Following World War I and the revolutions of 1918-1919, new political forces appeared in Hungary. Groups on the extreme right wing, representing racist policies, recruited their members mostly from middle class people. These groups intended to protect Hungary primarily from Jews who were considered to be harmful to national interests. Not only did they target the representatives of liberal economic and political principles as well as those of Communism, but also the traditional ruling classes, the aristocracy, even though the rise of the right wing was due to their policies. The extremists intended to seize power and thus establish a heavily centralized state which was to restrict or even obliterate parliamentarianism. The leader of this political movement was Staff Captain Gyula Gömbös.

After 1921, during the prime ministership of Count Istvan Bethlen, an aristocrat who represented conservative-liberal views, the aristocracy and the capitalists reinforced their positions in politics as well as in the economy. The extreme right wing groups of the middle classes were either forced out of power or, as subordinates to the aristocratic-capitalist circles, became part of the system. The latter was to be guaranteed by the unified governing party, which was subordinated to the government and dominated by Bethlen and his followers. Restricting franchise and reintroducing open voting made it possible for the Unified Party to assure its two-thirds majority and thus, the influence of the traditional ruling classes both in parliament and in the executive organ of power.

As a result of the social-political tensions generated by the 1929-1933 Depression, Gyula Gömbös became Prime Minister. It may well have seemed for contemporaries that the earlier racists would now have an opportunity to realize their former plans. Gömbös considered one of his first tasks as Prime Minister to be reorganizing the governing party. What made it urgent for him was the fact that Bethlen's followers formed a majority in parliament, in governing offices, in the administrative authorities, and in the

* Abbreviations for important Party of National Unity documents can be found in the Appendix at the end of this article.
government itself. Most of these political forces, as they perceived their interests to be endangered, did not support the new Prime Minister’s intentions concerning the establishment of a dictatorial authoritarian state. As the situation was unfavorable for him, Gömöös intended to clear away the obstacles in his path by means of the new party. In the following we are going to examine what role was to be assigned to women in this party as well as how they reacted to these plans.

It is necessary to give a brief overview of some of the important issues related to the topic of women’s situation in the period. By the 1930s the rate of women whose activities were confined to the family had decreased in Hungary. An increasing number of women took up jobs, as a result of which their rate among bread-winners also increased. This was particularly characteristic of industry and the services, particularly in the urban areas. Their participation in higher education became more apparent as well, even though this phenomenon showed a wide variety according to profession and social class. For several reasons, women became far more active in the society following World War I and the revolutions of 1918-1919. This was also manifested by their vigorous participation in the work of various associations.