


Attila Pók

THE POLITICS OF HATRED IN THE MIDDLE OF EUROPE

SCAPEGOATING IN TWENTIETH CENTURY HUNGARY
HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

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in the Middle of Europe



Scapegoating in Twentieth Century Hungary
History and Historiography

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On the front jacket:
William Holman Hunt: 'The Scapegoat' (1854)
Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight, UK

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Preface

Motto:

When someone is honestly 55% right, that is very good and there is no wrangling. And if someone is 60% right, it's wonderful, it's great luck and let him thank God. But what's to be said about 75% right? Wise people say this is suspicious. Well, and what about 100% right? Whoever says he is 100% right is a fanatic, a thug, and the worst kind of rascal.

Quoted from *An old Jew in Galicia* by Czeslaw Milosz in *The Captive Mind*, Vintage International Edition, New York, 1990. p. V.

One of the greatest theoretical–methodological problems of modern historical scholarship is the question: to what an extent is a historian in a position to ‘re-construct’ the past, is this at all a possible and feasible task for historians? If we accept the view that numerous, frequently conflicting narratives can be constructed on the basis of the same sources, the next question logically arises: in addition to making more or less successful attempts at reconstructing the past, what other aims can the study of the past serve?¹

On leaving the sacred halls of *academia* students and professors of history always have to face numerous social, political, cultural challenges of their own times and their choice of research subjects not once is directly shaped by ‘non-scholarly’, ‘non-professional’ experiences of all kinds. If excellence is combined with relevance, history has just as much to say about the past as about the present.

¹ Georg G. Iggers and Q. Edward Wang with the assistance of Supriya Mukherjee: *A Global History of Modern Historiography*. Pearson–Longman, 2008, 301–306.

The essays in this volume were inspired by the social–political, cultural, intellectual environment of the author: post-communist East Central Europe. The author is a member of the so called 68-er generation, born in the immediate aftermath of World War Two, intellectually very much shaped by the events of 1968, especially by Martin Luther King’s assassination, the student movements and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Inspirations

The world of academia, where as a historian I belong to, is on the move in science just as much as in social sciences and humanities. Borders, at least in this sphere of life, seem to be vanishing. One semester here, another there, joining project teams parallelly in various parts of the world, talking to publishers via Internet, submitting manuscripts without paper from a distant hideaway are natural elements of contemporary academic life – East and West alike. For my generation of East Central European intellectuals, when we², started our careers in the first half of the 1970s, the probability of this way of life was identical with having week-end houses on the Moon or the Mars. From a purely technical–scientific point of view, even life on these distant planets seemed to be feasible – as shall we need in order to get there, to what an extent the political tensions of the bipolar Cold War world will allow us to travel there?

During the time of our high school and college education both culturally and politically we were thinking in terms of a bipolar world: East and West. America was generally considered to be the avantgarde, the leader, the decisive force of the West, be it in political and military confrontation with the Soviet Union, in economic, technological development, in all fields of culture, everywhere. That was the case in the anti-Western official communist propaganda as well, but, of course, with a negative connotation: American imperialism was presented as the quintessence of the Western enemy. Early anti-Stalinist and reform-communist dissent did not care about differences between Western Europe and the US either. A number of its representatives

² Cf. the website: www.single-generation.de/kohorten/68er.htm that gives an interesting list of some better known, mainly German members (writers and scholars) of this generation and hosts a debate on their achievements.

were looking for spiritual stimulation in the West at large, because the Marxist–Leninist–Stalinist official New Faith (as Cz. Milos called the official Communist ideology) was incapable of fully satisfying these needs. In the 1950s and 1960s the US-led West for both many reform-communists and dissidents of the 1970s and 1980s was not just a social–political model based on private property and market-economy but primarily a source of vibrant intellectual stimulation.

The West meant primarily not IBM, GE, big multinational corporations, not so much Adeneauer, De Gaulle, Nixon, not even Kennedy but much more Polanski, Hemingway, Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Pasolini, Amerigo Tot, students of Adorno, the Frankfurt School, Marcuse, Fellini, Brigitte Bardot, Sophia Loren, Lawrence Olivier, Kerouac, Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye*, Steinbeck, Stanley Kubrick (especially his *Clockwork Orange*), the Nobel Prize for Pasternak’s *Doctor Zhivago*, famous musicals as the *Hair*, *West Side Story*, David Ojstrah, Leonard Bernstein etc. ³

On a *non-intellectual level* the rhetoric of Radio Free Europe appealed to lots of people who developed a far from realistic image of a way of life in the free and prosperous West where everything is of much better quality than in the East, where everything always perfectly functions. Top quality equalled Western quality. Those average citizens of the Soviet Bloc countries, who were not interested in culture, when defining the WEST, focused on consumption from Coca Cola and blue jeans to western made cars and not on the political or economic system.

Throughout the period of the Cold War in official Moscow or local Communist Party foreign policy strategies just as much as in most reform communist and anti-communist dissident rhetoric it was basically assumed that in spite of all regional peculiarities the US stood for and represented on the highest level the West and the SU the East.⁴ US–SU summits were by far the most important events of international politics and experience showed that the decisions taken on this level were indeed crucial for the fate of the whole world. The SU-led East was the OTHER for the US-led West and the other way round. This was true in spite of the pretty fast emerging other fault lines: following the acceleration of the decolonisation process, the Third World ap-

³ Cf. Gábor Klaniczay: *Ellenkultúra a betvenes–nyolcvanas években* [Counter-Culture during the Seventies and Eighties]. Noran, Budapest, 2003.

⁴ John Lewis Gaddis: *We Now Know. Rethinking Cold War History*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1997, 1–53.

peared on the stage of world politics and the Chinese–Russian rift seemed to be weakening the Soviet position.

Temptations

On the other hand, numerous reform-communist or anti-communist Eastern intellectuals of the Cold War were also quite suspicious of the West that in spite of the great human and material losses of the wars never experienced the level of destruction that Eastern Europe had to face. For many of them, many of us, parallel with the tribute paid to the West there existed also a longing for the Marxist–Leninist *Method*, the dialectical comprehensive understanding of the complex phenomena of the world.

When Cz. Milosz published his *Captive Mind* in 1951, he was 40 years old and has just broken with the communist system. The *Method*, he argued, “exerts a magnetic influence on contemporary man because it alone emphasizes, as has never been before done, the fluidity and interdependence of phenomena....”⁵ The *Method* also has some mystery about it, but this “only enhances its magic power”⁶ – Milosz argued. When I went to university in Budapest during the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was a loud call for going back to the “real” non-Leninist, even less Stalinist Marx (we were frequently quoting Marx defining himself as a “non-Marxist” and wanted to read only the pre-Communist Manifesto, early Marx) and made an effort at understanding György Lukács and Gramsci. With all our tribute to the culture of the West, we liked Che Guevara, rediscovered Rosa Luxemburg and organized demonstrations against the dictatorship in Greece and the American imperialists in Viet Nam. At the same time we certainly loved recordings from the performances of the Metropolitan Opera in New York as much as the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Tom Jones songs or reports from Woodstock. Works by Djilas and Marcuse together with Pasternak, Solschenicin, Orwell and Koestler were being circulated. Under the spell of the events of 1968 many of us started to believe that the real front lines in the modern world were not so much between East and West but among generations, between North and South, in general between those inside and those outside power. We, the

⁵ Czesław Milosz: *The Captive Mind*. Vintage International Edition, New York, 1990, 51.

⁶ Idem.

“1968-er generation of intellectuals”, sincerely believed that by the time we are “Sixty-Four”⁷ we shall have created a New World.

Disappointments and Expectations

By now all of us in this so called ‘Great Generation’ are around sixty-four and have indeed created a new world, fundamentally different from that of our student days. But better or worse?

We can very well remember that the loudest Hungarian cry for a ‘new world’ in 1956 had clearly shown: the Eisenhower slogan of the liberation of the captive nations was just campaign rhetoric and not a political action programme. Lots of Central European intellectuals of the 1968er generation got more interested in reforming than dismantling the forcefully imported Soviet system. One of the most important preoccupations of many outstanding and not so outstanding Eastern and Central European minds has – since the early 19th century – been backwardness, underdevelopment, lagging behind of their homeland, of their historical region. The great hope attached to changes was to get impetus, help to this catching up process.

The backwardness was perceived in terms of political culture (representative democracy, secularization), various economic indicators (level of industrialization, per capita GDP, energy efficiency, overall efficacy of labour, transportation and communication networks etc.), culture (number of functioning cultural institutions, level of illiteracy, per centage of respective age groups in institutions of primary, secondary and higher education etc.). This preoccupation with the causes of the backwardness of our region was, of course, far from being a novelty for our generation. One of the most fundamental dilemmas for patriotic politicians and political thinkers of partitioned Poland, Habsburg controlled Bohemia and Hungary, the Ottoman-ruled Balkans was the relationship between the implementation of the aims of national self-determination and modernization. After all, from a merely pragmatic point of view, larger territorial–political units can better deal with the construction of modern systems of transportation and communication, with modernization in every field of life than competing small sovereign states. On the other hand, it was frequently argued, the antiquated, pre-modern structures of political and

⁷ As the famous Beatles song put it.

economic rule, petrified social structures of conservative empires lacking mobility can also be major obstacles to modernization.

But even if the program of dismantling the outlived empires is successfully implemented and the incoming new national states prefer cooperation to rivalry, another dilemma might still stay on the agenda: will the import of modern Western institutions not endanger the integrity and cohesion of smaller Eastern nations? All these issues are brilliantly summarized in a most insightful book by the outstanding Polish historian, Jerzy Jedlicky.⁸ What he writes about 19th century Polish intelligentsia, applies in a chronologically and geographically much wider Eastern and Central European circle: "...[19th century Polish intelligentsia] regarded its own country as a poor and neglected suburb of Europe, a suburb that looked at the metropolis with contradictory feelings of envy, admiration and distrust".⁹

For many 'captive minds' socialism – communism promised (and at a terrible price but seemed to implement) fast, comprehensive modernization: industrialization, urbanization, easy access to education and medical care as parts of some kind of an overall redemption. 1956, 1968, 1981 but also the news about Soviet domestic politics, domestic social life (via anti-Communist dissidents and occasionally anti-dogmatic reform-minded communists) helped to get out of the magic spell but the discard of the official communist ideas and program was not always coupled with the elaboration of feasible alternatives.

The euphoria of 1989–90 temporarily vied the complexity and the difficulties of the transition. Ralf Dahrendorf's insightful forecast (you can build up democratic political institutions in six months, market economy in six years but to change deep-rooted attitudes, mentalities calls for at least sixty years)¹⁰ was not taken very seriously.

⁸ Jerzy Jedlicki: *The Suburb of Europe. Nineteenth Century Polish Approaches to Western Civilization*. CEU Press, Budapest, 1999.

⁹ Jerzy Jedlicki: op. cit.

¹⁰ Ralf Dahrendorf: *Reflections on the Revolution*. Crown, New York, 1990.

A very modest proposal

‘Where are we heading?’ – was the great question for my generation of intellectuals in the aftermath of the demise of the Soviet Block. If I now look back, the first major item on the post-communist Central European agenda was the problem of the fast proliferation of new national states (successor states of the Soviet Union, the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, and primarily the Yugoslav disintegration process). It was believed that the removal of unwanted bonds, the gaining ground of national self-determination goes hand in hand with the democratization of the societies/countries concerned. To the most shocking extent Yugoslavia but to a lesser extent, the experiences of all the East Central European post-communist countries showed that this was not the case, xenophobia and the emergence of authoritarian leaders, the lack of a fair ruling of the position of national minorities ranked high on most of the new national agendas.

Numerous members of my generation were, are shocked by the outbursts of political hatreds capitalizing on class, religious, ethnic and national differences in East Central Europe.

The essays of this volume try to explore some elements of the historical roots of these political hatreds in my part of the world, they pay special attention to the making and social, political function of scapegoating, one of the most widely used and abused social psychological instruments in the aftermath of the post-communist transition. The pieces on historiography reflect my interest in the history of modern historical scholarship, they are trying to find out how historical narratives can become essential elements of mobilizing political ideologies.

All these writing more or less directly were inspired, motivated by my social, political experiences of the last twenty years in post-communist Hungary. I very much hope that they serve not only a better understanding of past events they deal with, but just as much make the reader contemplate about the present.

Introduction

Atonement and Sacrifice:

1. Scapegoats in Modern Eastern and Central Europe

When studying the history of East and Central European nations and statesmen and the political thoughts produced by the latter, one often encounters a basic stereotype. It matters little if the person in question was liberal or conservative-minded, a communist or fascist by conviction, a member of ruling – or oppositional – parties in the Polish or Czech nation or any other nationality or ethnic group. When he explains the tribulations of his respective group, he will often blame influential persons, social groups or impersonal factors such as ideologies or prejudices for the troubles, never his “own kind.” No matter if the explanations include detailed, well-thought-out analyses, or they are composed of superficial polemical arguments or simply cursory remarks. The result is often the same; a scapegoat is found. Here I will attempt to provide a short survey of the process resulting in the creation of such stereotypes in modern East and Central Europe and will include a few case studies in my discussion.

Focusing my attention on scapegoating does not mean, of course, that such a process would be the “privilege” of East Central European thinkers alone. Neither is scapegoating the only characteristic framework of the arguments of political thinkers in the region. The significance of this topic lies in current experiences. Since the *annus mirabilis* of 1989, several peoples, including the Croats, Hungarians, Slovaks, Slovenians, Macedonians, to mention only a few living in the region can, for the first time, give national self-determination a real chance. However, their scope of action is circumscribed by numerous external and internal factors. The small nations of the region face many obstacles and will undoubtedly experience many more failures than expected during their development. The problems include declining living standards, widespread corruption, the lack of economic and political, not to speak of moral and military, aid by the West. The consequent absence of a

truly promising prospect for the future contributes to the emergence of allegedly clear-cut monocausal explanations. Before substantial progress can be achieved, the cohesion of small societies in East and Central Europe would have to be restored and strengthened. The problem is underlined by the fact that single-cause explanations easily induce the creation of scapegoats.

Before I turn to a discussion of specific cases, however, I would like to clarify the original, classical Biblical meaning of the concept of the scapegoat and review the currently available socio-psychological interpretations of this concept. This will provide a conceptual framework for my investigation.

The Scapegoat in the Old Testament

The Old Testament presents the story of the scapegoat in the “Book of Levithans.”¹¹ According to the story, the Lord commands Aaron to

Come into the holy place with a young bull for a sin offering [that is, for the sins of himself and his people], and a ram for a burnt offering. And he shall take for the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. And Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and his house. Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering which is for the people...thus he shall make atonement for the holy place.... And when he has made an end of atoning for the holy place and the tent of the meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat and confess over him all the iniquities of the people of Israel and all their transgressions, all their sins, and he shall put them upon the head of the goat and send him away into the wilderness.... The goat shall bear all their iniquities upon him to a solitary land...

It is obvious from this that there can be no scapegoat without a sense of guilt and guilt comes from breaking the law. The law might be broken in various ways; by not respecting it, by a very conscious effort to replace it by new laws or (and this is more often the case), by accepting the law but, due to external or internal circumstances induced perhaps by an emergency, breaking it.

¹¹ Leviticus XVI/3, 5, 15, 16, 20, 21. 22. Revised Standard Version, Toronto–New York–Edinburgh, 1953, 119–120.

In all these cases the lawbreaker is aware of his guilt. If remorse tortures the person in question, a ready way out of such an uncomfortable situation is to transfer the guilt onto someone else.

Advantageous as such an act might appear for the person troubled by his conscience, providing him with a certain measure of relief, it also has a major long-term drawback. He has to face his *externalized, concretized* guilt. Nevertheless, this is a somewhat more comfortable situation than having to admit to oneself and face one's deficiencies and failures. It matters little in such a situation if the guilty one is a single person, a group or a class, or even an entire nation. A series of failures often trigger the scapegoating process, and in some situations the call for a scapegoat might become quite passionate.

Scapegoats in Social Psychology

These issues are already being studied by modern social psychologists. The subject is considerably larger than this essay's size would permit its full exploration here. Therefore, I will consider only two socio-psychological phenomena of scapegoating. One of these is the individual's, and what is even more important, a communities' feeling of guilt, remorse, and the other is the possibility of transferring penitence, repentance or contrition.

Allport,¹² Heider¹³ and, most recently, Douglas¹⁴ provided extensive studies on group dynamics and prejudices. Their analyses of the behavior of groups of various sizes show that whenever tensions of any kind accumulate, there also tend to appear demands for finding a scapegoat. Such a scapegoat may be one or several individuals, or a group or a category of people. They are then considered to be the ultimate cause of the problem in question. The prevailing attitude toward the scapegoat is usually violence and this is often encouraged. The process of scapegoating can, therefore, be easily misused or

¹² Willard G. Allport: *The Nature of Prejudice*. Reading, MA, 1949.

¹³ F. Heider: "Social Perception of Phenomenal Causality," in R. Taguiri and L. Petrub eds., *Perception and Interpersonal Behavior*. Stanford, 1958; first published in *Psychological Review* 51 (1944), 358–474.

¹⁴ Thomas Douglas: *Scapegoats. Transferring Blame*. London–New York, 1995. See also Péter Hanák, "A másokról alkotott kép. Polgárosodás és etnikai előítéletek a magyar társadalomban a 19. század második felében" [The Image of the Other. Bourgeois Transformation and Ethnic Prejudices in the Hungarian Society during the Second half of the 19th Century]. *Századok* 119 (1985), 5–6.

manipulated. According to H. White and K. Lewin, an interesting socio-psychological phenomenon is that the process of scapegoating could expand and even accelerate in post-authoritarian societies when the authoritarian constraints are removed.¹⁵ The underlying socio-psychological motives in this process appear to be twofold; one is *enforced attribution* and the other is *mobilization and recruitment*.

Enforced Attribution

Part of human nature is such that both individuals and groups want clear-cut, monocausal explanations for all events. However, this is, in most cases, impossible as historians know only too well. Therefore, finding a scapegoat is often the easiest solution for the dilemma.

This “solution” is most frequently found in authoritarian/totalitarian or post-authoritarian societies. In the former, social tensions are created by the curtailment of individual rights and by a vague feeling of insecurity, of being in danger. Even if a dictator offers a sort of pseudo-security for the population at large in exchange for the lack of individual autonomy, practically every member of such a society will feel insecure. Strangely enough, it is usually the dictator himself who is worried the most about his own security.¹⁶ The list of obvious examples is indeed long, extending from the Roman Emperor Nero to Ceausescu or Saddam Hussein.

The feeling of insecurity is usually accompanied by self-reproach, the conscious or subconscious feeling of guilt in most members of society. This feeling can be spontaneous or artificially induced. This could lead to a series of public self-criticisms, a process somewhat similar to the open confessions of sin in Protestant congregations, the manipulation of an ancient, basic human need, the willingness to confess.¹⁷

¹⁵ A good example of this was the tragic incident at Tîrgu Mures [Marosvásárhely] on 19–20 March, 1990, when Hungarians of the town were attacked by extreme nationalist Romanian crowds.

¹⁶ See Guglielmo Ferrero: *The Principles of Power*. New York, 1942; also, Robert A. Kann: *The Problem of Restoration. A Study in Comparative Political History*. Berkeley, CA, 1968.

¹⁷ See Sigmund Freud: *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*. Gesammelte Werke, XIV. Frankfurt am Main–London, 1955. (English editions under the title: *Civilization and its Discontents*).

However, the efforts of the communist or fascist dictatorships differ from religious confessions. The latter are performed more on an individual basis and lead, through penitence, to absolution, to the remission of sins. In this case the aim is to help the individual to preserve – or to re-establish – his internal balance or autonomy. On the other hand, public confessions in authoritarian societies put the confessor to shame, humiliation, and instead of absolution it will aggravate his feeling of guilt. The consequence will be, more often than not, a voluntary demand for punishment or even an offer to become an accomplice.

Such an atmosphere can lead to a search for scapegoats because no one wants to, or can live, long with a permanent feeling of guilt. In this way the dictator is responsible for the accumulation of potentially aggressive forces in society. Nevertheless, because of the dictator's power, the aggression will be directed toward a scapegoat. However, the dictator would not be what he is if he permitted a free flow of aggressive feelings in society even if it strengthened his position. His so called "consolidated autocracy" could mean, strangely enough, relative security for the scapegoat. (As the Viennese mayor from 1897 to 1910, Karl Lueger put it: "Wer Jude ist, bestimme ich.")

The long, often tiresome period of transition from an autocratic to a democratic social system – which is currently the situation in all East and Central European countries – is easily conducive for "*en masse*" searches for scapegoats. The search often takes place in an atmosphere of overheated euphoria in which calls are made for revenge, for "doing justice." The loudest calls for radical measures against potential scapegoats often come from individuals who were closely identified with the socio-political establishment of the authoritarian system. It is the case of members of extreme rightist parties who joined leftist organizations after World War II, or sons of communist leaders who became prominent in the dissident movements in the 1980s in the countries of the Soviet bloc. This should not be surprising since they are the ones who feel the greatest need for the transfer of guilt and responsibility. However, we may identify three different types of responsibility: legal, moral and historical-political.

It is often very difficult to find a person or a category of people whose responsibility for past events could be established in terms of the prevailing penal code. If the moral system of the society in question is unstable and manipulated – which could be the result of frequent fundamental changes – historical-political evaluations often become predominant. These so-called

evaluations are often loaded with hatred that desperately needs to be focused on personalized objects, on an individual or a group. Scapegoating is, of course, far from being a legal process. Therefore, the measures taken against scapegoats do not have to be legal, and this could have tragic and fateful consequences.

“Mobilizing” and “Recruiting” Scapegoats

Another function of scapegoating often emerges in what experts call pre-authoritarian societies.¹⁸ This I call the “mobilizing–recruiting” function which could be the search for “prospective” creation of scapegoats. In the original Biblical sense of the concept scapegoats are not necessarily hated, and one can feel a little sympathy, or even be a little sorry for them. Most “mobilizing” scapegoats are, however, substantially different. Their creation is part of the emerging totalitarian/authoritarian movements. The scapegoats (be they the “exploiters,” the Jews or others), become the subjects of common, collective hatred, and this hatred includes a certain amount of guilt-feeling as well. This might result in what Eric Erikson called “pseudo speciation.”¹⁹ In this the scapegoat is considered to belong to a different “species” such as, for instance, an “inferior race.” Consequently, the usually valid prohibition of aggression against members of one’s “own species” does not apply to scapegoats. Let us now consider some actual historical cases.

Strangers as Scapegoats

The typical East and Central European scapegoats are strangers. They are foreigners, aliens in all their possible forms and functions, “explanatory” as well as “mobilizing.” In a somewhat simplified form the scapegoats stand for social or national failures and problems. National scapegoats, in a somewhat arbitrary classification, may be neighboring nations, minorities or hostile great

¹⁸ See Ferenc Pataki: “Bűnbakképzési folyamatok a társadalomban”. [Scapegoating in our Society] in *Rendszerváltás után: társadalomlélektani terepszemle* [After the System Change. A Social Psychological Survey]. Budapest, 1993, 100–102.

¹⁹ Eric Erikson: *Insight and Responsibility*. New York, 1964.

powers. Among these, prominent place is given to “exploiters” and foreign and home-grown capitalists. The list could, naturally, be expanded including, for instance, the followers of various religions and certain professions, but these should suffice for the present purposes of analysis.

National Strangers

Neighbors

Let us consider first national scapegoats in East and Central Europe, for instance, neighboring nations. Hungarians and Romanians, Poles and Lithuanians, Serbs and Bulgarians, Turks and Greeks frequently consider each other as scapegoats when trying to explain their own failures. Failure without exception represents a situation in which the territories of their states, the political boundaries of their national lives and ethnic homelands do not correspond. Prime examples of such situations are lands with ethnically mixed populations. The peoples living in these lands have often developed a distinctly supranational identity of their own. At the same time several neighboring national states consider the lands to be part of their own territories. Transylvania, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo represent, in this respect, the worst trouble spots.

The key source of the conflict is a very simple question, namely, which ethnic group had entered the disputed territory first. A corollary question is which one of them is numerically the largest. The problem is that state borders have changed several times as late as the 20th century. During this time the large multi-ethnic empires collapsed, giving way to so-called national states. The peace settlements following World War I were based, at least in principle, on national self-determination. This was an attempt to create ethnically more or less homogeneous states in East and Central Europe. However, this was hardly feasible. Hungary was the only country which came close to achieving ethnic homogeneity – over 93 percent of the population are ethnic Hungarians. The losers, quite naturally, sought explanations about what had happened to them. The Hungarians, for example, continue to think of Transylvania as an organic part of the historical Hungarian state, the latter of

which was created in 1000 AD, shortly after the Hungarian people entered the Carpathian Basin at the end of the 9th century. Most Hungarians accept the assertion of their historians, according to which the Romanians have migrated to Transylvania from the southern Balkans “only” from the 12th–13th century on.

Numerous Romanian scholars and politicians insist on the theory of “Daco-Romanian continuity.” According to this theory the Roman emperor, Traian (98–117 AD), conquered the territory of the Dacians in 107 AD. The Roman presence in the region lasted for about 160 years. Yet linguistic, demographic and ethnological facts prove – so the theorists argue – that the Latin speaking, indigenous Dacian population represents unbroken continuity in Transylvania. These people were the ancestors of the current Romanian population.²⁰

These mutually exclusive views were greatly aggravated by the outcome of World War I, when the victorious Entente powers confirmed the annexation of Transylvania by Romania. Experts dealing with the area often emphasize, as Dennis Hupchik put it, that “History has shaped Transylvania into one seismic epicenter along the human (fault)line, separating Western and Eastern European civilizations.”²¹ An early example was provided by the Romanian daily, *Tribuna*, in 1884–1885. According to numerous articles published in this paper, the Romanians are superior to the Hungarians, because they are the greatest, the best-educated people in Eastern Europe, and the Hungarians are the cause of all the suffering of the Romanian people. On the other hand, strong anti-Romanian views prevailed among the Hungarians of Transylvania who pointed out the alleged cultural inferiority of “latecomer” Romanians in comparison with Hungarians. The Hungarians often referred to the “treacherous” activity of the Romanians, undermining Hungary’s fight for its liberty in 1848.²²

²⁰ For a summary of the Romanian arguments, see Stefan Pascu: *A History of Transylvania*. Detroit, MI, 1982. The most comprehensive summary of the Hungarian view is: Béla Köpeczi (ed.): *A History of Transylvania*. Budapest, 1990, 3 vols. Important texts about this historical-political debate may be found in Lovis L. Lote (ed.): *Transylvania and the Theory of Daco-Romanian Continuity*. Cleveland, OH, 1980. An important summary is presented by Laszlo Péter (ed.): *Historians and the History of Transylvania*. Boulder–New York, 1992.

²¹ Dennis Hupchik: *Conflict and Chaos in Eastern Europe*. London, 1995, 50.

²² See, for instance, Al Zub (ed.): *Identitate alternate în spațiul cultural românesc*. Iasi, 1996; and Sándor Bíró: “Az erdélyi román értelmiség eszmevilága a XIX. században” in József Deér and László Gáldi (eds.): *Magyarok és Románok*. Budapest, 1944, 160.

Macedonia is another territory in Eastern Europe beset by similar problems. This land is the locus of a double or even triple conflict between Orthodox Christianity and Islam on the one hand, and between Bulgarians, Greeks, Serbs and Albanians on the other. All these conflicts are confounded by the emergence of a peculiar Macedonian identity. The murder of the populist Bulgarian prime minister, Alexander Stambolijski in June, 1923, is a tragic example of scapegoating in relation to Macedonia. His assassins cut off his right hand while he was still alive for signing a treaty with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (later Yugoslavia), in which concessions were made about “Bulgarian Macedonia.”²³

In many instances the nationalists of East and Central Europe modeled their movements on modern West European nationalism, and they aspired to establish historic and linguistic “continuity” in “their” territories. Historians have played a primary role in filling gaps and in the process created both “explanatory” and “mobilizing” scapegoats. One example was provided by the same Slovak nationalists in September 1919, who earlier complained about alleged Hungarian oppression, and then presented the Czechs, their new compatriots in Czechoslovakia, as a major danger to their national integrity.²⁴

Cultural and national differences, as well as various difficulties in creating, then consolidating the so-called national states in East and Central Europe early in this century, frequently resulted in accusations against neighboring nations representing them as major obstacles to the realization of ambitious national plans. Emil Niederhauser provided a comprehensive study of pre-communist East and Central European historiography in which he deals with many of these debates.²⁵ Otto Szabolcs studied the manuals used in primary and secondary schools in the region and pointed out many of the anomalies.²⁶ The British–Hungarian historian, Laszlo Peter, also published an impressive study in 1992 about the debates of historians concerning Transylvania.²⁷ In most of these debates all sides used scapegoating in asserting their national positions.

²³ John D. Bell: *Peasants and Power. Alexander Stambolijski and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, 1888–1923*. Princeton, NJ, 1977.

²⁴ Stanislav J. Kischbaum: *History of Slovakia*. New York, 1995, 164.

²⁵ Emil Niederhauser: *A történetírás története Kelet-Európában* (A History of Historical Writing in Eastern Europe) Budapest, 1995.

²⁶ Ottó Szabolcs: *Külföldi tankönyvek Magyarország-képe* (The Image of Hungary in Foreign History Schoolbooks) Budapest, 1994.

²⁷ László Péter: *op. cit.*

Minorities as Scapegoats

Historical works on East and Central Europe have always devoted a great deal of attention to national and ethnic minorities when discussing obstacles to the creation of strong national states. About 20–25 percent of the population of the region lived in minority status during the interwar years and continues to exist to this day in this condition.²⁸ Before World War II, Ukrainians, Jews and Germans in Poland, Germans and Hungarians in Czechoslovakia, Serbs in Croatia, Croats, Hungarians, Slovenes, Albanians and Germans in Yugoslavia, Turks in Bulgaria, Hungarians and Germans in Romania, all caused difficulties for nationalist historians who believed – and continue to believe – that the perfect political framework for their nation is an ethnically homogeneous population.

Formerly oppressed minorities, however, have a way to become dominant majorities as did the Romanians in Transylvania, Croats and Slovenes in the former Yugoslav lands, or the ethnic populations in some of the successor states of the former Soviet Union. Such a development could contribute to the emergence of even more complex situations.

One late-19th century example will illustrate the complexities of the issues involved. It concerns the activities of Béla Grünwald, a Hungarian politician–historian during the 1870s–1880s. He was convinced that the resistance of the national minorities in Hungary to the “benevolent” assimilation into the Hungarian nation and its culture, was a major obstacle to bourgeois transformation, which he equated with the modernization of the country. He then helped to create a modern system of public administration for Hungary, but continued to argue for the forced assimilation of national minorities.²⁹ Other examples were provided by Polish opinions about Ukrainians living in Poland during the interwar years, and Estonian and Latvian attitudes toward Russians in the early 1990s. These attitudes may all be explained as a search for scapegoats. The vicissitudes of national development often call for unusual explanations as a means of strengthening the cohesion of the national state. A most

²⁸ See Georg Brunner, *Nationalitätenprobleme und Minderheitenkonflikte in Osteuropa*. Gütersloh, 1993 and Ferenc Glatz: *Minorities in Central Europe. Historical Analysis and a Policy Proposal*. Budapest, 1993.

²⁹ See Attila Pók, “Nemzet és nemzetiség Grünwald Béla gondolkodásában” [Nation and Nationality in Béla Grünwald’s Thought] in Éva Somogyi: *Verbürgelichung in Mitteleuropa. Festschrift für Péter Hanák zum 70. Geburtstag*. Budapest, 1991, 215–228.

tragic example of such attitudes was anti-Semitism after World War I. Be they winners (as the Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Yugoslavs, Romanians), or losers (as the Hungarians) in World War I, Jews were frequently blamed by them for their difficulties and failures.³⁰ Obviously, such attitudes contributed to the terrible tragedy of the Holocaust.

Hostile Great Powers

The third national issue of scapegoating, invoking the image of a “hostile great power,” has been very important in modern times for the small nations in the region. It is a distinctive feature of East and Central European history that, for long periods of time, the state and the national polity, as well as the national economies, were subordinated to “external rule.”³¹ This experience left lasting impressions on the political thought processes in the area.

One example of this was provided by the writings of the communist historian in Hungary, Aladár M6d. His major work, *Four Hundred Years of Struggle for Independent Hungary*, represented the official version of Hungarian history during the early 1950s.³² According to M6d, the key issue of Hungarian history since at least the 16th century has been a continuous struggle for independence. He asserted that Turkish, Habsburg, imperial Russian and German interventions were responsible for a series of failures in achieving Hungarian aspirations. These included the intervention of the reactionary Habsburgs and imperial Russians in 1848–1849 that prolonged Hungary’s longstanding backwardness; the Compromise of 1867 which was a ‘sellout’ by the Hungarian ruling classes; the interwar ‘fascist’ Horthy-regime, imposed on Hungary by anti-communist Western imperialism, the consequence of which was that Hungary became an accomplice of Hitler. As a consequence, Hungary had to wait for liberation by the Soviet Union in order to gain full sovereignty. At the crucial turning points (1711, 1849, 1919, 1941), traitors of the exploiter ruling classes sold out the interests of the nation’s working people to the Habsburgs,

³⁰ Ezra Mendelsohn: *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars*. Bloomington, EN, 1983.

³¹ See George Sch6pflin: “The Political Traditions of Eastern Europe.” *Daedalus* 119 (Winter, 1990), No. 1, 55–90.

³² Alad6r M6r: *N6gy száz 6v k6z6delem az 6n6ll6 Magyarorsz6g6rt*. Budapest, 1943. Numerous editions were issued during the 1950s.

to the Tsar, to the Habsburgs again, to Western imperialism and finally to the Germans. This peculiar mixture of categorical and individual scapegoats also appear in Czech and Polish images of Germany.

Well-known historical facts obviously do, indeed, confirm some elements of these views. But the idea of scapegoating by invoking collective guilt had disastrous consequences. It resulted in massive population expulsions and the forced “resettlement” of millions of innocent people after World War II. The same pattern of political thinking has continued even after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the region, and it survives in post-communist societies today. The former Soviet leaders and their “accomplices” in East, and Central Europe are considered to have been solely responsible for everything “bad,” for all negative phenomena that emerged after 1945.

More recently, this pattern of thought became part of the rhetoric of extreme nationalist politicians in countries where former communists – now calling themselves socialists or social democrats – have come, through free elections, back into power. The Slovak, Polish and Hungarian socialists are being accused of having sold out the country to the West European and American capitalists during the privatization of the economy. The privatization process in these countries did, indeed, involve some corruption. But the nationalists’ charge about wholesale betrayal and the alleged deals that had been made in return for individual enrichment of former communist functionaries does not reflect the complexity of this process. The argument according to which the former communist elite converted its political power into economic assets is scapegoating of the clearest kind.

The rightists’ argument has, however, deep historical roots. Economic and political modernization in East and Central Europe has frequently been identified with the suppression of national aspirations.³³ The best example is the heated debate that has been waged about the evaluation of the development of the Habsburg Monarchy between 1867 and 1918. Was this state the “prison of oppressed nations,” or an example of the feasible, mutually advantageous coexistence and cooperation of East European peoples?³⁴ The answer, of course, depends upon the prejudices of the people participating in the discussions

³³ See György Litván: *Magyar gondolat – szabad gondolat* [Hungarian Thought – Free Thought]. Budapest, 1978.

³⁴ See Péter Hanák: “Hungary in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy: Preponderance or Dependency?” in *Austrian History Yearbook*. Houston, TX, VIII (1967), Part I.

In concluding this short and by no means complete survey of national scapegoats, I want to mention several speeches of the President of Serbia in 1993–1995. During these years Slobodan Milosevic succeeded in convincing his fellow Serb countrymen that various “alien elements” – a minority in Kosovo, (the Albanians), a neighbor (the Croats), and hostile great powers (in Western Europe and the United States) – had been responsible for the isolation and economic plight of their country. He asserted on these occasions that all these forces combined their efforts to threaten the integrity of the Serb national state. He skillfully combined in one argument all basic patterns of “national scapegoating.”

Social Strangers

Exploiters and Capitalists

The so-called exploiters as scapegoats have already been mentioned; they are the alleged accomplices of hostile great powers. The key issue in this argument is modernization or, rather, the failure of modernization. Lagging behind the West in economic and technical accomplishments, the living standards of the peoples of Eastern and Western Europe have been an important basis of comparison.³⁵ The search for the causes of this lag had reached its height after World War I. The East European “winners” had to ask the question, namely, since the external restraints had been removed, who is to be blamed for the continuing slowness of the catching-up process. On the other hand, the “losers” searched for those who were “responsible” for their defeat. One of the losers was, of course, Hungary.

A 37-year old historian, Gyula Szekfű, produced a very influential book in 1920.³⁶ He found the cause for Hungary’s unprecedented tragedy – losing two-thirds of the country’s territory and 40 percent of the ethnic Hungarian population – in a series of failed attempts to transform the country’s political system along liberal lines. According to him, three successive generations pur-

³⁵ See Berend T. Iván: *Decades of Crisis. Central and Eastern Europe before World War II*. Berkeley, CA, 1998, chapters 1 and 2.

³⁶ Gyula Szekfű: *Három nemzedék* [Three Generations]. Budapest, 1920.

sued and were misled by the mirage of Western liberalism that could not take root in Hungary. As a consequence, the Hungarian nobility, raised into the middle class, lost its position in the emerging liberal market economy while the state refused to offer them well-deserved support. The gaps in the system were then filled by the “alien” Jewish middle- and upper-classes whose members exploited the situation. Szekfű thus developed the Hungarian version of the German *Dolchstoß* theory, and according to him only the secret conspiracy of the hidden internal enemies (primarily Jews and communists) stabbed the nation in the back, and it was not the mistakes of the political leaders that caused Hungary’s defeat in World War I. He asserted that the “unhealthy” development of society created a power-vacuum in pre-World War I Hungary and eventually led to the revolutions of 1918–1919.

Szekfű argued that Hungary’s internal weakness, not her military defeat caused the tragedy. During the 1920s Hungarian public opinion centered on the anti-Semitic implications of Szekfű’s analysis. But a careful reading of the book shows that the author – whose wife was Jewish – had different intentions. In fact, Szekfű’s real target was not Hungary’s Jewish population but the liberal establishment which, by neglect, contributed to Jewish gains in national life.

In the same year another thoroughgoing analysis of Hungary’s losses in World War I was published by a brilliant scholar-politician, Oszkár Jászi. He was a critic of Hungary’s political and social elite of the early 20th century. He was involved in the revolution of 1918 and, as a consequence, he had to flee Hungary. His book, published at first in Vienna, also focused on Hungary’s internal problems leading up to the dismemberment of the country.³⁷ Contrary to Szekfű, Jászi argued that liberalism was never introduced in Hungary. “All serious liberal-minded intellectuals,” he stated, “were silenced during the last quarter century of the existence of the Hungarian state; all liberal cultural and political aspirations were trampled upon by ‘patriots’ and plundering gang-leaders drunk with nationalism.” Yet, Jászi’s conclusions came surprisingly close to Szekfű’s arguments. He further stated: “The Hungarian soul turned out to be sterile and the thinning ranks of the army of culture were increasingly filled by aliens, first of all Jews, which, in turn, led to a disgusting mixture of feudalism and usury.”³⁸

³⁷ Oszkár Jászi: *Magyar kálvária – magyar feltámadás*. Vienna, 1920. English translation: *Revolution and Counter-revolution in Hungary*. London, 1925.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 154.

Szekfű expressed the resentment of the Hungarian middle classes whose social and economic positions were undermined by the disintegration of the Hungarian state; Jászi, on the other hand, reflected the disappointment of a group of cosmopolitan intellectuals (using this concept in the best sense of the word) who no longer perceived a chance for the modernization of the country. Different as their views were about the nature of Hungary's ills, they agreed on one point; namely, that the "cruel and badly prepared" decisions of the great powers in Paris only gave the final blow to a fatally sick Hungarian society. Both of them found the appropriate scapegoat in successful/ unsuccessful Western liberalism, and its representatives, the Jews as well as in "hostile great powers." These ideas permeated Hungarian society during the interwar years.

The other group in my somewhat arbitrary classification of "socially alien" scapegoats is the capitalists at large. "Rootless" is the frequently used term describing capitalists and it has a rich tradition in the political literature of the region.³⁹ László Németh, a sensitive Hungarian populist writer and essayist of the interwar years, complained about the allegedly alien character of Hungarian capitalism.⁴⁰ He believed that "native capitalism" could defend national sovereignty much better. He wrote in 1934: "It is a basic interest of Hungarians to bring their capitalism to heel for the public good."⁴¹ Or to quote another populist politician and influential sociologist, Ferenc Erdei, about interwar Hungarian society: "This bourgeois-capitalist society was created by the loose elements of feudal structures and to a very great extent by aliens. It represented a separate modern social structure next to the surviving historical one. Therefore, it had both a colonial nature and was also an alien body in the general structure of society."⁴² It is understandable that Erdei, holding such

³⁹ See Péter Hanák's essay: "The Anti-capitalist Ideology of the Populists," in Joseph Held. (ed.): *Populism in Eastern Europe. Racism, Nationalism, and Society*. Boulder–New York, 1996, 145–161.

⁴⁰ See György Csepeli: "In the Captivity of Narratives: The Political Socialization of Populist Writers in Hungary" in Held: *op. cit.*, 129–144.

⁴¹ Quoted by Péter Hanák: "Anorganikus volt-e a kapitalizmus Magyarországon?" [Was the Hungarian Society Anorganic in Hungary?] *Élet és Irodalom* (April, 1995), 4.

⁴² Ferenc Erdei: "A magyar társadalom a két háború között" [Hungarian Society between the Two World Wars], in Kálmán Kulcsár (ed.): *Erdei Ferenc összegyűjtött művei*. Budapest, 1980, 293–294. Also quoted by Péter Hanák, "Modernizáció és kapitalizmus Magyarországon" [Modernization and Capitalism in Hungary] in J. Buza, T. Csató and S. Gyemesi (eds.): *Challenges of Economic History*. Budapest, 1994.

views, would become a willing partner of the Communists since the core ideology of the latter included similar anti-capitalist strictures.

From the late 1960s on, there have been serious attempts in some East European countries – especially in Poland and Hungary – to adopt certain features of the market economy without, however, adjusting the monolithic institutional–political framework. In the revolts against Soviet colonial rule and the one-party system that facilitated it – in Germany in 1953, in Poland and Hungary in 1956 in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and again in Poland in 1981 – the proposed changes were to transform socialism “with a human face,” but were not intended to restore capitalism in any way or form.

The post-1989 changes were partly based on the political–ideological heritage of these revolutions, but the programs of the new, democratically elected governments included loud calls for free-market capitalism. After so many failed attempts at reforming the socialist economy, there was overwhelming popular support for a transition to capitalism in all countries of the former Soviet zone. However, after quite a few years, in spite of the radical shift to capitalism, in spite of the slowly improving global indicators, living standards in Eastern Europe are still in decline for most of the population, or at best, they are stagnant. The social cohesion and solidarity that made the transition relatively smooth and bloodless after 1989, have largely disappeared.⁴³

Consequently, extreme rightist and leftist political groups have reappeared and are promoting a “modernized” version of a 19th century theory which has a certain appeal for the population of former communist countries. These extremists point out the differences between the production- and commerce-oriented sectors of the economy. Trade, credits, profits derived from interests and stock-exchange activities are deplored. In fact, only the production of new goods is considered by these groups to constitute useful economic activity. They attempt to separate the process of modernization from the pursuit of profit. They see the aim of economic activity not in profit seeking but in “serving the public good.” Thus, the capitalists once again appear as scapegoats in these societies.

The economy obviously must satisfy society’s needs. However, if a central bureaucracy decides economic issues instead of the economic process itself, tyranny is in the making. The profit-principle is, in Hungary as elsewhere, in-

⁴³ See Éva Ehrlich, Gábor Révész and Péter Tamási (eds.): *Kelet-Közép-Európa; Honnan honá?* [East Central Europe. Where From, Where To?] Budapest, 1994.

stitutionalized in the banking system. Most banks are located in luxurious premises, charging huge interests for loans, and they care little for the concerns of everyday citizens. Occasionally, Gottfried Feder's contrast between "schaffendes" (creative) and "raffendes" (greedy) capital is echoed and capitalism and capitalists are frequently presented as scapegoats.⁴⁴

In sum, the greatest danger in scapegoating in East and Central Europe is that the two basic functions – enforced attribution and the explanatory-mobilizing functions – are closely brought together. It is the obligation of social scientists and historians to call society's attention to this potential. A Western author who knew a great deal about the nature of Eastern and Western tyrannies, George Orwell, said the following when he was exactly as old as the writer of this essay; – he was speaking in his novel, entitled *1984*, about the ritual of "Daily Two Minutes of Hate." The subject of the hate was Emmanuel Goldstein, an enemy of the people, who has a

*lean Jewish face with an aureole of white hair and a small goatee beard – a clever face and somehow inherently despicable, with a kind of senile silliness in the long thin nose.... It resembled the face of a sheep and the voice, too, had a sheep-like quality. The horrible thing about the Two Minutes Hate was not that one was obliged to act a part but, on the contrary, that it was impossible to avoid joining in. Within thirty seconds any pretense was always unnecessary. A hideous ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness, a desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces with a sledge-hammer seemed to flow through the whole people like an electric current, turning one even against one's will into a grimacing, screaming lunatic. And yet the rage that one felt was an abstract, undirected emotion which could be switched from one subject to another like the flame of a blow lamp.*⁴⁵

It certainly has to be repeated that scapegoating is just one distinctive trait of political thought in my part of the world. In numerous crisis situations (most recently in 1989–1990) political action was based as much on critical

⁴⁴ In current Hungarian political literature a moderate form of this type of anti-capitalism argumentation can often be discovered. See, for instance, László Tőkéczi's writing "Gondolatlanság és bűnbakképzés (Thoughtlessness and Scapegoating)," in *Magyar Nemzet* (Feb. 4, 1998). A radical form of this sort of writing can be found in the publications of István Csurka and Zoltán Zétényi in the journal *Magyar Fórum* and *Nyugati Magyarország*. See also Miklós Szabó, "Új balítéletek (New Ill Judgements)," in *Népszava* (Jan. 11, 1997), 7.

⁴⁵ George Orwell, *Nineteen-eighty-four* (London, 1983 edition), 749-750.

self-examination and a search for reasonable compromises as on scape-goating.

The Scapegoat in the New Testament

I began this essay with references to the Old Testament. Now I would like to conclude by citing the Gospel of John from the New. The Gospel describes Jesus as the lamb of God (*Agnus Dei*) onto whom guilt and repentance were consciously transferred. This is a major difference with the Old Testament because Jesus willingly accepted the burden of guilt. There have always been great personalities who willingly sacrificed themselves for the public good. The “greatest Hungarian,” Count István Széchenyi, who devoted all his creative energies and much of his wealth to reforming Hungary in the 1830s and 1840s, and blamed himself for all the ensuing failures and tragedies, might be an excellent example. These men were aware of what Gyula Illyés so beautifully expressed in his 1956 poem, “One Sentence on Tyranny”:⁴⁶

For it is in all that you intend
In your tomorrow, it is at hand,
Before your thoughts it is aware,
In your every movement it is there...

Where seek tyranny, think again:
Everyone is a link in the chain:
Of Tyranny’s stench you are not free:

...Talk to yourself and hear
Tyranny, your inquisitor,
You have no isolation,
Not even in imagination...

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⁴⁶ Ádám Makkai (ed.): *On Quest for the Miraculous Stag: The Poetry of Hungary*. Budapest–Chicago–London, 1996, 643–649.

2. Under the Spell of Two World Wars

Nationalism and the Politics of Hatred: Some Twentieth-Century Hungarian Perspectives

The most important question to be raised in any history of twentieth-century European nationalism is the relationship between nationalism and fascism.⁴⁷ Twentieth-century Hungarian nationalism and national identity were shaped by two key issues: the territorial losses after the First World War and the Hungarian state's and society's responsibility for the Holocaust. How do these two problems relate to each other if presented in a comparative history of the politics of nationalist hatred, championed by fascism, in twentieth-century Europe? These are ambitious questions, in this article I will present the outline of some answers.

When did God Die?

In 1927, a few years before national socialism became the main European agenda, a most influential French intellectual of Jewish origin, whose views had a great impact on his European contemporaries, wrote the following: 'Our age is indeed the age of the *intellectual organization of political hatreds*'.⁴⁸ He argued that there was a fundamental difference between pre-nineteenth cen-

⁴⁷ For this issue the latest contribution Robert O. Paxton: *The Anatomy of Fascism*. New York, 2004.

⁴⁸ Julien Benda: *The Betrayal of Intellectuals*. Boston, 1959, 21 (original italics). Originally published as *Le Traison des Clercs* in 1927.

tury and nineteenth- and twentieth-century political passions. Up to the time of the Napoleonic Wars they ‘consisted in purely passionate impulses, natural explosions of instinct... today I notice that every political passion is furnished with a whole network of strongly woven doctrines...’.⁴⁹ The process leading to this situation, according to his analysis, starts at the time of the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, and its decisive element is a blending of the national and political passions, ‘...very powerful political passions, which were originally independent of nationalist feeling, have now become incorporated with it’.⁵⁰ The sixty-year-old philosopher gives a list of these major passions: the movement against the Jews, the movement of the possessing classes against the proletariat, and the movement of the champions of authority against the democrats. He refers to the National Socialist parties, institutional embodiments of this phenomenon. He might have read the reports, for example, on Adolf Hitler’s speech in Munich on 6 April 1927 that was published in the *Völkischer Beobachter* under the title: ‘Nationalism and Patriotism’. The thirty-seven-year-old ambitious, charismatic politician pointed out that ‘our young, socialist nationalism has nothing to do with the old antiquated patriotism’⁵¹ and argued that the German bourgeoisie had no true national aims. Just as much as Benda, Hitler very well realized that patriotism could hardly substitute for religious feelings; whereas nationalism can easily satisfy such sentimental, spiritual demands. Nationalism, just as much as extreme religious devotion, can very well be combined with hatred. Radical nationalists’ hate against their enemies is much stronger and less abstract than the love of their own kin.

One of the best experts of twentieth-century European conservative thought, an American of German background, Fritz Stern, author of the up to now perhaps the most important work about the deepest lying intellectual roots of national socialist ideology,⁵² defined his motivation when embarking on writing about the politics of cultural despair as follows: ‘I hope to show that ours is the age of the *political organization of cultural hatreds and personal resentments*’.⁵³

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵¹ *Völkischer Beobachter*, 8 Apr. 1927. Cited by John Lukacs in *Népszabadság*, 6 June 1998, 33.

⁵² Fritz Stern: *The Politics of Cultural Despair*. New York, 1961

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 6. Italics mine.

Aware of the disastrous consequences of the practical implementation of the doctrines of national socialism, Stern thus argues for a different approach to the origins of extreme political hatreds. He looks for an understanding by putting the issue into a broader context. He shows how nationalists attacked modern (i.e. liberal, secular, industrial–urban) culture, how essentially non-political grievances intruded politics. He defines this movement as a conservative revolution and traces its origins to romantic minds. Its followers ‘sought to destroy the despised present in order to recapture an idealized past in an imaginary future’.⁵⁴ Among the representatives of this European intellectual trend Fedor Dostoevski and Friedrich Nietzsche⁵⁵ came up with the most pervasive pessimism (God died!) concerning the future of the West. The next stage is the transformation of this cultural criticism into a political ideology. This combination of cultural criticism with extreme nationalism can be observed in almost every continental country (Maurice Barres, Gabriele D’Annunzio, Karl Lueger). It can also be called the Ideology of Resentment, which first arose in the 1890s, was powerful in the aftermath of the First World War, and surfaced again during the time of the Great Depression. It reached a peak in Hitler’s Germany and also shaped the international political climate in the form of an East–West confrontation during the Cold War. If we continue Stern’s line of argumentation, we might add that after the collapse of the Soviet Union the conflicts of North and South, the ‘clashes of civilizations’ (Samuel P. Huntington), and the fight against terrorism reflect these feelings.

Stern thus also considers hatred as a central issue of the twentieth century but *he believes that it is not the political issues that awaken culturally expressed ‘intellectually organized’ passions. He argues for an opposite causal relationship: the deepest lying cultural hatreds and resentments are politically manifested.*

Four other authors helped me in formulating the points of this article: first of all Peter Gay who, in my opinion, has most originally succeeded in combining social, cultural and intellectual history in his comprehensive survey of Victorian Europe. Just as much as in his other works, in *The Cultivation of Hatred*,⁵⁶ he calls Sigmund Freud to help and argues that the major events of the ‘long’ nineteenth and the ‘short’ twentieth centuries can be described as the series of attempts at curbing the eruptions of individual and collective aggressions. The

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵⁵ Cf. Peter Bergmann: *Nietzsche, ‘the Last Antipolitical German’*. Bloomington, 1987.

⁵⁶ Peter Gay: *The Cultivation of Hatred*. New York, 1993.

great challenge for a historian venturing into the realm of social psychology is to try to contribute, through the analysis of numerous case-studies, to the debate on the proportions of ‘nature and nurture’ among the causes of aggression.

An earlier, classical work – *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* – by Richard Hofstadter, the great American historian who died in the prime of his most creative career, was first published in 1963. In it he explains how extreme radical nationalism shows the signs of clinical paranoia. This politically defined paranoia differs from its individual psychological counterpart in referring to the persecution not of an individual but the whole of the national community. Paranoid politicians are great advocates of conspiracy theories and explain complex social-economic–political situations by ‘enforced attribution’, i.e. by presenting oversimplified, unicausal ‘clarifications’, most often treason or high treason by leading political figures.

Three recent works are of great help for the study of Hungarian twentieth-century nationalism in a comparative way. Robert Paxton’s *The Anatomy of Fascism* elaborates on the same problems as Fritz Stern in his above-mentioned work but with an even broader horizon. He presents fascism as an ideology and a political movement ‘that exalted hatred and violence in the name of national prowess’⁵⁷ and warns: ‘A linear pedigree that leads directly from pioneer thinkers to a finished fascism is pure invention’.⁵⁸ He points out that ‘fascism’ is more plausibly linked to a set of ‘mobilizing passions’ that ‘shape fascist action than to a consistent and fully articulated philosophy... At bottom is passionate nationalism’.⁵⁹

He also comes up with a list of these passions that can be very well used by analysts of all fascist and other radical rightist movements:

- a sense of overwhelming crisis beyond the reach of any traditional solutions,
- the primacy of the group, toward which one has duties superior to every right, whether individual or universal, and the subordination of the individual to it,
- the belief that one’s group is a victim, a sentiment that justifies any action without legal or moral limits, against its enemies, both internal and external,

⁵⁷ Robert O. Paxton: *The Anatomy of Fascism*, 8.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.

- dread of the group's decline under the corrosive effects of individualistic liberalism, class conflict, and alien influences,
- the need for closer integration of a purer community, by consent if possible, or by exclusionary violence if necessary,
- the need for authority by natural leaders (always male), culminating in a national chief who alone is capable of incarnating the group's destiny,
- the superiority of the leader's instincts over abstract and universal reason,
- the beauty of violence and the efficacy of will, when they are devoted to the group's success,
- the right of the chosen people to dominate others without restraint from any kind of human or divine law, right being decided by the sole criterion of the group's prowess within a Darwinian struggle.⁶⁰

He keeps writing about groups but, as his examples show, in most cases he means the national community. Paxton gives a broad survey of early twentieth-century European and American movements that can be considered as forerunners of later full-fledged fascist organizations. He presents fascism as a European phenomenon, differentiating among the major phases of its evolution: taking root, getting power and exercising power. Instead of the dominant trend in scholarship to focus on the ideological lineage, he puts the emphasis on the concrete political and social settings. The analysis convincingly proves that a comparative look at fascism's precursors would hardly put Germany first, France is a more likely candidate and the first version of the Ku Klux Klan in the defeated American South in the second half of the 1860s was 'a remarkable preview of the way fascist movements were to function in inter-war Europe'.⁶¹

Gloria Victis

I have also benefited from Wolfgang Schivelbush's *The Culture of Defeat*,⁶² who comes up with a series of refreshing insights. By quoting Reinhart Koselleck, he makes the point for his choice of subject: 'History may in the short term

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁶² Wolfgang Schivelbush: *The Culture of Defeat*. New York, 2004. First published in 2001.

be made by the victors, but historical wisdom is in the long run enriched more by the vanquished... Being defeated appears to be an inexhaustible wellspring of intellectual progress'.⁶³ He also refers to Nietzsche's 1871 warning that great victories pose great dangers and that the triumph of the German Empire would entail the demise of German culture.⁶⁴

Twentieth-century wars namely aim at much more than military victory; the humiliation of the enemy nation is a major target. Consequently, defeat is generally not considered to be just a military affair but can become tantamount to the agony of nation.⁶⁵ Schivelbush compares three cases: the defeat of the American South (1865), the French trauma of 1870–71 and post-World-War-One Germany. A historian of Central European political traumas can best use his list of response-patterns to defeat that he has developed on the basis of a great number of additional case-studies stretching from ancient to contemporary history:

- military defeat is frequently followed by the celebration of the overthrow of the old regime; for a few weeks or months thus defeat is interpreted as liberation;
- this period is sooner or later followed by an awakening: revolutionaries now are referred to as putschists who have stabbed their homeland in the back;
- from this view then it logically follows that the victory was achieved by unsoldierly, illegitimate means (*im Felde unbesiegt*) so the losing side attains dignity. The defeat is not an accepted outcome of the war but an injustice to be rectified;
- the losers in battle can easily turn out to be winners in spirit: the 'savage' victor might be assimilated into the vanquished civilisation;
- defeat can also be interpreted as an act of purification and this process not once attracted the sympathy of some representatives of the victorious nation;
- the feeling of revenge becomes stronger by developing a myth of the strength of the enemy ('it is our honour to have been vanquished by the whole world'). A gentlemanly setting of accounts (*revanche*) gives way to the aim of a complete destruction of the adversary who is the incarnation of evil;

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

- in the longer run, the renewal of the vanquished community might also include learning from the victor as, for example, the French adoption of the Prussian–German models of military and educational institutions or the imitation of America in Germany after 1918 and 1945.⁶⁶

The last methodological aid to be referred to are Hans Ulrich Wehler's views on the relationship between theoretically-founded social history and cultural history. The fourth volume of his monumental *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*⁶⁷ sets an example of how to properly place intellectual, cultural and historical elements into a theory-guided social-economic historical synthesis once the aim is not to construct histories but to reconstruct history. His conceptual triangle of a comprehensive analysis consists of work (economy), power structures (politics) and language (culture). The way he presents interactions among these spheres is illuminating – for the purposes of this article I have used his analysis of the 'intellectual aftermath' of the First World War in Germany.

Hungarian Peculiarities of European Hatred Patterns

With this extensive introduction I wanted to point out that what I was trying to do was not to present a Hungarian problem with some European background but to talk about the *Hungarian peculiarities of European patterns*.

In my view the two key issues of twentieth-century Hungarian history are Trianon (i.e the huge territorial losses after the First World War) and the responsibility for the Hungarian Holocaust. Just as Paxton argues in other cases, I cannot see any direct lineage between hateful anti-Semitism, emerging in Hungary in the aftermath of Trianon, and the anti-Jewish legislation nearly two decades later and the Holocaust. Therefore when we look for the explanation of the eruption of the first huge twentieth-century wave of hatred, that against Jews, in post-World-War-One Hungary, we should focus more on the concrete social–political–economic situation than on the traditions of anti-Semitic thought and politics in Hungary.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁶⁷ Hans Ulrich Wehler: *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*. München, 2003.

Hatred in State Policy

Why was the ire of Horthy's⁶⁸ associates (the 'national government' and the 'national army') primarily aimed at the Hungarian Jewry? First of all, because the dimensions of national disaster were far beyond imagination. Who or what can bring about such a fundamental change in the life of a nation, of a state, taking one-thousand-year-old Hungary to the brink of complete destruction? That force must be of some extreme, rationally hardly conceivable strength. Resurrection is hardly possible without self-examination and atonement, as some kind of a guilt must be definitely lurking in the air. If an individual or a small group is struck to a comparable extent, the first step towards recovery is the ritual of mourning. Mourning and its rituals, funerals allow to express sadness, unhappiness but at the same time acceptance, acknowledgement of the tragic loss. This 'adaptive mourning'⁶⁹ frees the individual or the larger group, community from the obsession with the past and opens up the possibility of contemplating a vision of the future. This adaptive mourning was not a feasible alternative for the Hungarian society after the First World War – no nation in the world would have acknowledged the loss of two thirds of the homeland and more than one third of the national community. Still, also in the lack of 'adaptive mourning' the causes of the tragedy, the culprits had to be determined. To blame the victorious Entente powers or the new neighbours, thus exclusively external factors (like with the Bulgarians⁷⁰), was not a realistic alternative. Namely, in the case of strong movements against them, they were still in a position to impose further losses on the country. There remained one serious option: the national community should find 'some part of itself that it can cut off or remove and then project the guilt onto the amputated part, onto the abject...'.⁷¹ That part of the Hungarian self which became the abject was the 'familiar foreigner', the Hungarian Jewry. This group was sufficiently familiar to be seen as part of the self, and yet suf-

⁶⁸ Miklós Horthy, admiral, a former aid to Emperor Franz Joseph, Hungary's head of state from 1920 to 1944.

⁶⁹ Cf. the respective works by Jörn Riisen and also Jeffrey S. Murer: "Pursuing the Familiar Foreigner: the Resurgence of Antisemitism and Nationalism in Hungary since 1989", University of Illinois Ph. D. thesis, manuscript, 1999.

⁷⁰ Cf.: Attila Pók: "Atonement and Sacrifice: Scapegoats in Modern Eastern and Central Europe", *East European Quarterly*, xxxii (4, Jan. 1999), 531–48. In this volume: 15–32.

⁷¹ Murer: "Pursuing the Familiar Foreigner", 179.

ficiently foreign for exclusion from the new conception of Hungarians. This amputation, unfortunately, turned out to be very concrete, as not very long after the Red Terror of the Hungarian Soviet Republic (that also had Jewish victims, not only Jewish perpetrators⁷²) hundreds of Jews were killed by the White Terror: a completely new phenomenon in Hungary, as politically motivated pogroms demanding a high death toll of Jews were not part of former Jewish-gentile relations in Hungary.⁷³ Let me make the point stronger: it is not the frequently referred to *numerus clausus* law of 1920 (that with the pudicity of the remnants of Hungarian liberalism did not use the word Jew or Israelite when limiting the number of Jewish students in Hungarian higher education) but the anti-Jewish brutality of the White Terror that introduces a qualitative turn in the history of anti-Semitism in Hungary and can be defined as a major step on the road to the Holocaust. *The Holocaust is thus much more connected to nationalism than to traditions of anti-Judaism and modern anti-Semitism.* If we study the anti-Jewish arguments of the period of the Second World War, they have their roots much more in the social, political and economic realities of World War One and post-World-War-One Hungary than in the anti-Judaic intellectual heritage of the nation.

Popular Hatred: *Vox Populi*

One of the most difficult tasks of a historian is to find sources for the reconstruction of the ‘popular mood’. As in connection with the First World War, it is frequently argued that it was not so much irresponsible politicians who dragged the world into a never before seen disaster, but that they only responded to ‘popular demand’, the question is worth studying. Peter Hanák has published a selection of intercepted letters sent by soldiers of the Habsburg monarchy from the front⁷⁴ and his findings are very much in line with

⁷² Cf.: László Karsai: *Holokauszt*. Budapest, 2001, 215.

⁷³ Cf. Murer: “Pursuing the Familiar Foreigner”, 179. György Ránki (ed.): *Magyarország története* [A History of Hungary], 1918–1919, 1919–1945 Budapest, 1976, 397, 1310 f.

⁷⁴ Péter Hanák: “Vox Populi. Intercepted Letters in the First World War”, in idem, *The Garden and the Workshop. Essays on the Cultural History of Vienna and Budapest*. Princeton, New Jersey, 1998, 179–212. For a useful comparison Jean-Pierre Gueno: *1914–1918. Mon papa en guerre. Lettres de poilus, mots d'enfants*. Paris, 2004. For further reading see the bibliography of this book, 92–93.

the results of the most recent research on nationalism tracing the peculiarities of twentieth-century East and Central European nationalisms (Daniel Chirot, Liah Greenfeld). The euphoria of the Great War has permeated most layers of most societies involved. From the personal correspondence of common folk to the articles by nameless journalists to officially distributed flyers,⁷⁵ to statements of prestigious intellectuals,⁷⁶ the tone in the militarised Europe of the late summer of 1914 was everywhere enthusiastically optimistic. This atmosphere, however, in less than a year gradually turned to one of terrible disappointment. The hatred potentials underwent a substantial change. The process certainly reached its peak in late 1918 and 1919 in the defeated countries, primarily Germany. With the domestic unity of the summer of 1914 (*Burgfrieden, union sacrée*) long forgotten, the focus of hatred changed from the enemy nation to the home front. Military leaders blamed the domestic political opposition for destruction ('stab in the back'), soldiers returning from the front blamed those who had never experienced the hell of war, instead they had remained safe in the homeland, and even accumulating wealth. Popular hatred targeted more the domestic political elite than the former enemy. Institutionally this meant the organisation of numerous associations for the representation of the interests of these 'loser' groups,⁷⁷ but some of this discontent is also expressed by the emerging communist parties, their numerous members being recruited from returning prisoners of war. The failure of attempts at radical revolutionary transformation discredited leftist political parties and liberal political values and cleared the way for an outburst of radical anti-Semitism, which combined class hatred with racial hatred. The general tendency, however, was always the resultant of a variety of factors: let me from the point of view of the hatred potential compare twentieth-century Hungarian nationalism to some of its counterparts. Anti-Jewish rhetoric and political action was essential in post-World-War-One Germany, Poland, Romania and Russia just as much as in Hungary, but among Poles, Romanians and Russians, anti-Semitism was a major element in shaping the respective national ideologies already during the three to four decades before the Great War.

⁷⁵ With works like Ernst Lissauer's "Hymn of Hate": "we love as one, we hate as one... we have one foe and one alone – ENGLAND".

⁷⁶ Thomas Mann writes about the war as purification, liberation and enormous hope and shows great empathy for the artists who praised God for the collapse of a peaceful world with which they were so exceedingly fed up. Cf. Lajos Pók: *Thomas Mann világa* [Thomas Mann's world]. Budapest, 1969, 73.

⁷⁷ Like the "Awakeners" in Hungary.

Anti-Semitism was an important factor of pre-World-War-One Austrian politics as well, but in Hungary the integration of exclusionist anti-Semitism into legislation and governmental policy was a new phenomenon. The extent of radical violent attacks on Jews was new in Hungary just as much in Germany.⁷⁸

The point I want to make with this comparison is simple but essential: I think that the experiences of the course and the consequences of the First World War are the major turning point in hatred history. There are no nations with special inclination towards hatred. Jews being targeted as scapegoats, for example, is a general European phenomenon during the later nineteenth and earlier twentieth century. These passions, however, are generally more socially than nationally motivated. In Eastern and Central Europe Polish and Romanian nationalisms are, however, fed by anti-Jewish hatred, in Hungary similar feelings aim at the national minorities – and Jews are assimilating fast.

Jews – Freemasons – Communists

In this respect the frequent references to the Jewish-Freemasonic- Bolshevik conspiracy played a decisive role in the ‘intellectual stimulation’ of the anti-Jewish ire both inside and outside Hungary. Most anti-Semitic treatises published in the aftermath of the Great War refer to freemasonry as the major destructive organisational framework of the domestic traitors of national interests. The most important source of this view was Friedrich Wichtl’s book entitled *World Freemasonry, World Revolution, World Republic* first published in 1919.⁷⁹ This book, together with publications of Karl Heise and similar-minded writers, offered powerful, clearly definable, visible objects of common hatred that could be blamed for all the sufferings of the Great War and the ensuing revolutionary anarchy. The motive of connecting Jews to freemasonry as allies in the struggle for world hegemony was rooted in France’s Third Re-

⁷⁸ Iván T. Berend: “The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism. The Cases of Turn-of-the-Century Poland, Hungary and Romania” in László Karsai and Judit Molnár (eds): *Közdelem az igazságért. Tanulmányok Randolph L. Brabam 80. születésnapjára*. Budapest, 2002, 67–74.

⁷⁹ E.g. *Entente-Freimaurerei und Weltkrieg. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Weltkrieges und um Verständnis der wahren Freimaurerei*. Basel, 1919. For an analysis of respective works with a focus on ‘conspiracy theories’: Johannes Rogalla von Bieberstein: *Der Mythos von der Weltverschwörung 1776-1945*. 2nd edition, Flensburg, 1992.

public with Jews giving the orders and freemasons carrying them out (*Protocols of the Elders of Zion*).⁸⁰

From the point of view of the adaptability of these arguments, it was absolutely negligible that, in spite of the high proportions of Jews among its leaders, the overwhelming majority of Hungarian Jews were not involved in the Hungarian Soviet Republic, and anti-Semitism was widespread among freemasons (especially in Germany). The recovery, the resurrection of the nation, called for clearly definable perpetrators. Countless publications and political statements in post-World-War-One Hungary echoed the sentiments that Jews and freemasons were closest allies of destructive communists.⁸¹ Let me limit myself here to one single quotation from Ottokar Prohászka, perhaps the most influential public personality of the early 1920s who argued: ‘The eyes of numerous people were blindfolded and they did not see the true face of freemasonry. They were told that they (the freemasons) were an innocent, philanthropic association. Now we see that they are an internationalist, defeatist gang that hates the church and ... opened the gates to Jewish infiltration and tramples upon Christian national traditions’.⁸² There seems to be absolutely no historical evidence for these connections, or at least they have never been presented. These views reflect the social psychological phenomenon of enforced attribution. Critical, conflict-loaded situations as the aftermath of the First World War, the period of the Great Depression or the international political situation of 1938–39 are a most fertile hotbed for the creation of scapegoats. The anti-Judaic and anti-Semitic traditions offer a potential to put Jews into the position of the scapegoat. Leszek Kolakowski’s famous formulation is very much to my point: the seemingly harmless, separate, dispersed, in themselves weak elements of anti-Semitism can easily and quickly be combined or blended into an explosive mixture.⁸³ This takes me to what, I think, should be (should have been) the key issue of a Hungarian *Historikerstreit*, the

⁸⁰ Cf. Jacob Katz: *Jews and Freemasons in Europe. 1723–1939*. Cambridge, Mass., 1970; idem, *From Prejudice to Destruction*. Cambridge, Mass., 1980, chapter 11.

⁸¹ Cf.: János Gyurgyák: *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon*. (The Jewish Question in Hungary) Budapest, 2001, 110–116.

⁸² Cited by István Somogyi: *A szabadkőműveltség igazi arcai*. (The True Faces of Freemasonry) Budapest, 1929, 181.

⁸³ Leszek Kolakowski: “Az antiszemiták. Öt semmiképpen sem új tézis, figyelmeztetőül” (The Anti-Semites. Five, Not at All New Points as a Warning) cited by: Péter Kende: *Röpirat a zsidókérdésről*. (A Brochure on the Jewish Question) Budapest, 1989, 146.

Hungarian society's involvement in the implementation of the Holocaust, a debate which were also to address the reception of the anti-Jewish legislation.

The peculiar vacuum situation of the Hungary of 1944, the lack of perspective was a perfect soil for enforced attribution. I am convinced that without German occupation there would have never been deportations on a large scale in Hungary, but once the Germans were in control they did not lack helpers. The most tragic examples of *a fully distorted nationalism* are well documented in Gábor Kádár's recent Ph.D. thesis on the economic exploitation of Hungarian Jews. Let me quote here also only one example: The gendarmes at Kolozsvár railway station – in the course of beating up the Jews to be deported – confiscated part of their luggage with the following 'patriotic' argument: 'you should not take everything to the Germans, something should also be left for the Hungarians'.⁸⁴

My preliminary conclusion at this point is that there is nothing like a national character of anti-Semitic inclination, but there exist crisis situations in which the hatred, scapegoating potential can 'optimally' be manifested in anti-Semitism. The anti-Semitic intellectual potential leads to anti-Jewish action as a result of numerous factors in situations when the tragedy and the sins are most visible, but the causes are most complex and hard to define. In the case of the greatest tragedy of modern Hungarian history, it was the Nazi regime's pressure, then direct intervention that laid down the planks over the quite wide gulf between anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, that blended elements of nationalism and anti-Semitism into a most dangerous mixture.

Old Wine in New Bottle?

Finally, before I come to the conclusion, let me also ask the question: why did new waves of hatred, especially anti-Semitism surface following the next major turning point of Hungarian history, after the transition of 1989–90? If we again utilise the scapegoating theory in our search for the answer, this is quite understandable and logical. Rich literature and numerous empirical investigations prove that the very short-lived euphoria of the summer of 1989 and the

⁸⁴ Gábor Kádár: "A magyarországi Vészkorszak gazdasági vetületei"(Economic Aspects of the Holocaust in Hungary) (manuscript), Debrecen, 2002, 57. The motive also appears in the 2002 Nobel Prize winner Imre Kertész' best known book: *Fateless*. Cf. István Deák's review: "Stranger in Hell", *New York Review of Books* (25 Sept. 2003) 65–7.

spring of 1990 was followed by a substantial disappointment of broad strata of Hungarian society due to the cruelty of the omnipresent market-economy, the declining living standards.⁸⁵ Both society and social sciences had to face the task of understanding the causes of the collapse of the communist system and the roots of social and economic problems emerging after the transition. In spite of the departure of the Soviet troops (whose function as a subject of common hatred was anyway gradually vanishing during the second half of the Kádár-era) no miracle happened. What is even more, paradoxically, for many people the security of a protected cage gave way to the dangers of a free jungle. This is the perfect environment for the proliferation of hated scapegoats: the problems are visible, most powerful and some of them (unemployment, new forms of violent criminality, bottomless poverty) totally unfamiliar. With Soviet-type mind control no longer present, this is the ideal case for enforced attribution, a situation that can well mobilise some segments of Hungarian society.

The objects of hatred can be divided into two major groups: social and national minorities. As to the first group, the respective hateful rhetoric aims at all kinds of exploiters and oppressors: former members of state security, leading politicians of the communist regime just as much as new capitalists (especially bankers with the old distinction [Gottfried Feder] between ‘good’ [*schaffend*, creative] and ‘bad’ [*raffend*, greedy] capital recurring frequently). The national subjects of hatred include hostile great powers (now especially the USA and most recently, since accession, the EU) who present themselves as friends and protectors but in fact ruthlessly subordinate Hungarian interests to their interests. Hatred is also targeting neighbours (especially Romanians, Slovaks and Serbs) who do not grant enough rights to the Hungarian minorities. Finally, but most loudly internal minorities such as resident foreigners, Romas and Jews appear on the horizon of passionate haters in post-communist Hungary. Hateful rhetoric can be the most efficient when these motives are combined into ‘ideal typical’ ‘traitors of the national cause’. Let me again be very

⁸⁵ Cf. e.g. György Csepeli and Tibor Závecz: “Várakozások, remények, félelmek: az Európai Unió képe a magyar közvéleményben”(Expectations, Hopes, Fears: the Image of the European Union in Hungarian Public Opinion), in *Magyarország politikai évkönyve, 1997*, 650–68. For a broad perspective: Rudolf L. Tóké: *Hungary’s Negotiated Revolution. Economic reform, social change and political succession, 1957–1990*. Cambridge and New York, 1996; Geroges Mink and Jean-Charles Szurek: *La grande conversion. Le destin des communistes en Europe de l’Est*. Paris, 1999; John S. Micgiel (ed.): *Perspectives on Political and Economic Transitions after Communism*. New York, 1997.

thrifty with the examples. As early as the beginning of 1990 a new weekly explains that the anti-Semites of 'old Hungary' hated not the capitalist businessman but the 'bespectacled Marxist freemasonic intellectual' who sold Transylvania and brought the communists into power'.⁸⁶ The point about the lack of 'adaptive mourning' is well illustrated with the slogans of the rightist demonstration on 27 October 1996 as reported. This was the day when a corruption scandal involving socialist and liberal politicians of the then ruling coalition (Tocsik scandal) was also on the agenda of a MIÉP (the radically xenophobic Party of Hungarian Justice and Life) rally commemorating 1956. The crowd chanted: 'Down with Pető!' (the leader of the liberals), 'Down with Horn!' (the leader of the socialists), 'Down with Trianon!' (the symbol of Hungary's defeat after the First World War).⁸⁷

The hateful approach to minorities has been well analysed by social psychologists. Numerous points in this literature can be well used for understanding other kinds of hatreds as well. Edward Said's famous *Orientalism*, for example, introduced the concept of 'colonising view'; his conceptual framework that was originally based on an investigation of Westerners' prejudiced views of the Orient.

This concept can be very useful in summarising the peculiarities of modern European hatreds in general and twentieth-century Hungarian hatred in particular. The views of the haters give more insight into the identities and peculiarities of the haters than those of the hated. The hater transfers all his or her failures, unresolved problems, deficiencies onto the hated group that is perceived as homogeneous, non-differentiated. This hated group can be an inferior minority as the Roma (a symbol of criminality, distorted body and soul, timeless threat to the peace and security of consolidated societies) or the superior wealthy capitalist, especially Jews, a symbol of greedy cosmopolitanism.⁸⁸ The images of the hated minorities are very often projections of the most disliked qualities of the majorities' own selves.

⁸⁶ *Szent Korona*, (21 Feb. 1990). Cited by László Karsai (ed.): *Kirekesztők*. (Excluders) Budapest, 1992, 150–51.

⁸⁷ Murer: "Pursuing the Familiar Foreigner", 12.

⁸⁸ Cf.: György Csepeli: "Kinek a képe?" (Whose Image?) in György Csepeli and Antal Örkeny: *Gyűlölet és politika*. (Hatred and Politics) Minoritas Alapítvány Kisebbségkutató Intézete, Budapest, 2002, 192–9.

Conclusion

For the formulation of my final conclusion let me invite the Hungarian political scientist, István Bibó to help. Some time during 1943 or early 1944 he wrote the following: ‘Collective hysteria is a state of the whole community and it is useless to separate, to remove the visible carriers of hysteria, if in the meantime the preconditions and basic situations conducive to hysteria survive, the traumas experienced at the beginning of the hysteria do not dissipate, the phoney situation at the core of the hysteria is not resolved. Even if we destruct all “evil” people, the community within one generation will again reproduce the madmen of hysteria, its beneficiaries, its hangmen...’.⁸⁹

With my investigations presented here, I would like to contribute to the development of the awareness of the potential of the evil in us, as my investigations are far from being abstract academic discourses. I feel worried about the fast proliferation of hate and hate speech in current Hungarian public and private life. As a cure and prevention, a look at the roots and nature of hatred and their open discussion can hopefully be of some use.

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⁸⁹ István Bibó: “Az európai egyensúlyról és békéről” (On Balance and Peace in Europe), in idem: *Válogatott tanulmányok* (Selected Essays), I, Budapest, 1986, 376.

How to Explain the Enemy? The Making of a British Army Manual on Hungary, 1943–1944

Ever since the eighteenth century, the British example has often provided a touchstone for Hungarian thinkers and politicians when writing and debating the problems of their own economy, society and politics. Beginning with György Arankás' little book, published in 1790, which compared the British and Hungarian systems of administration, through to the letter of ex-Governor Miklós Horthy, written in May 1945, which beseeched the British ruler to represent Hungarian interests by reference to the intellectual kinship of the two nations, a conviction in the kinship of the two nations was manifested in a diversity of different contexts.⁹⁰ In respect of the twentieth cen-

⁹⁰ György Aranka: *Az angliai és magyar igazgatás egybevetése* [A Comparison of English and Hungarian Administration]. Kolozsvár, 1790. See also, Győző Concha: "Az angolos irány irodalmunkban a múlt század végén" (The English Orientation in Our Literature at the End of the Last Century), in *Hatvan év tudományos mozgalmi közölt.* Budapest, 1928, vol. 1, 213–27. On the beginnings of British–Hungarian parallels in Hungarian historical thought, see Ágnes R. Várkonyi: *A pozitívista történetiszemlélet a magyar történetírásban* [Positivism in Hungarian historiography]. vol 2, Budapest. 1973, 471. Horthy's letter was published in Éva Haraszti (ed.): *Horthy Miklós dokumentumok tükrében* [Miklós Horthy in the Mirror of Documents]. Budapest, 1993, 717. Sándor Fest and István Gál published extensively on British political and cultural influences in Hungary. See I. Gál: *Magyarország, Anglia és Amerika (különös tekintettel a szláv világra* [Hungary, England and America with Special Regard to the Slavic World]. Budapest, 1945, and S. Fest: "Anglo–Hungarian Historical and Cultural Relations", *Angol Filológiai Tanulmányok*, 4. 1969. The most recent works on the topic are Tibor Frank: *The British Image of Hungary 1865–1870*. Budapest, 1970, and Géza Jeszenszky: *Az elveszett presztízs. Magyarország megítélésének megváltozása Nagy-Britanniában* [The Lost Prestige, the Change of Hungary's Image in Great Britain], 1894–1918. Budapest, 1986. On British–Hungarian relations during the Second World War, see Elisabeth Barker: *British Policy towards South-East Europe in the Second World War*. London, 1976; Gyula Juhász: *Magyar–brit titkos tárgyalások 1943-ban* [Hungarian–British Secret Negotiations in 1943]. Budapest, 1978; William Deakin, Elisabeth Barker and Jonathan Chadwick (eds.): *British Political and Military Strategy in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe in 1944*. New York, 1988; András D. Bán: "British Foreign Policy towards East Central Europe and Hungary, 1939–1947", in Ignác Romsics (ed.): *20th Century Hungary and the Great Powers*. New York, 1995, 171–183.

tury, the position taken by Great Britain was of decisive importance for the fate of Hungary and, from the point of view of the European balance of power, Britain itself could not be indifferent to what was happening in the heart of Europe.

A small but perhaps not insignificant contribution to the topic of British–Hungarian relations is one episode reflecting the attitudes and practical policy of Great Britain towards Eastern and Central Europe during the Second World War: the birth of a military handbook on Hungary.

1. British Foreign Policy after the First World War

Following the peace settlement ending the First World War, Britain did not show any sustained political interest in Eastern and Central Europe.⁹¹ The fate of the peoples and states of the region did not figure among the major considerations of British foreign policy makers.⁹² Nevertheless, among the many factors that resulted in Britain’s decision to abandon its policy of appeasement in March 1939 and then to enter the Second World War, it was Hitler’s expansion in the region that proved crucial. Nevertheless, as we know from Elisabeth Baker’s and András Bán’s research, there was no real long-term British policy towards the region until the summer of 1943.

As far as Hungary was concerned, Winston Churchill’s speech of 5 September, 1940, clearly revealed the British position. Unfair, unjust and unreasonable as the Trianon treaty might have been, such *Diktats* as the Second Vienna Award could never be recognized. The Hungarian minister in London, György Barcza, was officially informed that should Hungary allow German

⁹¹ András D. Bán: “*British Foreign Policy towards East Central Europe and Hungary, 1939–1947*”, 171.

⁹² A specialist in the field gives a succinct summary of post-First World War British attitude towards the region: ‘As early as 1922 there were signs that Britain was having to take the road of the United States and leave Europe „to stew in its own juice”. In Locarno in 1925 there were clear expressions of British disinterest in Central European affairs. It was, however, only at the time of the Great Depression that the Foreign Office abandoned all plans for the political or economic reconstruction of the Danubian region and gave way to German expansion.’ See Gábor Bátonyi: *Britain and Central Europe 1918–1933*. Oxford, 1999, 4.

troops to march through her territory against an ally of Britain, this would be considered an unfriendly gesture, and that an attack on one of Britain's allies would be understood as a *casus belli*.

Nevertheless, even though Hungary joined the German attack on Yugoslavia in early April 1941, prompting Prime Minister Teleki's suicide, it was not until December that the British declared war on Hungary. The delay may partly be explained by Churchill's desire to maintain goodwill in the Danubian basin in the hope of being able to lead it towards a confederate reorganization. By the summer of 1943, however, the prospect of victory over Germany was apparent, and pondering on events had to give way to the concrete planning of them. Consultations with the American and Soviet governments made it clear that forcing the withdrawal from the war of one of Germany's allies should be a first priority. The extent to which Britain was to be involved in military actions in the region was still uncertain, although this paper will show that the deployment of British land forces was seriously considered. At the same time, the account which follows will also shed light on the different approaches towards the Horthy regime pursued within the ranks of the contemporary British political and intellectual elite.

2. Propaganda and Policy

In order to coordinate propaganda activities against enemy countries, a secret organizational unit was established in Britain in August 1941 called the Political Warfare Executive (PWE), which was nominally under the supervision of the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office. Its policy was made by a ministerial commission consisting of the heads of the Foreign Office and of the Ministries of Information and of Economic Warfare. The tasks belonging to the PWE increased with the progress of the war, but their efficient discharge was hindered by constant shifts of competence and authority. In March 1942, the ministerial committee was dissolved. In turn, the Minister of Foreign Affairs was made responsible for policy and for the strategic decisions of the commission, while the Minister of Information was put in charge of their execution. The units dealing with individual countries were responsible for developing action plans, taking into account local characteristics.

It was in August 1943 that the issue of the so-called 'zone-handbooks' was transferred from the War Office to the PWE.⁹³ The original idea was to provide British soldiers entering the various European countries during the war with materials giving a comprehensive picture of these countries, directing their attention to local customs and traditions, and thus encouraging the relevant populations to look upon British troops not as invaders but as liberators. The collection of various expressions in the local language, to be used in everyday situations, was also intended to facilitate friendship between the population and the British soldiers. In addition to handbooks for Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Romania and Yugoslavia, a handbook of this kind was also prepared on Hungary. A great deal of material on all these countries was collected for the manuals and eventually two series of publications were decided upon. One was to be issued for the officers, of a larger format, with varying length but generally consisting of two to three volumes, containing all the important data on the country, the territory in question, and analyzing and summarizing all its essential problems. The other series was designed for the lower ranks, as comprising handbooks of a smaller format of 70–80 pages each, intended to be straightforward and readable.

3. How to deal with Hungary?

The manuscript of the first volume of the handbook on Hungary, which extended to nearly 200 pages, was completed by the autumn of 1943. Throughout this year semi-official talks between the representatives of the Hungarian government and oppositional groups were conducted in Istanbul, Stockholm and Switzerland over the conditions for a cease-fire and a separate peace.⁹⁴ Making use of the material placed at his disposal by the Foreign Office, the greater part of the text was written by the prestigious British historian, A. J. P. Taylor, a good friend of Mihály Károlyi, the well-known Hungarian democratic politician in exile and president of the Hungarian Republic in 1918–19. Taylor was considered an expert on the topic as a result of his comprehensive

⁹³ The National Archives: Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), FO 898/483.

⁹⁴ Gyula Juhász (ed.): *Magyar–brit titkos tárgyalások 1943-ban*. Budapest, 1978.

book on the Habsburg Monarchy published in 1942.⁹⁵ Fourteen chapters discussed Hungary's geography, history, the ethnic and social composition of its population, its system of government, political parties, problems of religion, education and jurisdiction, with detailed information on social insurance, health care, the press, radio and so on.⁹⁶

It was plainly considered important to publish the handbook as soon as possible, for the manuscript was sent to press immediately, and on 15 October the PWE forwarded the first proof to the Central Department of the Foreign Office for comment. C.A. Macartney, Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, and known for his works on Hungarian history, was accordingly asked to give his expert view on it. Macartney's opinion was utterly devastating. In his view, the sections on history and politics reflected biased, negative and personal opinions of Horthy's Hungary and the current political leadership of the country, and the data published in the book was frequently not based on the most recently available sources.⁹⁷ The responsible department at the Foreign Office accepted Macartney's view unequivocally. According to Frank K. Roberts, head of the department, Taylor's standpoint was so biased that it might easily have had results entirely contrary to the handbook's original intention. Roberts's memorandum, dated 11 December, stated that the text submitted by Macartney offered facts without any ideological colouring, and although at times it criticized Horthy as sharply as Taylor's manuscript, it supported its statements in a more balanced and convincing manner. He also considered it a point worth making that, should Taylor's text be published, it would probably be thought to represent the official standpoint of the government which might even give rise to policy conflicts within the British government.⁹⁸

Differences in opinion – as reflected by the surviving files – generally touched upon the question as to which social class or layer in Hungary should be considered as most sympathetic to Britain? The main goal of propaganda activities towards Hungary was, of course, to separate her from Germany, so it was equally important to figure out Germany's real and potential enemies in the country. An internal Foreign Office note, dated 5 September, 1941, (al-

⁹⁵ A.J.P.Taylor: *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809–1918. A History of the Austrian Empire and of Austria–Hungary*. London, 1942.

⁹⁶ PRO WO 220/250

⁹⁷ PRO FO 371/34499/C 14618.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

though unsigned, its arguments and style suggest the authorship of R. W. Seton-Watson) argued that in the aftermath of Hungary's entry into the war with Russia, 'the popularity of the pro-Nazi Movement in the country has been passed, because that portion of the Hungarian people which supported it has realised that its Social Reform programme has borne no fruit and its only real result has been the strengthening of the German minority and the dragging of Hungary at the coat tails of Germany.' The Hungarian Nazis were not credited – so the note went on – for the achievements in territorial revision; their popularity was based instead, as in Austria, on a 'Miesmacherei'. Consequently, 'There is a good basis of discontented Hungarians on whom an appeal on a Social Reform programme might have considerable effect.' The argument continued, indicating that, 'To the discontented Nazis must be added the far more discontented remnants of the Small Farmers' Party and among the intellectuals what is left of the liberal element in the country.'

At the same time, Seton-Watson thought it appropriate to attack the 'dominating class' in Hungary. Even if this included some pro-British elements, he explained, the feelings of its members were 'superficial and snobbish' and they had no influence on Hungarian policy.⁹⁹ In another policy proposal of January 1942, it was explained:

Emphasis would be laid on a far-reaching social programme, treating Hungary as essentially a Peasant State... every effort would be made to divert attention and interest from racial and territorial disputes to social and economic problems of reform, and to the need for cooperation with the neighbouring Danubian states and on their essential community of interests in spite of out-of-date revisionist quarrels.¹⁰⁰

An official of the Foreign Office, Mr Murray, seemed to show more understanding of the Hungarian situation than Seton-Watson. First, he refuted the value of the peasants: 'the radical peasant interests referred to in Seton-Watson's paper are not organised in a body in sympathy with us, but adhere to the Arrow Cross – a Nazi organisation.' Murray also attached more significance to addressing liberal circles. He wrote, 'there is a second stratum of moderate elements which might be called liberal, who are opposed to the Ar-

⁹⁹ PRO FO 898/158/67738.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

row Cross and are perhaps our truest sympathisers and potential allies.¹⁰¹ An extensive note, also of February 1942, showed much more insight. As to the social layer to be targeted, it remarked:

the cleavage between pro-British and pro-German is largely a vertical one, running clean through Hungarian society from top to bottom. This is one reason which makes an effective appeal extraordinarily difficult. We have on our side Legitimists, High Tories, Kurucz squires, and their cousins in Government offices and the Army, business men, Jewish intellectuals, Socialists, Communists, peasant leaders, etc. The special interests of these various tendencies are often diametrically opposed, and if we back some particular cause because it is agreeable to one section of our supporters, we may find that it alienates another.¹⁰²

The note gives a profound insight into the considerations shaping British policy at this time. First, it identifies the points where German policy, as opposed to British, might be more attractive to Hungarians. Secondly, it comes up with a most interesting and well balanced policy proposal as to how British policy might be more appealing:

The pro-German case against us is that if we win we shall once again bring about the dismemberment of Hungary, alternatively or in addition, that we shall Bolshevize Central Europe, including Hungary, and thirdly, that we represent a form of anti-social Judeo-capitalism, an antiquated social system which contrasts dismally with the blessings of the New Order. The latter will bring Hungary an assured market, with elimination of Jewish exploitation... The things which we must not identify ourselves with are... the following (reading from right to left):

Legitimism

High Toryism and positive support of the 'feudal' idea, large landed interests, etc.

Big business and capitalist interests.

The names of Liberalism and democracy. Each of these has been so twisted in Hungary as to bear today an unfortunate con-

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 3 February, 1942.

¹⁰² Ibid. 17 February, 1942.

notation: 'Liberalism', that of unrestricted Jewish exploitation of the peasant and worker, 'democracy', a mask for Czech hegemony in the Danube basin.

Jews in general.

Anything containing more than a cautious and qualified mention of the word international.

'Octobristm', i.e. the Karolyi regime of 1918–19. Communism or Bolshevism...

We should deny to the full extent that we are able truthfully to do, that we plan to put Hungary under the tutelage either of Russia or of Czechoslovakia, or that we propose to assign Magyar territories to Hungary's neighbours.... The main line should be that we do not want, and it is not in our interest to see Hungary which is weak, demoralized or untrue to her best national traditions... We also want that Hungary to be solid, which requires social justice, a country in which the Magyar peasant and workman finds a real national home.

Actual detailed advocacy of land reform should be treated rather cautiously, but we can always say that we have an interest in a solid, self-respecting, independent and prosperous class of peasantry... But we must avoid putting the whole landowning class and their allies against us by rash statements.

We should not mention the Jews at all except to say that on the one hand we want a national Hungary, on the other hand, a tolerant Hungary – appeal to Hungary's traditions real or imagined.

As we will see, many of the views expressed here found their way into the final version of the manuscript.

4. 'In a General Way we Try to Tell the Truth...'

At the beginning of 1944 a draft of the original manuscript was given to Owen O'Malley, the last British Ambassador to Hungary before the British declaration of war. He also considered Taylor's text to be of a propagandist tone, especially in respect of its historical survey. After the text had come into

his hands, he contacted Elisabeth Barker, who was responsible for the topic within the PWE, for further information. She told him that the guidelines provided by the Foreign and War Offices relating to the handbook had remained at the level of generalities. In a memorandum prepared for the Foreign Office, O'Malley quoted Elisabeth Barker: 'In a general way we try to tell the truth but having regard to our friendship with Czechoslovakia and Russia and the rather leftist outlook of the British government, we have given the booklet a bit of a twist to the left.' He then warned the reader:

It is not at all certain whether if and when British troops enter Hungary, Hungary will be enemy or quasi-neutral or quasi-friendly soil. It must be assumed that the booklet which will be carried by every soldier will get into Hungarian hands. In its present form the political paragraphs are unnecessarily wounding to Hungarian sentiment. The same ground could be covered in different and much less injurious words.¹⁰³

A draft of the text, modified by Macartney, dated 1 January 1944, was prepared for the PWE by the Central Department of the Foreign Office. Accepting the text in general terms, the Central Department thought it nevertheless advisable to highlight the following:

- Since 1919 Hungary had been governed not by the big landowners but much rather by smallholders and clerks. A great many of these had lost their land or jobs as a consequence of the treaty of Trianon.
- The influence of the social democrats and other opposition parties was much greater than followed from the proportion of their representation in parliament.
- The range of people exercising an influence on political life could continue to widen before British troops arrive in Hungary.
- In Hungarian political life national considerations must be taken into account at least to the same extent that class conflicts merited attention.
- If possible, taking sides in relation to the rightness of the re-annexation of Hungarian territories must be avoided, for it could only lead to abortive debates.

¹⁰³ PRO, FO 371/39269 (1944, file No. 204).

On 4 February the PWE expressed its views in a lengthy memorandum. In general terms it agreed to the publication of the material put together by Macartney and the Research and Press Service of the Foreign Office rather than of Taylor's text. It only considered the part dealing with national minorities to be wrong in its approach. In the opinion of the PWE the text approved by the Foreign Office was too approving of Hungarian policy towards the nationalities before the First World War and in its treatment of the issue of territorial revision. It judged the description given of the bloodshed in Újvidék (Novi Sad) and its environs at the beginning of 1942 to be particularly wrong. (In the course of January 1942, thousands of civilians fell victim to atrocities carried out by Hungarian military and police forces in these recently re-annexed Hungarian territories.) The PWE disapproved of the manuscript's presentation of this tragic event as the result of only a single irresponsible decision.¹⁰⁴

Macartney essentially accepted these objections and suggested the compromise that no evaluation should be made in respect of the territorial losses incurred by the Treaty of Trianon. The final version printed in March reflected the concerns of the PWE and tried throughout to avoid radical views. Thus, for instance, the historical part unequivocally condemned Hungarian nationality policy during the time of the Dual Monarchy (1867–1918) and considered Hungary's participation in the First World War to be the logical outcome of that policy. At the same time, it viewed Hungary's alliance with Germany as a necessary act against Slavonic influence. With regard to Trianon, it only pointed out that territorial revision had become the centre of Hungarian policy and that this had rendered impossible peaceful co-operation with the countries in South-Eastern Europe. It was not easy and required a highly developed sense of diplomacy to describe the role played by Hungary in the Second World War (for the book might find its way into the hands of those for whom it was not intended). Soldiers sent there had to be furnished with information which accepted Hungary as the potential ally of the West while, at the same time, unequivocally condemning her entry into the war against the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁵

The second volume of the handbook, in length similar to the first, was completed in May. It described the economic structure and situation of Hun-

¹⁰⁴ PRO FO 371/34499/66960.

¹⁰⁵ PRO FO 371/34499/66960 174-175.

gary in a comprehensive and highly informed fashion. The circumstances surrounding the creation of this volume are not known to us, but on the basis of the recollections of Elisabeth Barker and F.K. Roberts,¹⁰⁶ it is probable that it was put together from material collected by the Research and Press Service of the Foreign Office. In June, the work was supplemented by the publication of a volume containing maps. Finally, a Hungarian ‘Who’s Who’ with several hundred names was published at the beginning of 1945. It was prepared under the supervision of A.J. P. Taylor, by the 23-year old daughter of the well-known Hungarian architect, László Lajtha, Erika de Bosdari. A former translator and secretary of the British Press Agency, Britanova, in Hungary she had left the country after the death of Pál Teleki.¹⁰⁷ The bulky character of the handbook, now extending to four volumes, comprehension of which often called for some preliminary reading and knowledge, rendered it, however, unsuitable for all ranks. In line with the original plan, therefore, a pocket-book version based on the handbook was considered necessary. This was duly published in November 1944.¹⁰⁸

British troops did not, of course, go to Hungary but that possibility seemed quite likely when the pocket-book was printed. Even so, the handbook and especially the story of the making of both its complete and abridged versions, is a revealing source for historians, since it distils what was known about Hungary by the leading political bodies in 1943–44, and their opinions concerning the country. The history of this manual on Hungary also shows that British foreign policy makers wanted to be ready for any possible turn of the war. Indeed, until the very last moment they did not fully exclude the possibility of British military intervention with land troops in the Carpathian Basin. Except for the ‘Who’s Who’ volume, we have no evidence as to how the books were used, or indeed if they were used at all, by the British members of the Allied Control Commission.¹⁰⁹

Let me conclude on a slightly sarcastic tone, not alien to the British style of making politics. In March 1951, the last pre-war British minister to Budapest,

¹⁰⁶ The interview with F.K. Roberts was conducted in London in November 1984.

¹⁰⁷ The interview with Erika de Bosdari was conducted in London in December 1984.

¹⁰⁸ Excerpts of the pocket-book version were published by Klára Majoros: “Mit tegyen és mit ne tegyen az angol katoná Magyarországon 1944-ben? [What a British Soldier Should and Should Not Do in Hungary in 1944?]”, in Ferenc Glatz (ed.): *Az 1944. év története*. Budapest, 1984, 62–63.

¹⁰⁹ At the end of July 1945 the Foreign Office still had in store 450 copies of the Hungarian Handbook: PRO FO 898/485/A.

Sir Owen O'Malley, wrote the following to 'Elemér' Macartney: 'It beats me how any Central European could hope that frankness on both sides was a practicable thing where England was concerned... HMG never showed any comprehension of Hungary's nature as a state or nation or of her problems, nor any disposition to be frank with Hungary.'¹¹⁰ The story of the handbook does not fully support this point but does not fully refute it either.

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Hungarian Cultural Centre London,
School of Slavonic and East European Studies,
University College London, 2004. 247–258*

¹¹⁰ Cited by Gábor Bátonyi: *Britain and Central Europe*, 225.

Germans, Hungarians and the Destruction of Hungarian Jewry

This article discusses some aspects of German and Hungarian responsibility for the unprecedented tragedy of modern Hungarian history: the deportation and murder of hundreds of thousands of Jewish Hungarians.¹¹¹

Before turning to the actual topic, two preliminary remarks that help clarify the approach and method applied here seem to be necessary.

(1) I share the view (as described for example by the Hungarian writer Imre Kertész¹¹²) that the Holocaust is perhaps the most memorable event since the crucifixion, and that the flames of the Holocaust came close to destroying what we can describe as modern civilization.

(2) My second preliminary remark brings me to the method I apply in this chapter: Elie Wiesel says¹¹³ that scholarship can have no vocabulary for the horror of Auschwitz. Historical scholarship can shed light on the number of victims and analyse the related political manoeuvres in the foreground and in the background, but it has no key to the essence of that tragedy. The history of anti-Semitism prior to the Holocaust can be studied with the traditional methods of economic, social, political and intellectual history but historians working after the Holocaust can hardly do with that; seemingly ahistorically, they have to look for the antecedents of the later tragedy by utilizing, among others, the findings of social psychology. On the basis of this consideration I apply the social psychological concept of scapegoating in my present investigation.

It was mainly Allport, Heider and Lewin who in their works on group dynamics and prejudices extensively dwelt on this issue.¹¹⁴ The analysis of the

¹¹¹ Very consciously I use the term Jewish Hungarians and not Hungarian Jews in order to emphasize that Jews – just as Catholics, Lutherans or Calvinists – are one of the denominations in Hungary and not a race or other segregated group.

¹¹² Cf. e.g. Imre Kertész: *A holocaust mint kultúra. Három előadás* [The Holocaust as Culture – Three Lectures]. Budapest, Századvég, 1993.

¹¹³ Cf. Ellie Wiesel: *Against Silence. The Voice and Vision of Ellie Wiesel*, ed. Irving Abrahamson, New York, Holocaust Library, 1985.

¹¹⁴ Cf. the excellent study of Ferenc Pataki: *Bűnbaképzési folyamatok a társadalomban* [Scapegoating in Society]. in id., *Rendszerváltás után: Társadalomlélektani terepszemle* [After the

behaviour of smaller and larger groups shows that whenever tensions of any kind accumulate, there also appears the demand for finding a scapegoat (be it an individual or a group) who is presented as the ultimate cause of all troubles. The prevailing attitude towards the scapegoat in the group is violent. Both individual and group scapegoats serve for transferring responsibility: a well-selected scapegoat might ease tensions. Responsibility, however, can be defined from at least three points of view: it can be legally interpreted (this is not unambiguous either, as the formally perfect civil and penal codes of dictatorships can serve absolute injustice) but also understood in a moral or historical–political sense. Scapegoats are easily born in situations like that – especially when not only legal norms but moral and historical–political values change frequently as well. The less definable responsibility is and the less responsibilities in the legal, moral and historical–political sense of the word overlap, the easier it is for scapegoats to be born. Scapegoats are also important as objects of common hatred when radical political mass movements aiming at dictatorial rule use the hostility towards a group or a person as a mobilizing force for easy manipulation. Scapegoating, of course, is not a legal procedure; therefore the measures and sanctions taken against scapegoats cannot be legally regulated either – which might have tragic consequences.

After these lengthy preliminary remarks the main issue this chapter will address is the relationship between the various forms and stages of Hungarian anti-Semitism and the destruction of the Hungarian Jewry – to what extent is there a continuity, a direct connection between them? Did anti-Semitism necessarily lead to the Holocaust in Hungary?

Anti-Semitism has always been a kind of a seismograph sensitively showing when the accumulation of social, economic and interethnic tensions reached critical dimensions. In the Hungary of the early 1880s the anti-Semitic ideological motives, which had already existed for a long time, were synthesized into the groundwork of a political movement, then a party, and this fact reflected a qualitative change in major economic and social processes. In the political climate created by the 1873 economic crisis, the impoverished, indebted, declining Hungarian gentry considered the Jews as obstacles to their own ‘modernization’, as threats to the ‘organic’ national development. Istóczy, a leading figure of the Hungarian anti-Semitism of the time said in the Hun-

Change of Political Systems: A Social Psychological Perspective]. Budapest, Scientia Humana, 1993, 83–126.

garian Parliament in March 1881: ‘The Jewish problem is not a religious issue, it is a social, national, economic, political and first of all a racial question.’¹¹⁵ His Anti-Semitic Party (founded in 1883) was present from 1884 to 1892 in Parliament and is in fact the first factor in modern Hungarian party politics which in its programme and activity subordinates the questions related to Hungary’s constitutional, legal status in the Habsburg Monarchy to social and economic issues. The party’s short-lived success can perhaps be best explained by the fact that its leaders strongly sensed the short- and long-term changes inherent in the decline of big segments of the middle layers of the Hungarian nobility. Instead of a critical self-examination – unlike the great figures of Hungarian liberalism – they transferred responsibility onto the Jewish scapegoat. The social psychological phenomenon of organizing movements by offering a well-defined object of common hatred to potential members is at work here. Still, this first major anti-Semitic upsurge in Hungarian history failed quite quickly because the dominant trend of Hungarian liberalism considered assimilating Jews as allies in the actual and potential conflicts between Hungarians and the national minorities of the country in the struggle for maintaining the political and cultural supremacy of Hungarians in multi-ethnic Hungary.

The next, most critical, juncture in the growth of anti-Semitism in Hungary is the aftermath of World War I when – according to the argumentation of contemporary anti-Semites – it turned out that in spite of the ‘generous liberal assimilationist policy’ Jews had a leading role in the anti-national communist Hungarian Soviet republic and this contributed to the substantial Hungarian territorial losses, to the ‘Trianon disaster’. This argumentation points out that there was something basically wrong with the Hungarian liberalism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I have chosen two case studies from 1920 to illustrate how even most self-critical, intellectually high-level analyses of the Hungarian national tragedy after World War I also led to presenting Jews as scapegoats. The first case study is the most influential book in twentieth-century Hungarian political literature. Under the title ‘Three Genera-

¹¹⁵ Quoted in: *Zsidókérdés, asszimiláció, antiszemitizmus. Tanulmányok a zsidókérdésről a huszadik századi Magyarországon* [Jewish Question, Assimilation, Anti-Semitism. Studies on the Jewish Question in Twentieth-Century Hungary]. Budapest, 1984, 18.

tions'¹¹⁶ it aimed at pointing out the 'deeper-lying' causes of Hungary's post-World War I tragedy. The author, the 37-year-old Vienna archivist and historian, Gyula Szekfű (well known by that time for his realistic book on Ferenc Rákóczi's exile years which among extreme nationalists earned him the label of a 'traitor' to the sacred Hungarian traditions) found the causes of Hungary's tragedy mainly in the series of futile attempts at the liberal transformation of Hungary. Three generations were misled by the illusions of Western liberalism which could not take root in Hungary. The backbone of the Hungarian nation, the traditional Hungarian middle class, turned out to be a loser in the emerging liberal market economy – no indigenous Hungarian bourgeoisie could develop and the economic-cultural gap was filled by the alien Jewish upper and middle class. The liberal state did not care about the impoverished layers. This unhealthy development of Hungarian society led to a power vacuum after World War I, to the revolutions which (rather than the military defeat of the monarchy) caused the loss of two-thirds of Hungary's pre-war territory. The result of the attempt at the implementation of liberal principles in Hungary was a total failure: Hungarian national interests were pushed into the background, and the non-Hungarian national minorities and especially the Jews were gaining ground. A careful reading of the book shows that Szekfű blamed more the Hungarian liberals who gave way to the Jews than the Jews themselves. Nevertheless, the Hungarian public opinion of the 1920s concentrated on the anti-Semitic implications of his argumentation, i.e. blaming the Jews for the Hungarian national catastrophe. This interpretation could have the fatal function of mobilizing anti-Semitic feelings. In his book Szekfű devotes a special chapter to those tendencies in late nineteenth – early twentieth-century Hungarian political and intellectual life which – one way or another – were in opposition to the dominant liberalism. He deals quite a lot with the so-called bourgeois radicals who, from a leftish platform, criticized pre-World War I Hungarian political regimes. They studied modern French, English and American sociology and wanted to apply their newly acquired intellectual arsenal for working out a plan for the modernization of Hungarian society. They concentrated their attacks on the 'feudal-clerical' reactionary forces, the 'noble-plutocratic' class rule which, in their interpretation, was a peculiar kind of scapegoat.

¹¹⁶ Gyula Szekfű: *Három nemzedék* [Three Generations]. Budapest, Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1920. Reprinted with an introduction by Ferenc Glatz, AKV–Maceneas, Budapest, 1989.

Oszkár Jászi, the leading figure of this group, was forced into exile (to Vienna) after World War I and in the same year as Szekfű he also published a book on the causes of Hungary's post-World War I tragedy. His *Hungarian Calvary, Hungarian Resurrection*¹¹⁷ also addresses the Jewish problem. As different as his personality and the framework of his analysis might be, at this crucial point he seemingly gets very close to Szekfű's conclusions. According to his argumentation the deepest root of the problem was that real liberalism could not gain ground in Hungary 'as the noble-plutocratic class-rule was unable to do any organisational and creative work'. The Hungarian soul turned out to be sterile and the thinning ranks of the army of culture were increasingly filled by aliens, above all Jews, 'which in turn led to a disgusting mixture of feudalism and usury'.¹¹⁸ Szekfű thus blames a rootless liberalism imposed on Hungary, whereas Jászi blames the lack of real liberalism for the enfeeblement of Hungarian society. Still, it follows from both argumentations that part of a successful therapy of the fatally sick Hungarian society should be to set borders to, to limit Jewish presence in Hungarian economic, social and cultural life.

A practical implementation of this demand was the *numerus clausus* law of 1920.¹¹⁹ Szekfű and Jászi, of course, had nothing in common with the radical right-wing students and politicians who argued in favour of the limitation of the number of Jewish students at universities, but it was quite impossible to keep anti-Semitism within moderate bounds.

The *numerus clausus* law was only the tip of the iceberg of this second major upsurge of anti-Semitism in Hungary. In his excellent monograph,¹²⁰ Rolf Fischer lists numerous examples from various fields of public life for the policy of dissimilation on national and local level. He mentions Prime Minister Pál Teleki's 1921 proposal of a separate labour service for Jews who cannot be drafted for regular military service or a decision of a chief judge in a village not very far from Budapest (Derecske) who, in 1922, when refusing to grant permission for a Jewish entrepreneur to start an industry, argued as follows: 'The request will be refused because on the territory of truncated Hungary the

¹¹⁷ Oszkár Jászi: *Magyar Kálvária, Magyar feltámadás* [Hungarian Calvary, Hungarian Resurrection]. Vienna, Bécsi Magyar Kiadó, 1920. Reprinted Munich, Auróra, 1969.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 154.

¹¹⁹ Passed by the Hungarian Parliament on 26 September 1920 as Act1920:XXV.

¹²⁰ Rolf Fischer: *Entwicklungsstufen des Antisemitismus in Ungarn, 1987–1939*, Südosteuropäische Arbeiten 85, Munich, R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1988.

primary task of officials is to guarantee the living conditions of Hungarians. If he granted the request of a member of a different race, a chief judge would act against his obligations.¹²¹ A failed therapy again: the re-emergence of anti-Semitic views – as a peculiar kind of seismograph – shows that the accumulation of social, economic and political tensions had again reached a critical level.

Though by the late 1920s and early 1930s anti-Semitic views and movements were – parallel with the gradual recovery of the country – pushed back, if one searches for the changing role of anti-Semitism in Hungarian society, there is an obvious, striking difference between the pre- and the post-World War I period. Whereas before the war anti-Semitism was against the main trend of Hungarian politics, during the interwar period it became part of governmental policy and legislation. And it is at this point that I should like to introduce the problem of German responsibility for the destruction of Hungarian Jewry.

The 1938–41 period, on the one hand, marks the return of much of the ‘mother country’; on the other, it also marks stages of increasing discrimination against Jews – including those living on the regained territories. Even if the first anti-Jewish law of 1938¹²² can in no way be attributed to German pressure, it can hardly be denied that both processes were greatly determined by the ‘German factor’ in Hungarian politics. The German–Hungarian relationship after Hitler’s coming to power was shaped by three major factors:¹²³ Hungary’s economic dependence on Germany, the shared interest of the revision of the post-World War I peace treaties, and certain similarities in internal power structure. We know of a great number of sources that testify to the Germans’ growing impatience because of the ‘too generous’ treatment of Jews in Hungary. In spite of the cruelty of the labour service, the third anti-Jewish law,¹²⁴ Kamenyec-Podolsk and Novi Sad, Antonescu, Pavelic and Tiso kept complaining to Hitler about Hungarian leniency in this respect. Prime Minister Miklós Kállay and similar-minded politicians believed that it was possible

¹²¹ Ibid. 156, 159.

¹²² Passed by Parliament on 29 May 1938 as Act 1938:XV.

¹²³ Cf. György Ránki: *A németek szerepe a magyar zsidók elpusztításában* [The Role of Germans in the Destruction of Hungarian Jewry] *Az 1944. év története* [The History of the Year 1944] ed. Ferenc Glatz, Budapest, 1984, 64–8. Passed by Parliament on 8 August 1941 as Act 1941:XV.

¹²⁴ Quoted by Péter Kende: *Röpirat a zsidókérdésről* [Reflections on the Jewish Question], Budapest, Magvető, 1989, 146.

to work out a middle way in this respect as well, which might in turn also help Hungary get out of the war.

The nineteenth of March 1944 brought an end to such illusions. With the Germans occupying Hungary, the conservative elite, undoubtedly, also suffered serious losses. This elite, indeed, had helped to preserve some elements of constitutional order and a relatively normal framework of everyday life, but in spite of all the good intentions, the outcome was an unprecedented disaster for modern Hungary. The members of the so-called Christian national middle classes held leading positions in public administration and the army and some of them were part of the machinery of deportations. They, of course, also suffered losses. Still, this is not an acceptable argument for relativizing the losses of Hungarian Jewry. No doubt, if the Germans had not occupied Hungary in March 1944, the Holocaust would not have extended to this country. However, we immediately have to add to this commonplace statement that a long series of failures of an antiquated authoritarian regime which, on the one hand, had managed to keep the extreme Right out of power for many years, and on the other hand had incorporated 'moderate' anti-Semitism into government policy, greatly contributed to Hungary's being pushed into this situation. It must also be said that the same policy which was responsible for paving the way to the Hungarian Holocaust, also led to an overall national catastrophe, to a catastrophe which endangered the culture and civilization jointly created by Hungarians, Germans and Slavs, by the followers of all religions, by all the people living in Hungary. Furthermore, we can never forget the outstanding figures of intellectual and practical opposition to anti-Semitism in Hungary, nor the eternal merits of righteous gentiles. Many of them belonged to the ranks of the conservative elite and the Christian middle classes whose responsibility I have referred to. The fact that they did not, could not, set the main trend, must not obliterate their merits. There is no collective guilt, but there is no collective innocence either.

Let me try to summarize by calling again on the scapegoat theory of social psychology to help. Jews, as I have just discussed, have often been forced into the positions of scapegoats in modern Hungarian history. Scapegoats have the primary social psychological function of carrying transferred guilt. Here the question logically arises: what kind of guilt in modern Hungarian history was transferred onto them? I think the answer can be one single word: failure. National and economic failures could easily be explained by transferring guilt and responsibility onto Jews.

Jews in Hungary also fulfilled another important social psychological function of scapegoating: they were often presented as objects of common hatred, they functioned as ‘mobilizing scapegoats’ for different types of rightish political movements and parties.

Looking for scapegoats is an unavoidable social psychological process. Scapegoats, however, in a classical biblical sense were known to be innocent. Contrary to that, anti-Semites considered Jews to be guilty of all kinds of evil. Still, the various forms of anti-Semitism in Hungary did not necessarily lead to the Holocaust. There is not, I think, a wide gulf between anti-Semitic parties, movements, various forms of anti-Jewish legislation and the Holocaust, only temporary planks. As Lesek Kolakowski put it: the seemingly quite harmless, dispersed, in themselves weak elements of anti-Semitism can easily and quickly be united into an explosive mixture.¹²⁵ This comparison might help me to reach my final conclusion: to an ever increasing extent, different forms of anti-Semitism can be observed in Hungary since the 1880s: up to World War I against the main trend of political life and after World War I as part of the main trend. It was German pressure, then direct intervention that laid down the planks between anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, that fused elements of anti-Semitism into a most dangerous mixture, bringing about the greatest tragedy of modern Hungarian history.

A Note on the Literature

The political, ideological and intellectual climate of Hungary in the aftermath of World War II was far from being favourable for serious scholarly research into the history of Hungarian anti-Semitism, although the issue of tracing the connections between ‘traditional’ non-violent anti-Semitism and the unprecedented mass murder of Jews (around 560,000 victims in Hungary) was an essential problem of debates in intellectual and non-intellectual circles alike. By now it is clear that the most important contribution to this debate during the short period of democracy (1945–8) was an essay by a Protestant legal scholar and specialist in public administration, István Bibó (1911–79). Under the title ‘Zsidókérdés Magyarországon 1944 után’ [The Jewish Problem in Hungary af-

¹²⁵ Quoted by Péter Kende: *Röpirat a zsidókérdésről* [Reflections on the Jewish Question]. Budapest, Magvető, 1989. 146.

ter 1944], first published in the review *Válasz* [Answer] in 1948 (the most accessible later edition is that in his *Válogatott tanulmányok* [Selected Studies, vol. 2, Budapest, Magvető, 1986, pp. 621–797], he raises the problem of the responsibility of Hungarian society for the Holocaust. He looks very deeply into the components of modern anti-Semitism, listing medieval anti-Jewish prejudices, the bulk of experiences accumulated in Jewish–non-Jewish relations and the deficiencies of modern social development as the main causes of anti-Jewish thoughts and actions. He warns against identifying anti-Semitic declarations with the ideology of mass murder but insists on the necessity of a national self-examination. Bibó did his best in this direction but the monolithic Communist system in Hungary from 1948 did not tolerate the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* he initiated.

From the late 1950s on, some Hungarian historians produced important source-publications about the Hungarian Holocaust (the most important work is Ilona Benoschowsky and Elek Karsai (eds), *Vádirat a náciizmus ellen* [Indictment against Nazism], 3 vols, Budapest, 1958–67). Such serious scholarly works on this most sensitive issue were quite rare in the countries of the region during these years, and their impact on Hungarian society was limited as well.

It was only during the second half of the 1970s that a Christian writer, György Száraz, could publish a longer essay under the title ‘Egy előítélet nyomában’ [In Pursuit of a Prejudice], first published in *Valóság* [Reality] 1975/8, then extended to a book under the same title (published by Magvető, Budapest, 1976) which had great resonance in most layers of Hungarian society. The essay came out at a time when the pro-Arab official Hungarian position in the Arab–Israeli conflict was the cause of some compunction for a number of Jewish Hungarian Communist officials. The lack of an open and sincere re-examination of Hungarian society’s attitude towards the Holocaust, the shocking ignorance of numerous young people born after World War II concerning the facts of this most tragic chapter of Hungarian history and also an emerging strong collective identity among young Jewish intellectuals, many of them pessimistic about the possibility of a Jewish–non-Jewish dialogue – all these factors pushed Száraz’s work into the foreground of public interest. Száraz pointed out the late nineteenth/early twentieth century as the time when the religious type of anti-Semitism was transformed into a socially motivated anti-Semitism. According to his argumentation, influential groups of the Christian upper and middle classes felt threatened both by Jewish capitalists in

search of more political influence and also by the aspirations of socially marginal critics of the establishment, some of the latter being active in the socialist movement. These fears led to the birth of legends about the ‘anti-national Jewish conspiracy’ which played a very important role in influential explanations of Hungary’s tragic truncation (with two-thirds of the former state territories lost) after World War I. Now, for the first time in Hungarian history the whole of Hungarian Jewry was blamed and in many cases brutally persecuted, which, as Száraz argues, ‘forecasted the horrible shadow of 1944’.

A young scholar, Judit Kubinszky, published an analysis of the early phase of Hungarian anti-Semitism in 1976 (Judit Kubinszky, *Politikai antiszemitizmus Magyarországon 1875–1890* [Political Anti-Semitism in Hungary 1875–1890] Kossuth, Budapest, 1976). She describes the first wave of anti-Semitism in Hungary which, seemingly, had completely disappeared by the late 1880s. But in fact it left deep traces behind – its arguments were disseminated by various social groups which, by distorting facts, stirred up hatred appealing to instincts and sentiments. It created an anti-Semitic ideology and phraseology.

A number of works were published about the history of Hungarian Jewry in the 1970s and 1980s, especially about various aspects of their assimilation. (For a survey cf. Peter Vary, ‘Befejezetlen múlt – mai magyar zsidó valóság’ [Unfinished Past – Present Day Hungarian Jewish Reality] in Róbert Simon (ed.), *Zsidókérdés Kelet- és Közép-Európában* [The Jewish Problem in Eastern and Central Europe], Budapest, 1985, pp. 455–83.) In comparison with this literature, the number of works on the history of Hungarian anti-Semitism is much smaller. The first comprehensive works raising the question of the relationship between pre-1938 anti-Semitism and the Holocaust were published outside Hungary: first of all, the first ten chapters of Randolph L. Brahm’s monumental work (*The Politics of Genocide. The Holocaust in Hungary*, 2 vols, Columbia University Press, New York, 1981. In Hungarian: *A Magyar Holocaust*, Gondolat–Budapest, Blackburn International Incorporation, Wilmington, 1988) and Nathaniel Katzburg’s analysis of official Hungarian policy towards the Jews and of the anti-Jewish laws (*Hungary and the Jews, 1920–1943*, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, 1981). In Hungary it was especially Miklós Szabó who, tracing the origins of conservative political thought, published some important studies on these issues during these years (collected in a volume entitled *Politikai kultúra Magyarországon 1896–1986* [Political Culture in Hungary 1896–1986], Atlantis Program, Budapest, 1989). As an example of his bal-

anced evaluations, I quote from an article on Dezső Szabó, a most influential Hungarian writer and political thinker of the interwar period:

[Dezső Szabó's] greatest achievement is that he was able to write about social problems in a racist language without being dissolved in racism, the problems preserving their social character – unlike in Fascist racisms. This helped him work in both right and wrong directions. The wrong direction was that he gave a tool to racist ideologies, the right direction was that social problems presented in racist language could appeal to middle-class layers which could not understand any other language. (p.133)

The fortieth anniversary of the Holocaust brought about a major breakthrough. Numerous publications came out, meetings and conferences were held, including an Israeli–Hungarian symposium about the Hungarian Holocaust. The most important publication was a book edited by Péter Hanák, the internationally well-known and respected author, on the history of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy (*Zsidókérdés, asszimiláció, antiszemitizmus* [The Jewish Problem, Assimilation, Anti-Semitism], Gondolat, Budapest, 1984). Among others, this volume included Bibó's and Száraz's above-mentioned works, a Communist scholar's and politician's article from 1946 (Erik Molnár, 'Zsidókérdés Magyarországon' [The Jewish Problem in Hungary]), and Péter Hanák's analysis of the assimilation of Jews in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The introduction to the book was written by a senior leader of the Communist Party, Imre Pozsgay. His position reflected the views of a number of historians (Iván T. Berend, Ferenc Glácz, Tibor Hajdu, György Ránki, Péter Sipos, Loránt Tilkovszky, etc.) who clearly differentiate between the conservative, right-wing, authoritarian interwar Hungarian regime and the Hungarian Fascists who came to power only after the German occupation of Hungary. The open Fascist rule after 15 October 1944 and the Holocaust in Hungary are not considered to be the unavoidable consequences of the anti-Semitic policy of Governor Horthy's regime, the thesis about the 'collective guilt' of all non-Jews is clearly rejected, but exactly for this reason the significance of personal decisions in critical situations is emphasized. At the same time Pozsgay's article shows the willingness of an influential group within the party to accept the party's responsibility for national unity without enforced assimilation of any type.

It was around this time that serious research programmes were started on the history of Hungarian Jewry mainly within the framework of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, co-sponsored by the Hungarian-born American billionaire György Soros, who set up his foundation in Hungary in 1985. Important results of this work were summarized in a two-volume work edited by the Institute of Philosophy of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (*Hét évtized a hazai zsidóság életében* [Seven Decades in the History of Hungarian Jewry] Budapest, 1990) or a publication of the Hungarian Statistical Office (*A zsidó népesség száma településenként 1840–1941* [The Number of Jews in Hungarian Settlements 1840–1941], Budapest, 1993). The most comprehensive scholarly work about the history of Hungarian anti-Semitism, however, was published by a German scholar, Rolf Fischer (*Entwicklungsstufen des Antisemitismus in Ungarn 1867–1939*, R. Oldenbourg Verlag, Munich, 1988 with a rich bibliography). This very well-documented book also supports the dominant view among Hungarian scholars of the topic: anti-Semitism has long-standing traditions in Hungarian political and intellectual life but the mass murder of Hungarian Jews could not have taken place without the German factor. Fischer goes even further: according to his view, the Second Anti-Jewish Law (in 1939) ‘endete jener Abschnitt der Geschichte des ungarischen Antisemitismus, der weitgehend aus den innerungarischen Verhältnissen erklärt werden konnte’ (p. 187.) [‘terminated the period of the history of Hungarian anti-Semitism that could basically be explained by Hungarian domestic political factors’]. The dramatic transformations of 1989–90, bringing about a complete freedom of thought, i.e. a political climate in which practically everything could be printed, opened the way for anti-Semitic views as well. The results of the free elections in 1990 and 1994 clearly proved that the number of the supporters of these often very loudly expressed anti-Semitic views is quite negligible. Still, a number of scholars felt the need to be alert. László Karsai, author of important monographs and source-publications on the Hungarian Holocaust, published an anthology (*Kirekesztők* [Exclusionists], Aura, Budapest, 1992) which emphasized the continuity in the history of Hungarian anti-Semitism from the 1880s to the 1990s. A year later Karsai published another anthology of works by critics of anti-Semitism (*Befogadók* [Inclusionists], Aura, Budapest, 1993) showing the continuous presence of liberal, open-minded, tolerant views in Hungarian political and cultural life.

More recently, a number of younger scholars, born after World War II, have been carrying on extensive research on various aspects of the history of

the Hungarian Holocaust (László Karsai, Judit Molnár, Tamás Stark, etc.). The results of their work are substantial contributions to the nation's coming to terms with the burden of the greatest tragedy in modern Hungarian history.

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3. Hopes and Illusions after 1945

Prophets or Scapegoats? Hungarian Radicals after the Second World War

Historians working on Hungarian politics in the twentieth century face no difficulty in identifying chronological borderlines. In the first half of the century the country on two occasions found it necessary to start building a new political order: in 1918 and in 1945. The First World War brought defeat, and the Trianon treaty left Hungary reduced to less than third of its former territory and a little over two-fifth of its population. Territorial revision was the fundamental aim of all domestic and foreign policy over the next two decades. The Second World War once more brought defeat and the vanishing of any hope of undoing the Trianon Treaty. Nevertheless both 1918 and 1945 appeared to present chances for the creation of a new social order based on democracy. It was an obvious fact, though perhaps less so in 1918 than in 1945 that the old social establishment was in ruins and that the country's resurrection was possible only on the basis of a fresh start. The political force called the Hungarian Radicals was on both occasions closely associated with these attempts.

The Radicals in 1918 and 1945

In 1918 the chance for the establishment of a democratic order was open only for a very short time: a couple of months in the immediate aftermath of the war. On 16 November, Hungary was proclaimed a republic. Universal suf-

frage, an independent judiciary, freedom of the press and other civil liberties were promised. The president of the new republic, Count Mihály Károlyi, a very rich aristocrat, parcelled out some of his own estates among landless peasants. However, the loss of huge territories of 'Historic Hungary' sealed the fate of the first attempt to establish a democratic republic in Hungary. In March 1919 Béla Kun's Soviet Republic replaced the Károlyi regime.

The year 1945 seemed to offer a more promising start. Seven months after the devastating war had come to an end, and in spite of the presence of the Red Army and the Soviet dominance of the Allied Control Commission, free general elections were held in November 1945. Multi-party parliamentary democracy replaced the traditional political system based on the 'Historical classes'. The features of the new society were, however, to say the least, not yet clear. This article discusses the role of a small group of the so called Radical Hungarian politicians in the making of the new society and political system.

The contemporary term to describe this group of a few dozen personalities was 'bourgeois radical' or 'radical democrats.' Most of them were born in the 1870s, came from German or assimilated Jewish urban middle class families, studied law and modern sociology and were in opposition to the pre-World War I Hungarian establishment. They criticized the system of huge latifundia, the narrow franchise, and were opposed to aggressive Hungarian nationalism. Democracy was the key concept in their ideology but they were far from claiming monopoly in this respect. The left wing of the Independence Party in parliament shared the demand for the extension of the narrow franchise and the successful lawyer Vilmos Vázsonyi had launched the Party of Democrats in 1901 with the extension of franchise as the centre-piece of their programme. The radicals, however, went further. They demanded universal, equal and secret suffrage. Again, a major concern of Vázsonyi was state support for the urban small entrepreneur. The radicals' major social-political concern was the dismantling of class rule based on latifundia and they were ready to cooperate with the Social Democratic Party which had acquired growing influence in Hungary before and during World War I. In contrast to Vázsonyi, who could not accept the Social Democratic programme of nationalization of the major means of production, the radicals accepted the Socialist programme as

a long term aim and believed that ‘modern bourgeois democracy’ was the first step in this direction.¹²⁶

The leading figure of the group, Oszkár Jászi defined the essence of radicalism as ‘the movement of the working middle classes directed at creating material, intellectual and moral goods. Politically it aims to support all efforts at developing and organizing productive forces and eliminating unearned income.’¹²⁷ This programme could accept neither Béla Kun’s Soviet Republic nor the aim of restoring the pre-World War One social order as implemented by Admiral Horthy in 1920.

Before 1918 the Radicals were active in the Society for Social Sciences (founded in 1901), the Bourgeois Radical Party (founded in 1914), and the Galileo Circle (founded in 1908). From 1907 to 1918 the periodical *Huszadik Század* [Twentieth century] (launched in 1900) was also associated with the radicals. In the inter-war years they supported the periodical *Századunk* [Our Century]. After 1945 they also published a few journals and they always had a strong presence in the Masonic lodges.

It was a younger member of this group, Imre Csécsy, who in 1939 first used the term ‘Hungarian Gironde’ for self-identification. With this reference to the more moderate grouping among the actors of the French revolution he was trying to clarify the position of the group. The Right in politics – he argued – always tried to limit civil liberties whereas the Left struggled for the extension of the political and economic rights of the individual. Communism with its totalitarian state was closer to the extreme Right than to the Left. After 1945 the Girondists were part of the moderate Left, believing that social order ought to be maintained through consensus rather than by the authority of an autocratic state. Further, they were convinced that the democratic order could best preserve the country’s independence.

The Radicals were inactive during the Second World War. In 1945, the Hungarian Radical Party which was reorganized and became politically active once more, managed to recruit only a few members. They had around one to two thousand supporters, mostly in the professions: university teachers, doc-

¹²⁶ Cf. Attila Pók: “Radikális és liberális demokraták Magyarországon a 20. század első felében” [Radical and Liberal Democrats in Hungary during the First Half of the 20th Century]. *Történelmi Szemle* XLIX (2007)4: 593–603.

¹²⁷ Oszkár Jászi: *Mi a radikalizmus?* [What is Radicalism?], ed. by the Országos Radikális Párt [National Bourgeois Radical Party], n. d. Quoted by János Varga: “A Magyar Radikális Párt újjáalakulása 1945-ben” [The Reestablishment of the Hungarian Radical Party in 1945]. *Történelmi Szemle*, (1975) 1. 101.

tors and lawyers. In November 1945 the Radical Party won 5,625 votes at the parliamentary elections, which was not enough to get them a seat in parliament. The 1947 elections, due to the popularity of a Social Democrat old hand, Károly Peyer, who had left his old comrades and joined the radicals, brought them six seats. The Radicals' newspapers and periodicals had a readership of not more than twenty to thirty thousand – mostly in the capital.

There were many reasons for the very limited influence that the Radicals mustered in the country. People who in 1918 would probably have joined their ranks had at least six parties to choose from in 1945: the Smallholders' Party, which had a 'polgári' [bourgeois] section, the Social Democratic Party, the Communist Party, the Peasant Party, the Bourgeois Democratic Party as well as the Hungarian Radical Party. Indeed, all these parties supported policies that were similar to those of the Radicals of the pre-1918 period. Differences among the parties involved means rather than ends. They all stood for land distribution, large scale social reforms and universal suffrage. In vain did the Hungarian Radical Party claim that it had advocated all these reforms before the others. As it had played no part in carrying out these reforms, it could not become a significant political force. The only thing it could do was to point to its unbroken consistency of principle, which, in itself, was far from being a winning political programme and could not constitute a political alternative. The key personality of the party between 1945 and 1949 was Imre Csécsy, a writer and editor in his early fifties. Other leading figures in the group were literary critic and writer Marcell Benedek, the physician and public health specialist Zsigmond Kende, and the publicist Béla Zsolt. The Radicals, conscious of the fact that there was no wider social class in the country to which they could appeal, claimed to be the party that represented the overall public interest. When the review *Huszadik Század* was relaunched with Csécsy as the editor in 1947, he announced that the periodical wished to offer the educated reader facts instead of political views, independent criticism in well-researched articles instead of dogma. The three volumes of the new *Huszadik Század* (1947–1949) testified to the spirit of these promises. Yet their impact on the public was rather limited. This had much to do with the Radicals' political philosophy.

Enlightenment and Marxism

The Radicals were a good fit in post-1945 Hungarian politics. They were avowed egalitarians and many were close to socialism. They believed in cooperation with the Social Democrats: indeed they were influenced by Marxism, an ideology they treated with respect. But the philosophy to which they were wedded from the time they appeared on the political scene before 1918 was Enlightenment rather than Marxism. Around the beginning of the twentieth century Enlightenment, based on the omnipotence of reason combined with anti-clericalism and materialism, had some appeal to some groups of intellectuals. By 1945, however, the rationalist morality of the *philosophers* had largely lost its appeal.

The Radicals, however, believed that the philosophical heritage of the Enlightenment was relevant in post World War Two Central Europe. Their moral sensibilities induced them to attack Hegelian–Marxian dialectics on a most sensitive point. This may have been tactically a political blunder but it underlined their fierce opposition to politics which disregarded fundamental moral principles by reference to some dialectical historical process.

In his book *Világos pillanat* [Luminous Moment] written during World War Two but published only in 1946, Csécsy dismissed dialectics as an ideological method supporting the superiority of the German state. For Csécsy and his friends the intellectual idol was not Hegel or Marx but Kant, whose central conviction was that morality and politics must be related. This view, he wrote¹²⁸ some modern critics say, is mostly past history. Indeed, it is historic in its significance. Some of its parts may have proved mistaken, but advocating the universality of human achievement and by demanding a strict self-control of reason it aimed to lead society to the right path. When and where did European thought go astray? Well, the rot set in with Hegel, I suppose.¹²⁸ This critical perception of post-Kantian German intellectual and political developments was the position from which the Radicals approached Marxism and historical materialism. Oszkár Jászi, more explicitly than Csécsy, had summed up in an article commemorating the 100th anniversary of Hegel's death in 1931 what could well be regarded as the *credo* of the Radicals: 'the future of our whole civilization depends on whether or not mankind will be able to reconcile Hegel and Marx's tremendously strong historical vision of what *is*

¹²⁸ Imre Csécsy: *Világos pillanat* [A Clear Moment]. Budapest, 1946, 51.

and *was* with Rousseau and Kant's deep moral intuition of the thing which ought to be'.¹²⁹

The other factor that influenced the Radicals' attitude to Marxism was the principle that society should be organized on a rational basis, in which individual interests (mostly those of the small proprietors) are reconciled with those of the community. The Radicals' vision was a Hungary which forged a bridge between Western and Eastern ideas of social organization and international relations. They accepted historical materialism as a method of social analysis but rejected Marxism as the ideology and programme representing a single class, the industrial proletariat. 'We recognize the great value of Marxian social criticism and we agree also with many elements of their economic theory, nevertheless Marxism could never become our Bible. We do not consider historical materialism (even in its improved version) the peak of science and philosophy, despite various elements of truth it may have discovered.'¹³⁰ The radicals were engaged in a permanent debate over Marxist socialism in their journals *Haladás* and *Huszadik Század*, and at meetings of the Masonic lodges. The Marxist method of social analysis, they argued, should be incorporated into a comprehensive ideology based on rational principles on which society, led by enlightened leaders, serving both individual and public interests, should be organized. This attitude did not attract much sympathy either on Left or the Right. The Radicals fell between two stools.

Absence of 'Bourgeois' Development

Views about the national past have always been an indispensable source for establishing political credentials in Hungary. Both the Communists and the Radicals used history to explain their political aims. The Communists' guiding principle was social progress attained through class conflict combined with the struggle for national independence: society moved inexorably from feudalism through capitalism to socialism. For the communists 1848 had to be the 'Hungarian bourgeois revolution' in order to assert that after 1945 the socialist revolution was on the historical agenda.' And revolution, as in the past, neces-

¹²⁹ Oszkár Jászi: "Hegel – a Hundred Years After" in György Litván (ed.): *Oszkár Jászi: Homage to Danubia*, Rowmann and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. New York, 1995. 52.

¹³⁰ Imre Csécsy: "És mégis tovább" [And Still Further]. *Haladás* November 10 (1945) 1.

sarily featured the ‘intensification of the class struggle’. This was clearly an assertion to prop up the Communist take-over.

The Radicals believed in social progress no less than the Communists, likewise they accepted socialism. Yet they knocked the central contention out of the Marxist creed: the presumption that a ‘bourgeois revolution’ had already taken place in Hungary in order to justify the communist take-over to introduce socialism. The Radicals’ concern was the backwardness of Hungarian society, the weakness of the urban middle classes, which they considered the most serious drawback for the attainment of progress. Csécsy wrote: ‘There has never been a bourgeois revolution in this country. In Hungary the transformation has not even begun which the West European countries went through between the seventeenth century and the middle of the nineteenth, leading to the French revolution by which the bourgeoisie as a class and bourgeois mentality and lifestyle prevailed over the autocratic feudal system.’ It is true, Csécsy went on, that the French revolutionary ideas reached Hungary, but in 1848, when in France the lower middle classes were already challenging the bourgeoisie, in Hungary even the feudal forces were not broken. The revolution was not led by the bourgeoisie but by the nobility. When later the bourgeoisie developed, it accepted gentry leadership and was largely concerned with the making of profit.¹³¹

What the Radicals found wanting was not so much the bourgeoisie as the *citoyen*. Csécsy’s views about the helplessness and responsibility of the Hungarian bourgeoisie was criticized by the doyen of the Radicals, Oszkár Jászi. Csécsy, he objected, had not recognized ‘that there is no unified middle class or bourgeoisie which, in fact, is composed of different, even opposing elements: the owners of the means of production or ‘banking capitalism’ and the *citoyens*, that is the working middle class. The latter did not come to power even in Western Europe and so ‘the great...spirit and the values of socialism originate mainly from the working middle class and the petty bourgeoisie.’¹³²

Csécsy accepted Jászi’s distinction: you are a bourgeois as far as you are independent, and a proletarian as far as you depend economically on others. The idea that ‘a citizen is a big-bellied bourgeois who does not do anything

¹³¹ Imre Csécsy: “Az októberi forradalom és a népköztársaság” [The October Revolution and the People’s Republic], *Századok és tanulmányok* 21 (1946) 331.

¹³² Oszkár Jászi: “Leszámolás a Katasztrófa előtt” [Coming Even before the Catastrophe], *Huszadik Század* (1947) 363–375.

but exploit others¹³³ does not hold true. By the distinction between the bourgeoisie and the citizen and by stressing the common interests of the latter with those of the proletariat Csécsy and his group adapted themselves to the post-1945 political expectations. Significantly, their party's new name Hungarian Radical Party, left out the epithet *polgári* (which could mean either bourgeois or citizen) in 1945. For the Radicals capitalism was still the mother of democracy, they maintained (in contrast to the so called people's democracy of Communist propaganda) that a democracy should make the free development of the individual possible. Alas, the bourgeoisie was concerned only with profit, hence the necessity of society's transition to socialism. The new order based on morally upright citizens would be superior to capitalism based on excessive competition and it would eliminate the threat of totalitarian dictatorship either of the Left or the Right.

Epilogue

The political fate of the Radicals was sealed by the Communist take-over in Hungary in 1948. Their party was never formally dissolved, but vanished in late 1948, early 1949. Although dispersed as a group, the radicals were not influential enough to be crushed by their opponents. Many of them were allowed to survive in the professions under Rákosi's dictatorship, such as Marcell Benedek as writer and professor of literary history, József Litván as a textile engineer and factory manager or Zsigmond Kende as a chemist. The homes of such 'girondins' were magic islands, 'embassies of Europe' in communist-controlled Hungary.

The Radicals' attitudes to the communist regime veered from stoic to romantic. In February 1950 Rezső Homolyai once more referred to the 'Girondists': 'Our activities in the past were mostly directed at solving urgent social problems.... Today these problems are handled by the state and the only thing that remains for us is to polish the rough stone, shaping and refining the soul.'¹³⁴ In contrast, Ruzstem Vámbéry, in a premonition, recalled the attitude of the Girondists who had been in the forefront of the Revolution but did not

¹³³ Imre Csécsy: "A polgár és a szocializmus" [The Citizen and Socialism]. *Huszadik Század* (1947), 355–362.

¹³⁴ *Kelet*, March 7, 1950.

refrain from turning against it as soon as they realized that it had been led into a *cul-de-sac* by the new leaders. ‘They went to the scaffold with a clear conscience singing the Marseillaise, the bridal march of the revolution, even under the gallows.’¹³⁵

As an overall summary, Hugh Seton Watson’s valedictory may be worth recording: ‘There was something very sad and moving to me personally in my visits in 1946 and 1947 to Hungary about the spectacle of people from the generation of 1914, who in their young years had fought an uphill struggle against the semi-feudal regime, who for a very brief period had shown their heads above the surface in 1918... had been knocked down first by the Communist dictatorship of Béla Kun and then by the regime of Horthy, had recovered by the late 1920s but again been pushed out by the Gömbös regime and its wartime successors, and now again they came bobbing up the surface full of hopes and enthusiasm, only to be finally submerged in the noisome flood let loose by Rákosi and his boys’.¹³⁶

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Ed. R. Pynsent, University College, London, 2000. 216–221.

¹³⁵ Rustem Vámbéry (criminologist, son of Ármin Vámbéry, orientalist) in *Világ*, March 1, 1946. 1.

¹³⁶ Hugh Seton-Watson: “Thirty Years After” in Martin McCauley (ed.): *Communist Power in Europe 1944–1949*, Basingstoke and London, 1977. 226-27. Let me thank my very good friend, László Péter (1928–2008) for calling my attention to this article.

Captive Minds and Scapegoats in Stalinist Hungary

Motto:

“For a member of the middle class the existence of people who live a more miserable life than he does is a cause for his own reputation, pride – for an intellectual: guilty conscience and responsibility”. (László Németh, quoted by Tibor Huszár in: *Az értelmiségszociológia és szociográfia hazai történetéhez. (To the History of the Sociology of Intellectuals and Sociography in Hungary)* In: Tibor Huszár: *Nemzetlét–nemzettudat–értelmiség (National Existence-National Consciousness-Intellectuals)* Magvető, Budapest, 1984, 245.)

“And to the angel of the church at Laodicea write thus...I know of thy doings, and find thee neither cold nor hot...I would thou wert one or the other. Being what thou art, lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, thou wilt make me vomit thee out of my mouth.” (*The New Testament. The Apocalypse of the Blessed Apostle John. Part 3.*)

This paper makes an attempt at analyzing the mindset of creative Hungarian intellectuals who accepted various influential roles in Stalinist Hungary. It uses contemporary and other Hungarian and non-Hungarian patterns of intellectual behaviour as a basis of comparison. The argument is shaped with the help of the conceptual framework of scapegoating.

1. Introduction

Captive Minds and 1956. Liberators and Stabilizers

One of the basic scholarly issues regarding the global, world historical significance of the 1956 revolts in Poland and the revolution in Hungary relates to the carriers of the revolutionary fermentation. Did these movements express overall national discontents, both politically and economically motivated or were they more the results of the activities of a small but loud and influential group of local intellectuals and/or Western efforts aimed at the liberation of “captive nations”? Did “captive minds” succeed in ridding themselves of their intellectual bonds that in turn shook the edifice of the whole system or rather the system was no more able to function? If one subscribes to the second view: did that mean economic failure or rather due to the lack of proper legitimacy for the political system and a lack of a social basis the deep crisis and temporary collapse were inevitable?

As the economic, political and social institutions of the countries of the Soviet Bloc showed *structural similarities* but *huge differences* in their resistance and opposition to the Soviet system that had been imposed on them, I am inclined towards attaching great significance to the role, impact of intellectual actors, to more and less captive minds in this process. From this point it logically follows that these minds then also had an important role in the temporary stabilization processes of these systems. Stalinism was not simply forcefully imposed but also built, constructed from inside. In terms of scapegoating, the conceptual framework I should like to use here: to what an extent can we transfer responsibility for Stalinism on local captive minds¹³⁷? Namely, if we assume that liberated minds helped a lot to weaken the global and local edifice of Stalinism, we can not deny the role of these minds in building, constructing this monster either.

Here I should like to address this issue by putting the case of these Hungarian minds into the Euro-Atlantic political–cultural–intellectual context of the post World War Two decade and into the context of twentieth century Hungarian political thought.

¹³⁷ I borrowed this concept from Czeslav Milos who used it to describe the state of mind of intellectuals who got under the spell of communist ideas.

Sources and Method

Before coming to my argumentation, permit me two preliminary remarks: one about my methodology, the other about my sources.

The methodological remark concerns my use of the concept of *scapegoating*. In my interpretation this is a social and social psychological phenomenon found in all societies and not some kind of a deviation. It cannot be disposed of, a social scientist should rather learn about its peculiarities. There are *three peculiarities* of this social psychological phenomenon that are essential. *First:* that, contrary to the original Old Testament interpretation that considered scapegoating as a process of atonement by consciously transferring guilt on the innocent goat, modern scapegoaters are convinced that scapegoats are indeed guilty. *Second:* scapegoating serves the interest of *enforced attribution*, i.e. easing social tensions by giving simplified monocausal explanations to most complicated phenomena or processes. *Third:* This scapegoating is essential in creating social cohesion and can well mobilize social groups or complete societies, especially in post-crisis situations.

Scapegoating is a form of systematic hatred that frequently results in aggression. If a historian is tracing the origins of aggression, this concept can be most helpful. Namely, it can help in shifting the focus of research from looking at the gaining ground of freedom in modern societies to the eruptions of individual and collective aggression. Peter Gay suggested that modern European intellectual and political history can also be described as a series of attempts at curbing these outbursts of aggression.¹³⁸ The great challenge for a historian venturing into this realm of social psychology is to try to contribute, through the analysis of numerous case-studies, to the debate on the proportions of “nature and nurture” among the causes of aggression.

As to the sources: in addition to primary sources (works by and documents related to the activities of leading Hungarian intellectuals in the late 1940s and early 1950s) for the Hungarian context I exploited especially the results of Ferenc Glatz, Tibor Hajdú, György Litván, György Péteri, János Pótó, Árpád Püspöki, János Rainer, Ignác Romsics, Éva Standeiszky, Domokos Szőke, Gábor Vermes, for the international context primarily the works by István Deák, Peter Gay, Tony Judt, Mark Lilla, Jeffrey K. Olick and Fritz Stern.

¹³⁸ Peter Gay: *The Cultivation of Hatred*. W.W, Norton & Company, New York–London, 1993.

2. The International Context

Cultural Hatreds and Political Passions. From Natural Explosions of Instinct to Political Passions of Strongly Woven Doctrines

Revolutions are about clearly defined confrontations. The clash between two strongly opposed poles (the contents generally formulated by intellectuals) can no more be resolved in a peaceful way. What were these two poles in post World War Two Hungary, to what an extent did they reflect the broader international scene? The search for an answer to this question has to start with another question on the connections between political and cultural hatreds. Namely, in bipolar confrontations the relationship between the poles is characterized by extreme mutual hatred. Is it political issues that awaken culturally expressed, intellectually organised passionate hatred or the causal relationship is just the opposite: it is the deeper lying cultural hatreds, resentments that are politically manifested?

This is an old research question of intellectual history, first powerfully formulated in the aftermath of World War One by two very different but very influential thinkers, *Julien Benda* (1867–1956) and *Carl Schmitt* (1889–1985). By sheer coincidence it was the same year, 1927 that the two authors published their respective works addressing this issue. In his *The Betrayal of the Intellectuals* Benda pointed out that “Our age is indeed the age of the intellectual organization of political hatreds”.¹³⁹ He arrives at this conclusion by analyzing the race, class, party and nation based passions of his day. Historically he sees a marked borderline at the aftermath of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. According to his argumentation before this time political passions were basically natural explosions of instinct. Since this watershed political passions – permeating an ever – increasing percentage of the population – had been furnished with a network of strongly woven doctrines. The decisive element is the blending of national and other political passions, the best example being Hitler’s National Socialist Party. Benda might have read the reports on a Hitler speech in Munich in April 1927 in which the thirty-seven-

¹³⁹ Julien Benda: *The Betrayal of Intellectuals*. The Beacon Press, Boston, 1959, (Second printing) 21.

year old ambitious, charismatic politician pointed out that “our young, socialist nationalism has nothing to do with the old antiquated patriotism”¹⁴⁰.

Defining One’s Enemy is Defining One’s Inner Self

These reports might have also been read by Carl Schmitt when formulating his famous essay on the concept of the political. The recently most fashionable antiliberal, devout Nazi political scientist gives a very simple, straightforward definition of what politics is about: “The specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy”. For him, “defining one’s enemies is the first step toward defining one’s inner self.”¹⁴¹ For Schmitt enmity transformed into fighting (and not peace) is the natural state of affairs. In Mark Lilla’s succinct summary: “A world without war would be a world without politics, a world without politics would be a world without enmity, and a world without enmity would be a world without human beings.”¹⁴²

The Contents: The Politics of Cultural Despair: The “Conservative Revolution of Dostoevski and Nietzsche”. The Ideology of Resentment

From the answers to the question on the relationship between cultural and political hatreds based also on the experiences of World War Two I should like to point out two: a German–American and an American one, *Fritz Stern* and *Richard Hofstadter*. Fritz Stern in 1961, in his search for the intellectual roots of national socialism, distancing himself from Benda, argued that his

¹⁴⁰ *Völkischer Beobachter*, 8. April, 1927. Cited in Hungarian by John Lukács in *Népszabadság*, 6 June 1998, 33.1

¹⁴¹ Cited by Mark Lilla from a 1996 English edition: *The Reckless Mind. Intellectuals in Politics*. New York, 2001, 57.

¹⁴² Cited by Mark Lilla: *op. cit.* 58. This idea was previously also well-formulated by the great late 19th century politically active Prussian historian, Heinrich von Treitscke: “This consciousness of themselves which the nations are acquiring and which can only be strengthened by culture, this consciousness means that that war will never disappear from the earth”. (quoted by Benda *op. cit.* 14).

own post World War Two age was the age of the political organization of cultural hatreds and personal resentments. In his attempt at understanding the origins of political hatred he explains how nationalists attacks on modern (liberal, secular, industrial–urban) culture shaped the “conservative revolution”. In European intellectual history Dostoevski and Nietzsche can be considered as the key figures of this movement. Their chief target is liberalism in the broadest sense of the word. In Fritz Stern’s words: “Man is not primarily rational, but volitional. He is not by nature good nor capable of perfectibility, the politics of liberal individualism rest on an illusion, evil exists and is an inherent aspect of human life... the idea of historical progress is false and blinds men to the approaching catastrophes...”¹⁴³ The deepest roots of the conservative revolution reach back to Rousseau and his followers’ criticism of the naive rationalism of the Enlightenment. Their ideologists (including Paul de Lagarde, Julius Langbehn, Moeller van den Bruck, Maurras and Barres, D’Annunzio and Enrico Corradini, the Action Francaise and the anti-Dreyfusards, the Christian socialists of Lueger’s Vienna, the pan-Germans) “superimposed a vision of national redemption upon their dissatisfaction with liberal culture and with the loss of authoritative faith.”¹⁴⁴

From this perspective the socialist-communist criticism of capitalism, of urban and industrialized culture can also be described as an *Ideology of the Resentment*. The difference between the conservative and Marxist–Socialist revolutionaries is the source of redemption: global class solidarity instead of national unity. This cultural criticism can thus be translated into various political ideologies: communism, fascism, McCarthysm, anti-Semitism etc.

The Form: the Paranoid Style

In his 1963 *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* Richard Hofstadter explained how extreme radical political passions show the signs comparable to clinical paranoia. The spokesman of the paranoid style focuses on the destructive conspiracies in the hostile world in which he lives, she or he points out how these clandestine or quite conspicuous activities threaten a whole nation, a

¹⁴³ Fritz Stern: *The Politics of Cultural Despair. A Study in the Rise of Germanic Ideology*. Anchor Books. Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1965. (First published by the University of California Press in 1961.) 8–9.

¹⁴⁴ Fritz Stern: *op. cit.* 11.

culture or a class. The paranoid search for conspirators, for enemies of the people is far from being reserved for just rightish or just leftish ideologists or politicians on the American continent (and elsewhere). Even if the paranoid style seems to show greater affinity for “bad” causes, a sound issue can also be presented in the paranoid style. The paranoid style makes great use of enforced attribution, a major feature of scapegoating: the enemy has permeated our sound society, reaching up to the top level decision makers. It is also a powerful means of creating social cohesion: fear and hate drive concerted action against the enemy.

The Proposal: Nature and Nurture among the Causes of Modern Hatred and Aggression

Traditional intellectual histories and political rhetorics of all kinds present the 19th and 20th centuries as the age of the gaining ground of freedom, the age of the triumph over all kinds of attempts on limiting individual and collective liberties.

All the above, seemingly too far reaching excurses were necessary to come to my point. I propose that in addition to this traditional, widely accepted though not unchallenged approach the same series of events can also be described – as Peter Gay did¹⁴⁵ – as the series of attempts at curbing the eruptions of individual and collective aggression.

Speaking about *Captive Minds and Scapegoating in Stalinist Hungary* is such a case-study. If we approach the issue from this perspective, what we are talking about is not something particular Hungarian but rather a chapter in European intellectual and political history. Mind European, not East European in spite of the quite complete, hardly permeable isolation between Eastern and Western Europe during the years preceding 1956.

¹⁴⁵ See footnote 2.

The Major European Intellectual Frontline between 1945 and 1956: Communists versus Anti-Communists

I think that Tony Judt¹⁴⁶ is absolutely right when he argues that the major intellectual and political frontline in post World War II Europe was not between East and West but between communists and anti-communists. Neither side could think in terms of compromises, fine shades. Numerous outstanding creative minds on both sides have been captivated by this bipolarism: the aftermath of the Munich conference in September 1938, when Britain and France seemed to have achieved a reasonable deal with Germany, (from a mid- or late 1940s perspective) unambiguously showed that looking for reasonable compromises, for a third way is politically useless and morally discredited. The platforms were to be clearly defined: Good versus Evil, Freedom versus Slavery, Resistance versus Collaboration. It was a political expression of this cultural climate when at the end of September 1947 the Information Bureau of the East European Soviet vassal parties declared: the world had been split into two camps (imperialist and anti-imperialists) and that the new war could not be avoided.

The political developments, including Churchill's March 1946 Fulton speech and Stalin's reaction of comparing the mastermind of the anti-Hitler coalition to Hitler, had clear intellectual parallels. They can serve as a basis of comparison for the Hungarian case. Here I can certainly only refer to them without going into an analysis.

The *Italian* Communist party attracted a great number of intellectuals, in fact respect of and openness to intellectuals was a tradition established by the great founding fathers, Gramsci and Togliatti. Togliatti defined Italian communism as "half Croce and half Stalin"¹⁴⁷. At the same time post war Italy had to face many intellectuals' long term association with Fascism.

France showed a longstanding tradition of bipolarism, cherishing the great revolution's myth: worshipping violence as a tool of public policy. The famous Radical Party politician, Edouard Herriot argued after the war that

¹⁴⁶ Tony Judt: *Postwar. A History of Europe since 1945*. The Penguin Press, New York, 2005. 197.

¹⁴⁷ Tony Judt: *op. cit.* 207.

without a blood bath normal political life in France could not be restored.¹⁴⁸ Working, writing in the cultural, intellectual capital of the post World War II world many outstanding and influential members of the Paris elite cherished communist theory and practice. The impressive performance of the French Communist Party in the first elections certainly played a decisive role here, the communist political success needed to be understood, to be interpreted.

Let me refer to just a few French examples. The leader of existentialism, Jean Paul Sartre argued at the time of the East European show trials that one could choose only between the USSR and the Anglo-Saxon Bloc.¹⁴⁹ As editor of the *Temps Modernes*, he published Marcel Peju's fully understanding comments on the Slansky trial. Paul Eluard in Bucharest in October 1948 said: "I come from a country where no-one laughs any more, where no one sings. France is in shadow. But you have discovered the sunshine of Happiness."¹⁵⁰ This was the case in spite of the rigid orthodoxy of Maurice Thorez' party. Anti-Communism was considered to be pro-Fascism by a great number of influential intellectuals (as e. g. the writers Louis Aragon or Jean Bruller Vercors, the 1935 Nobel Prize awardee Frédéric Joliot Curie or the great painters Léger and Picasso).

Tony Judt goes perhaps a bit too far, but I think he is basically right when he declares: "Western intellectual enthusiasm for Communism tended to peak not in times of "Goulash communism" or "socialism with a human face" but rather at the moments of the regime's worst cruelties: 1935 and 1944–1956."¹⁵¹ Even if the anti-Communists definitely outnumbered communists, the anti-Communist platform was far too heterogeneous: an ultra-leftish critic of Stalinism could easily find him- or herself on a common platform with neo-Fascists. As Arthur Koestler put it at a presentation in Carnegie Hall, New York in 1948: "You can't help people being right for the wrong reasons... This fear of finding oneself in bad company is not an expression of political purity, it is an expression of a lack of self-confidence"¹⁵² Or as Abbé Boulier explained to Ferenc Fejtő at the time of the Rajk trial: "Drawing attention to Communist sins is „to play the imperialists' game”."¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ Tony Judt: *op. cit.* 211.

¹⁴⁹ Tony Judt: *op. cit.* 214.

¹⁵⁰ Tony Judt: *op. cit.* 212.

¹⁵¹ Tony Judt: *op. cit.* 216.

¹⁵² Tony Judt: *op. cit.* 217.

¹⁵³ Tony Judt: *op. cit.* 217.

On the communist side in the East the respective discourses had the same motives as on the communist side in the West: “youthful enthusiasm for a Communist future was widespread among middle-class intellectuals, in East and West alike!”¹⁵⁴ These motives included the following main issues: terror is a necessary means of historical progress, the Soviet Union has sacrificed the most for the victory against Hitler, all the means for the implementation of socialism and communism under the leadership of the Soviet Union are legitimate, America’s sins both in terms of a system of values and domestic and foreign policy outweigh the incidental mistakes committed by the Soviet Union. As Camus put it in March 1944: “Anticommunism is the beginning of dictatorship”.¹⁵⁵ To illustrate the longevity of the last motive let me quote Claude Roy’s editorial from the December 1956 (!) issue of *Esprit* under the title: *Les Flammes de Budapest*: “We reproach Socialist ideology with idealizing man and being blind to his fallibility, but the average American is blinder still. What can one expect from this civilization that mocks and caricatures Western spiritual traditions and is propelling mankind into a horizontal existence, shorn of transcendence and depth?”¹⁵⁶

3. The Hungarian Context

Pro patria et libertate

This “synchronic” comparison, putting the post World War Two Hungarian case into a European perspective has to be combined with a historical one, that is dilemmas of Hungarian intellectuals during earlier periods of modern Hungarian history. *Pro patria and libertate*, the early 18th century slogan of Ferenc Rákóczi II’s war against the Habsburgs, refers to a problem that has been with us ever since. Translated into modern, more recent terminology: how do national sovereignty and social emancipation or modernization relate to each other: are they correlative concepts or can the two targets come into conflict?

¹⁵⁴ Tony Judt: *op. cit.* 199.

¹⁵⁵ Tony Judt: *op. cit.* 219.

¹⁵⁶ Tony Judt: *Past Imperfect. French Intellectuals 1944–1956*. University of California Press, Berkeley (Los Angeles) London, 1992. 196.

This was a great dilemma for many generations of creative Hungarian intellectuals and those active between 1945 and 1956 were not exceptions either.

Be it Oszkár Jászi or Ignác Darányi, Dezső Szilágyi, Mihály Károlyi or István Tisza or later Gyula Szekfű, Dezső Szabó, István Bethlen, Ernő Garami or Vilmos Vázsonyi, Kálmán Darányi, Gyula Hornyánszki, Gyula Gömbös, László Németh or István Bibó i. e. politicians in power or in opposition, social scientists, political thinkers, writers or other leading intellectuals, when trying to come up with “national salvation programs” of all kinds, they were generally thinking in dichotomies, basic cleavages. The most frequently counterposed concepts included revolution vs. counterrevolution, progressive vs. conservative, democratic vs. reactionary, “deep Hungarian” vs. “shallow Hungarian”, “kuruc” vs. “labanc”¹⁵⁷, “small Hungarian” vs. “big Hungarian” – Eastern orientation vs. Western orientation, “Realpolitiker” vs. prophets, false realists vs. Romantic essentialists¹⁵⁸, emulating Europe vs. national egoism, healthy Hungarian temper vs. distorting foreign influence, gentlemanlike vs. not gentlemanlike¹⁵⁹, “urban” vs. populist¹⁶⁰. They frequently attached as much or more significance to discrediting the other, the alternative program as to the formulation of their own agenda. There have certainly been alternatives to this dichotomic, occasionally even schizophrenic way of thinking: the idea of a “third way”, the search for the “middle way” has been a well-definable trend in Hungarian intellectual history from the reform generations in the 1830s and 1840s through the “Hungarian Victorians”, the “bourgeois radicals” of the early 20th century to populists and reform socialists and reform communists of all shades.¹⁶¹ Ideas of reasonable compromises were

¹⁵⁷ *Kuruc* meaning anti-Habsburg, radical Hungarian nationalist, *labanc* pro-Habsburg, traitor of the Hungarian national cause.

¹⁵⁸ In Hungarian: túlfeszült lényeglátók, cf. Dénes, Iván Zoltán: *A „realitás” illúziója. A historikus Szekfű Gyula pályafordulója* [The Illusion of Reality. A Turning Point in the Career of the Historian, Gyula Szekfű]. Budapest, 1976.

¹⁵⁹ *Úri vs. nem úri* in Hungarian

¹⁶⁰ *Urbánus vs. népies* in Hungarian

¹⁶¹ Cf. an interesting article by one of the most influential politicians in Hungary between 1920 and 1944, István Bethlen on tradition and revolution in politics: “Hagyomány és forradalom a politikában” (Tradition and Revolution in Politics), *Magyar Szemle*, 1934 február (XX/ 2), 105–118., republished in Romsics, Ignác (szerk.): *Bethlen István: Válogatott politikai írások és beszédek* (István Bethlen: Selected Political Writings and Speeches). Osiris, 2000. 158–173. A survey from a reform socialist perspective: Huszár Tibor: “Az értelmiség-szociológia és -szociográfia hazai történetéhez” In: Huszár Tibor: *Nemzetlét – nemzettudat* –

based on a systematic, scholarly exploration of the problems of the Hungarian society in the spirit of serving the interests of both the homeland and liberty¹⁶². These views were generally expressed by personalities without influential positions in state or party administrations, outside political power, with a restricted scope of political action. One can observe that in the political thought of personalities closer to political power bipolarism was frequently gaining ground.

One of the major additional factors of the polarization of intellectual and political life in Hungary, in addition to the European agenda, was the total discrediting of German culture. The nation of Kant, Hegel, Goethe, Schiller, the Humboldt brothers or Thomas Mann was for centuries a major point of orientation for many Hungarian intellectuals. German was the lingua franca of the Central European region, most educational institutions followed the German model, many outstanding scholars and artists studied and gained experience in Germany. Just the same way as it was difficult to be communist and to be critical of the Soviet Union at the same time, Germanophile anti-fascism could hardly exist.

The Issues on a European Cold War Intellectual Agenda

The post World War Two Hungarian intellectual landscape was thus not very different from the European one. Post crisis situations call for unambiguous clear definitions of guilt and responsibility. Milovan Djilas' point, I think, has quite general validity: "Totalitarianism at the outset is enthusiasm and conviction, only later does it become organizations, authority, careerism"¹⁶³ During the short time during the aftermath of World War Two and the unfolding of the Cold War the minds of the most creative intellectuals of both captive and non-captive nations focused basically on the following issues:

1. The role of the state. The all too powerful state without checks and balances can be a disaster but the weak state can not protect its citizens. The conservative state can be a major obstacle to modernization

értelmiség [National Existence, National Consciousness, Intellectuals]. Magvető, Budapest, 1984. 109–311.

¹⁶² „Haza és haladás” Cf. Litván György: *Magyar gondolat – szabad gondolat* [Hungarian Thought – Free Thought]. Budapest, Magvető Kiadó, 1978.

¹⁶³ Cited by Tony Judt: *op.cit.* 200.

whereas the state can be the major driving force of “progressive” economic, social, cultural modernization. In this interpretation the more progressive, the more modern the state, the more powerful the redistribution has to be.

2. Modern political elites have always neglected the fate of the working classes, both industrial and agrarian. If this issue is not resolved, outbursts of social dissatisfaction can not be avoided.
3. Every nation, every ethnic community has to cherish its “organic” traditions and beware of institutions, habits, way of life imposed on them from outside.
4. Can true patriots report in foreign countries on the sins and crimes committed by their own kin? How do trans- or international class and group solidarities relate to loyalty to the nation and the national state?
5. Small nations, small states are just the toys or puppets of big nations, big countries with very limited scope of action, they are forced to move into directions defined by the great powers.
6. It was assumed that guilt and responsibility can be clearly defined politically–historically just as much as legally.
7. As I have already mentioned, the intellectual platforms on these issues were generally expressed in a complete bipolarity. Not once, more time and energy was devoted to refuting the other “false” view than elaborating one’s own ideas. In numerous cases it was also proposed that “my “right view” was the progressive and democratic one: if you share my resentment and my option for redemption you are a democrat, if you disagree you are a “reactionary”. A powerful example for this rhetoric comes from a leading Hungarian communist intellectual, József Révai who in a *Szabad Nép*¹⁶⁴ article of December 14, 1947 wrote the following about the “third way”¹⁶⁵: “There is no third way but there are people who subscribe to it. They have to be named. That the ‘third way’ does not exist is not a communist, not a leftish social democratic but a democratic view....The road of the struggle

¹⁶⁴ Hungarian communist daily paper.

¹⁶⁵ The concept originated from the French socialist politician, Léon Blum and was also frequently used by the Austrian socialist, Oskar Pollak and the Swiss economist, Wilhelm Röpke. The third way was generally identified as a political option between the US and the Soviet Union or between Communism and „reactionaries”.

against Hungarian reactionaries and external imperialism is wide enough and can accommodate all who are patriots and democrats”¹⁶⁶.

8. When it comes to the criticism of the unveiled practices of the Soviet and other communist parties, for most of the communist or pro-communist “fellow-travellers” distancing themselves from communist parties or Soviet imperialist policy did not mean joining the anti-communist platform.¹⁶⁷

The conflicting views, clashing political platforms in these debates can be well described with the conceptual framework of scapegoating: most opinions were expressed in an “all include” way trying to give sweeping, comprehensive explanations to complex issues, i.e. enforced attribution, one of the key concepts of scapegoating.

Hungarian Case Studies

In a 1987 interview the at that time sixty-seven-year-old literary historian Péter Nagy said that in his generation intellectuals had approached the communist party for two reasons. One group did so because for them during the Horthy period there was not enough democracy, the other group approached the communist party because for them Horthy’s political system was not dictatorial enough.¹⁶⁸ Different as these approaches might have been, they shared the view that the arch – conservative Horthy and his associates ruined Hungary, they shared a scapegoat. It was this scapegoat function of the Horthy regime (that in many cases also included a more or less powerful criticism of its social democratic and liberal opposition) that served as a common platform for them. Serious intellectuals with very different expectations and backgrounds met as members or fellow travellers of the Communist Party and became (without, of course, having that intention) co-architects of the totalitarian regime. Typical situations are frequently best presented by extreme cases, so with the help of the extensive literature on the activities of leading Hungar-

¹⁶⁶ Révai József: “Harmadik út?” [A Third Way?] In: Révai József: *Élmi tudtunk a szabadsággal*. Szikra, Budapest, 1949. 217.

¹⁶⁷ Tony Judt: *op.cit.* 217.

¹⁶⁸In: Csáki Judit–Kovács Dezső (szerk.): *Rejtőzködő legendárium* [Hiding Legends]. Szépirodalmi és Szemtanú, Budapest, 1990. 222.

ian intellectuals following 1945, let me try to prove my point by a few examples.

1. The careers of two literary historians who from the early 1950s to the mid 1980s were key figures not only on their field but also in Hungarian intellectual life at large. They developed a very close relationship that was greatly shaped by their shared faith in communist ideas. One of them, István Király (1921–1989) came from a family of protestant clergymen, the other Pál Pándi (1926–1987) from an upper middle class Jewish intellectual family. For Pándi his humiliation during the Holocaust, for Király the intellectual impact of the Hungarian populists who explored the utmost misery of rural Hungary gave an impetus to join the communist movement. Communism promised quick and comprehensive redemption, fast and efficient solution of all major Hungarian social, economic and political problems for them. As bright and well-informed minds, they were fully aware of all the evil that communism was responsible for but they never gave up their loyalty to the movement and the party. Their frequent quarrels were a never ending series of debates on how to be a proper patriotic communist....A patriot who is fully aware of and pays tribute to the great values of the national cultural heritage and a communist who wants to transform, to educate his people in the spirit of a universally valid theory and its Soviet type incarnation. A hardly reconcilable contradiction that has consumed much of their creative energies and might have contributed to their relatively early deaths.¹⁶⁹
2. László Németh (1901–1975), the great populist ¹⁷⁰ writer who had done a lot for exploring options for dealing with key issues of the Hungarian society during the interwar period describes a unique meeting in late March 1947 in Budapest. The other great populist writer, Gyula Illyés organized this encounter with the leading communist party expert of cultural policy, József Révai (1898–1959), inviting also the internationally also well known Marxist Communist phi-

¹⁶⁹ Cf.: Csáki Judit–Kovács Dezső (szerk): *op. cit.* for a series of insightful interviews on Pándi's life and work.

¹⁷⁰ I use the term populist (in Hungarian *népi* or *népies*) to describe the group of Hungarian writers and intellectuals who argued that the poverty of the agrarian population, the anachronistic but huge social, economic and political influence of the big latifundia is the greatest obstacle to progress in Hungary.

osopher, György Lukács (1885–1971). In the course of the conversation Lukács is reported to have offered cooperation to Németh who responded: “Use my brain for concrete tasks as Lenin prescribes it for bourgeois brains!”¹⁷¹ The conversation had no follow up and the significance of a statement in the course of a private exchange certainly should not be overestimated but this minor episode sheds light on how during the aftermath of World War Two communist ideas could occasionally appeal to great intellectuals.

3. On the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the death of one of the greatest twentieth century Hungarian poets, Endre Ady (1877–1919), who in his poetry (and journalism) was passionately critical of the political–social establishment of his times, József Révai raised the issue of the politics of hatred. He asked the rhetoric question: how can Ady’s mythological hatred against István Tisza (prime minister from 1903 to 1905 and 1913 to 1917, Speaker of the lower chamber of the Hungarian Parliament in 1912–13, symbol of the political establishment), his pathetic call for revolution, help the simple workers of the day. How can this powerful passion help the realization of day-to day and longer term plans of peaceful construction? Révai’s answer: “...let us not believe that we have finally defeated the forces of the Hungarian Hell and we can dispose of Ady’s passionate democratic hatred. It is not our merit but our weakness that we can not hate the same way as Ady did. We are building socialism, but the forces of the Middle Ages are still with us and if Ady’s great hatred is alien to us, that means our being defenceless against Hunnia’s former, not gigantic but insidious and dangerous lords.”¹⁷² It was this powerful, “constructive” hatred that appealed to numerous contemporaries who believed in the feasibility of a fast, sweeping rebuilding of the Hungarian society.

¹⁷¹ Cited by Huszár Tibor: *op. cit.* 364.

¹⁷² Révai József: *Élni tudunk a szabadsággal* [We Could Profit from Liberty]. Szikra, Budapest, 1949. 679.

4. Conclusion

The Hungarian 1956 revolution played a major role in the liberation of captive minds all over the globe and creative Hungarian intellectuals played a decisive role in preparing it. In this short paper I was trying to outline the contemporary international and the twentieth century Hungarian intellectual context of the making of Hungarian captive minds. Hungarian captive minds shared the fate of many of their predecessors and contemporaries. The fate of those who, under the spell of powerful ideologies and scapegoating fantasies¹⁷³ were more attracted to political forces promising fast and efficient action than to moral principles calling for tolerance and empathy, the true legacy of creative intellectuals.

In 1956 for a quickly vanishing historical moment it looked as if not hatred – fed bipolarity but free, reasonable minds, echoing the best traditions of universal humanism, with a call for liberty and empathy, will become the main driving forces of political action. Both in overall European and Hungarian history this was a most unusual situation and as such was unlikely to last. We have to pay tribute to those creative captive minds who succeeded in ridding themselves of Stalinist captivity and contributed to making the 1956 Hungarian revolution a radiating event of universal history.

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¹⁷³ Cf. Chapter Four in Vladimir Tismaneanu's *Fantasies of Salvation*. Princeton University Press, 1998. 88–110.

4. Clio's Fate in Communist and Post-Communist East Central Europe

Eastern European Historiography in the Twentieth Century

Does historical scholarship reflect regionalism? Is it at all reasonable to speak about West European, American, Asian, African or East European historical writings, or is this not a proper approach? The organisational principles of most comprehensive historiographical surveys are in most cases different. Ideological, political and philosophical concepts, methodological principles and outstanding historians serve as structural pillars for these works. National historiographies deserve subchapters or chapters if they represent ideological, theoretical or methodological alternatives (such as German historicism or French social history or the American New History). Histories of historical writing thus have their focus on Germany, France, Britain and the United States – the Soviet Union and the countries of the former Soviet bloc enter the stage generally only in connection with the presentation of Marxist historiography. If this is the case, we cannot avoid asking the very basic introductory question: in our panel's attempt¹⁷⁴ to give an overall assessment of twentieth century historiography, what is the task of the "East European" expert on the panel? I thought of two issues that might have to be clarified from my perspective:

¹⁷⁴ The first draft of this paper was prepared for a panel on "An Assessment of Twentieth Century Historiography" at the 19th International Congress of Historical Sciences in Oslo, in 2000.

- a) Is there anything like an “East European contribution” to the overall development of twentieth century historiography? If so, does this contribution involve posing certain questions that are less or not at all relevant in other regions, including theoretical or methodological considerations? Or, can this specific contribution be found in the field of the institutions of historical research work? The other side of this very same coin might be the “responsibility” of Eastern Europe for distortions or deficiencies in twentieth century historiography, for abuses of historical scholarship.
- b) What are the peculiar, specific social, political and cultural roles or junctions of historical scholarship in Eastern Europe in the twentieth century?

These questions can hardly be answered if we are not aware of the fact that in this part of the world, much more than elsewhere, the educational and socio-political representative functions of history are as important or frequently more important than the scholarly, cognitive function. In other words, the craft of the Eastern European historian often embraces not only the academic, scholarly world but just as much, or occasionally even more, the public realm.¹⁷⁵ The organizers of the panel and the editor of the volume based on the contributions clearly aimed at producing such an awareness by encouraging us to discuss the relationship between academic and non-academic historians.

In this short survey, my sole aim is to present a few characteristic features of East European historiography during the twentieth century. My scope is, however, quite limited: I do not include Russia and the Soviet Union (only as a major external German Democratic Republic. I also have to add that most – though not all – my sources are secondary¹⁷⁶, as it would be very difficult to find anyone with the great language proficiency and research time necessary to digest the twentieth century output of Eastern European historians. I have also heavily relied on my numerous personal contacts with historians of the

¹⁷⁵ William E. Leuchtenburg: “The Historian and the Public Realm”, in *The American Historical Review*, vol. 97, no. I (February 1992), 1–18.

¹⁷⁶ Two secondary sources were the most indispensable in my work: the recent synthesis by Emil Niederhauser: *A történetírás története Kelet-Európában* (A History of Historical Writing in Eastern Europe). Budapest, 1995 and the essays by Ivo Banac, István Deák, Keith Hitchins, Jiri Koralka, Maria Todorova and Piotr S. Wandycz in the October 1992 (vol. 97, no. 4) issue of the *American Historical Review*.

countries I am going to discuss: Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia (since 1993 the Czech and the Slovak Republics), Hungary, Poland, Romania and the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

The Role of Historiography in East European Nation-making

States and Nations

It is a commonplace of East European social, political and intellectual history that the emergence of modern historical scholarship from the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is an important element of “national awakening” in the region. Historical writing was charged with strengthening national identities, and historians were occasionally directly involved in political developments.¹⁷⁷ The ideas of the Enlightenment initiated an effort to broaden the scope of historical investigations to involve not only elites but also the entirety of the nation. In the multi-ethnic Russian and Habsburg Empires and in the Balkans where the Ottoman Empire was gradually losing ground, the first modern historians traced the origins of peoples or of nations and not the histories of dynasties. In other words, for them the natural framework of history was the national and not the dynastic community. Monumental works such as Frantisek Palacky’s *History of the Czech Nation in the Czech and the Moravian Lands*, the synthetic works by Mihály Horváth and László Szalay in Hungary, Joachim Lelewel’s twenty-volume Polish history, P. Slavkov Sreckovic’s more laudatory approach to history and Ilion Ruvacac’s more critical appraisal of the history of the Serbs and N. Balcescu’s and M. Kogalniceanu’s books in Romania have greatly contributed to the formation of the national movements of the respective nations. The relation-

¹⁷⁷ Miloslav Hroch: *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Eastern Europe*. Cambridge, 1985; Emil Niederhauser: “A történetírás szerepe a kelet-európai nemzeti mozgalomban a felvilágosodás korában. Vázlat” (The Role of Historical Writing in the East European National Movement during the Age of the Enlightenment), in *A tudomány szolgálatában – Emlékkönyv Benda Kálmán 80. születésnapjára*. Budapest, 1993, 287–292. A small, “classical” piece on this topic is R. W. Seton-Watson: *The Historian as a Political Force in Central Europe*. An Inaugural Lecture Delivered on 2 November, 1922 as Professor of Central European History in the University of London. London, 1922.

ship between state territories and national homelands remained a key issue for historians of the region in the twentieth century as well. It is namely impossible to draw state borders in Eastern Europe without creating dissatisfied national minorities.

The great issues for politicians and social scientists, especially in the aftermath of World War One, were: Why is it practically impossible to grant self-determination to the peoples of the region, and what are the “second-best” solutions? Historians had the lion’s share in coming up with possible answers concerning both former and contemporary national problems and tragedies. The question of who was to be blamed for the partitionings was a bone of contention in Poland between representatives of the conservative, self-critical Krakow school (such as J. Szujski or M. Bobrzynsky) and representatives of the liberal Warsaw school historians (such as T. Korzon or W. Smolenski) who blamed the partitioning powers (Russia, the Habsburg Empire and Russia) for the Polish national tragedy. When the partitioning powers came into conflict with each other in 1914, the majority of Polish historians were getting closer to the optimism of the Warsaw school as far as the potential of the Polish nation for recreating its own state was concerned.

Whereas Polish historians faced the problem of the disintegration of their state in the late eighteenth century, for their Hungarian colleagues this was the problem of the day after 1918–19. Who was to be blamed for the dismemberment of the Habsburg Monarchy, for losing nearly 70 percent of the Hungarian state territory and about 40 percent of the Hungarian population? How could the country lose some of the most important areas in its national history, Transylvania being integrated into Romania and the former capital, Pozsony [Bratislava, Pressburg] into Czechoslovakia? The Hungarian argument against the decisions of the Paris Peace Conference was predominantly historical (though it drew extensively on economic and ethnic arguments as well). It pointed out that Hungarians had always been the most advanced political forces in the Carpathian Basin and – especially after 1867 – Hungarian political institutions gave the best possible framework for the numerous national groups to live together. The other side of the coin was the search for the nation’s own responsibility for its fate. A bit comparable to the discussions of the responsibility for the partitionings of Poland was the debate on the book by Gyula Szekfű, published in 1920 under the title *Three Genera-*

tions¹⁷⁸, which blamed Hungarian liberalism as represented by the Hungarian gentry for the national catastrophe. Three successive generations were misled by the mirage of western liberalism that could not take root in Hungary. As a consequence, the gaps in the system were filled by the “alien” Jewish middle and upper classes and the elite of the non-Hungarian nationalities.

For Romanians, the First World War turned out to be a most decisive step towards the building of a state uniting all Romanian-inhabited territories. A major problem of romantic historiography was thus solved. Still, attempts were made to prove the continuity between “aboriginal” Dacian and later Italian, Roman settlers of the first centuries A. D. in the Roman province of Dacia, and this way the historical legitimacy of the boundaries of post-World War I Romania was in the focus of the interest of Romanian historiographers and archaeologists (above all Nicolae Iorga and Vasile Parvan).

Before going into more examples, let me just raise what I consider the crucial question: Did this constant preoccupation with national problems enrich or decrease the value of East European historiographies? One possible line of argument is that at a time when social, cultural and economic history was coming into the foreground in West European historical scholarship, a more traditional type of political history showed a relative underdevelopment of historical scholarship. On the other hand, a great number of important source publications and large-scale monographs were motivated by this “national” drive. We would probably know much less about the history of Transylvania without the Hungarian–Romanian debates concerning the time of the arrival of Romanians there, less about Macedonia without Greek–Serbian–Bulgarian debates about which national state this region should belong to, less about Bessarabia without Russian–Romanian discussions about its “historically legitimate” national affiliation and less about numerous other territories of the region if they had not been subjects of national/nationalist rivalries. Sometimes, moreover, historical argument enriched historiography at large as well. The methodology of modern settlement and ethnohistory originating in the German “Volkstumkunde”, for example, reached an extremely high level with Elemér Mályusz and his disciples at the Péter Pázmány University of Budapest.¹⁷⁹ This point, however, already takes us to the second major field of interest in twentieth century Eastern European historiography.

¹⁷⁸ Gyula Szekfű: *Három nemzedék* [Three Generations]. Budapest, 1920.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Steven Béla Várdy: “Modern Hungarian Historiography”, *East European Quarterly*, Boulder, 1976, 104–120.

The Origins of East European Backwardness. The Symbolic Geography of Europe

Where do the internal borders of Europe run and what types of social, economic, political and cultural developmental patterns do they delineate? This is a key issue for all the social scientists of Eastern Europe and is closely connected to the search for “scapegoats”: Who is responsible for all the political and economic defeats, failures and losses of these nations? The search for these causes organised historians into “traditionalists” and “Europeanists” in Romania, “populists” and “urbanists” in Hungary, “centralists” and “decentralists” in Yugoslavia, “optimists” and “pessimists” in Poland, and romantic nationalists and the followers of Jaroslaw Goll’s sober realism in Czechoslovakia. This is, of course, an oversimplification, but the real crux of the matter was indeed quite simple: Is there only one standard type of social, economic and political transformation of European societies, i.e. the one shaped by the French political and British economic-industrial revolutions, and does the lack or belated emergence of similar processes signal underdevelopment? Or is this not at all the case? Are there several alternative modes of development, and does imposing the “Western model” onto “Eastern” societies lead to really great catastrophes?

Interest in tracing the origins of divergences and differences in European socio-economic development has never been limited to the research agendas of modern Eastern European historians. Leopold von Ranke was already highly interested in regional differences,¹⁸⁰ and later German, British and French scholars shed much light on the consequences of the great geographic discoveries, on colonisation, on the regional peculiarities of the confrontation of central royal power and the estates, on the impact of religious factors (Eastern Orthodoxy vs. Roman Catholicism, the spread of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation) and on cultural-artistic trends (Roman, Gothic Art, Renaissance), etc. for the slower pace of development in Eastern Europe. For twentieth century Eastern European historians, dealing with these issues was far from an academic “exercise”, they were (are) searching for the numerous factors shaping their lives and career possibilities as well. When – to a great extent in line with “Western” historical scholarship – twentieth century

¹⁸⁰ Leopold von Ranke: *Geschichte der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1535*. Berlin, 1824, Leipzig, 1885 (third edition) V–VI., XV–XIX.

Hungarian, Polish, Romanian and other historians looked into 16th–17th century European agrarian history, the historical question they were addressing was a most current, topical one. Namely, have international political developments (Ottoman–Turkish expansion, the growing influence of the Habsburgs in the region) and the phenomena of socio-economic development (the expansion of the landlord’s manorial land at the cost of the free peasants’ plots, the strengthening of feudal bonds, the gaining ground of the “second serfdom”) in the 16th and 17th centuries been “fatal” for the region, putting it on an “eternal” “forced path” of underdevelopment? Alternatively, was the significance of the “deviation” or “*Abbiegung*” of the territories East of the Elbe River greatly exaggerated as a politically motivated legitimization of twentieth century divisions of Europe?

If we now ask the question whether preoccupation with these problems turned out to be a gain or a loss for historical scholarship in Eastern Europe, my answer is quite resolutely that it has proved a benefit. What is more, I would go a step further: It greatly enriched the overall development of historical scholarship. Why and how? First of all, because it greatly motivated serious comparative economic and – to a lesser but most significant extent – social and cultural historical investigations. My first example is Hungarian but quite honestly not because I come from there, not because I know the historiography of that region best and I am favourably biased. This example is the life-work of István Hajnal (1892–1956), who is, unfortunately, not well known in the West.¹⁸¹ Hajnal’s major research interest was comparative palaeography and in more general terms the impact of the rise of literary and technical progress upon historical evolution. He pointed out mediaeval Hungary’s “Western Christian” character by proving that chancelleries in Hungary issued written privileges first at exactly the same time as their counterparts in the “West” and at this time all over Europe the clergy’s most important social function was to be “custodian” of what Hajnal, in his quite complicated terminology, defined as the “objective social organisation”. This is in sharp contrast with the Balkans and Russia, he argued, but is equally far from being identical with the “Western” situation. Evidence for Hajnal’s claim is that in Hungary and Poland, Latin was used as the language of official documents for a much longer time (up to the nineteenth century) than in the “West” where the ver-

¹⁸¹ Cf.: István Hajnal: *Technika, művelődés* [Technics, Culture]. Edited by Ferenc Glatz. Budapest, 1993.

vernaculars appeared in legally binding documents as early as the 12th century. This, however, does not at all mean that in this field Hungary would share the characteristics of the “Orthodox cultural circle”. There the “dead church vernaculars” (such as “ancient Slavic”) had nothing to do with the spoken national languages, whereas in Hungary and Poland, Latin lived in a permanent, deeply rooted and mutually enriching contact with the “living national language”.

I think that this is a good example of the great, fundamental question that nineteenth and twentieth century Czech, Polish, Hungarian, Romanian and Southern Slav historians and politicians have had to face: How is it that their regions have essentially always been “part of the West” but have not been treated by the great powers as equals? These regions were economically and socially less developed and frequently fell victims of “western” aspirations to great power. For Hajnal’s generation, the post-World War One peace settlement and, for later generations of historians, the post-World War Two peace settlement resulting in the division of Europe into the western and Soviet bloc were decisive experiences along this line.

One possible answer to this question was (and not seldom is) “victimisation”, i.e. the argument that the nations of the region have basically always been right, they have always done their share in “western” efforts (e.g. in the fight against the Mongolians, Ottomans and other barbarians), but evil, bad-intentioned western politicians have been far too egoistic and sacrificed them. The other type of answer (for which Hajnal was my first example) tried to go deeper, looking at structural characteristics of the societies “East of the River Elbe”. Historians working in this field – with a few exceptions like Hajnal – dwelt upon these problems more on a theoretical level, rather than working out comprehensive surveys of European history based on their unique perspectives. Three names are worth mentioning here. The first is Oscar Halecki (born in Poland, maturing into a great historian in the US), whose *Borderlands of Western Civilization* and *The Limits and Divisions of European History* postulated a fourfold division of Europe: Western, West Central, East Central and Eastern. This division challenged the East vs. West division established in the early 1950s by Cold War politics.¹⁸² Jenő Szűcs published his

¹⁸² Oscar Halecki: *Borderlands of Western Civilization*. New York, 1952 and idem: *The Limits and Divisions of European History*. New York, 1950.

analysis of the historical regions of Europe¹⁸³ following the footsteps of Hal-
ecky on the one hand, and a Hungarian social scientist, István Bibó, on the
other, in 1979. Bibó examined the possibilities (“Spielraum”) of the small na-
tions living between Germany and Russia in a series of brilliant essays during
the aftermath of World War Two arguing that ever since Charles the Great’s
time (9th century A. D.) Europe has been divided into “East” and “West”.
The borderlines between these two regions were in flux – up to approximately
the middle of the sixteenth century this borderline ran somewhere along the
Eastern border of Poland, Bohemia and Hungary. The tragedy of the Otto-
man Turkish wars pushed Hungary into the East, and the Habsburg rule of
the 18th and 19th centuries didn't allow for a reintegration into the West ei-
ther. It was only in 1945 that a most unique opportunity emerged for the “ar-
rested socio-economic development” to return to the “Western” pattern.

The two decisive peculiarities of this model, Hajnal argued, were the eco-
nomic modernisation disseminated through the Industrial Revolution and the
representative democratic political system rooted in the French Revolution.
According to this interpretation, the socialist revolution (“disseminated” by
the USSR) was in fact a great historical venture to try to get out of the dead-
lock of Eastern development. The deep-rooted historical traditions of the re-
gion should have enabled Hungarians (Czechs and Poles as well) to carry out
this “experiment” by employing the “western techniques of practising lib-
erty”. These views reflect the optimistic political climate of 1945–47, when a
couple of truly free elections took place in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslo-
vakia, and it was widely believed that pluralistic, “Western-type” democracies
could emerge next to the western borders of the Soviet Union. These hopes,
of course, quickly vanished, and the question that an increasing number of in-
tellectuals in the region (and specialists of the region) started posing was more
and more the one that – in my view – is topical up to the present day.

Namely, was it only Soviet expansionism (motivated by Russian great-
power imperialism and communist ideology) and the logic of the Cold War
that doomed these “western” or “westernising” aspirations to failure, or were
deeper lying structural peculiarities of decisive significance in this respect?
This is the key problem of Jenő Szűcs’ brilliant essay, which presents a great
number of arguments concerning the existence of a third region in Europe,

¹⁸³ Jenő Szűcs: The Three Historical Regions of Europe, *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae*, vol. 29 (1983) /2/–4/131–184.

delimited approximately by the Elbe region in the West, the Carpathians in the East, the Adriatic in the South, and the Baltic in the North. The region was defined both by referring to institutions that existed there but could not be found further East (autonomous towns, corporate liberties such as those of the guilds, the presence of Roman and Gothic art and architecture, the influence of the Reformation, etc.) and by the lack of institutions typical of the social and economic development further West (the so-called “second serfdom” instead of free peasantry, influential nobility instead of a strong burgher, later a bourgeois layer). The argument went into numerous details of social, economic, political and cultural development and in most fields arrived at the conclusion that most of the “Western” institutions were available in this central region but in a “belated” and “distorted” form. At approximately the same time (late 1970s, early 1980s) some Czechoslovak, Polish and Hungarian intellectuals started “propagating” the concept of Central Europe with more or less the same message. Their region (which in some statements included Croatia and Slovenia, sometimes even Austria and Northern Italy as well) might have been in many respects different from the West but it was much more different from the East, i.e. from Russia and the Orthodox world in general. The Iron Curtain logic of the Cold War was refuted here. Bibó and Szűcs addressed a great number of concrete issues and based their arguments on an extremely broad knowledge of research results, though the genre of their works was the historical essay. The question regarding the roots of the division of Europe during the decades of the Cold War, however, also resulted in large-scale monographs and synthetic works in East European historical writing.

In this short survey I can only refer to the similarly motivated economic and social history school in Poland with close connections to the *Annales* school (especially the works of Witold Kula), to the internationally most influential works on comparative East European economic and social history (Pál Zsigmond Pach, Iván T. Berend, György Ránki), the comprehensive works on East European national awakening in Hungary (Endre Arató, Emil Niederauser) and Czechoslovakia (Miroslav Hroch) and to the great achievements of Romanian intellectual historians (Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Lucian Blaga, Henri H. Stahl).

The Impact of the Soviet Political System on Historiography in Eastern Europe

No doubt, the most obvious argument in favour of defining Eastern Europe as an independent entity in structuring our assessment of twentieth century historiography is the fact that for four decades the region was integrated into the Soviet-dominated part of the divided world. The same political institutions were imposed on originally quite different countries, states and societies. Did this lead to some kind of a fast-paced homogenisation of the historiographies as well?

Before making an attempt to answer this question, I would like to emphasise the obvious point that the Marxist doctrine had a far broader impact on historiography than the “official Marxist–Leninism” of the countries of the Soviet bloc. Marxism will thus obviously be important for our assessment, but here my observations are limited to the historiographies of the countries of the Soviet bloc.

The peculiarities could perhaps be best summarised if we first focused on the institutional framework of research. The sciences, humanities and all fields of scholarship were under the tight central control of the respective departments of the Central Committees of the Communist Parties. It was believed that research could be much more efficient if it was separated from teaching, therefore a wide network of research institutes (partly built on earlier beginnings) was set up where the members were expected (at least in principle) to do nothing but research. These research institutes functioned within the framework of the Academies of Sciences which were stripped of their wealth and autonomy and practically operated as ministries of scientific research. Like all other conscientious builders of socialism, the members of the historical research institutes also prepared and sometimes even accomplished five-year plans. Primary emphasis was not so much on finding new primary sources or initiating new projects, but on the fight against the “Front of Bourgeois Historians”, i.e. on re-evaluating, in a Marxist–Leninist spirit, the historical sources made accessible by “bourgeois” predecessors. Funding was no problem if research and publications remained in this spirit. The most sensitive historical issues from the point of view of these regions – those relating to the past of the communist parties – were dealt with by special, so-called

party-historical institutes within the Central Committees of the parties. The awarding of degrees and the “system of scientific qualification” were highly centralised and politically controlled. No one could become a “candidate” or a “doctor of science” in any field without being examined in the basics of Marxist-Leninist ideology. Archives were under the strict control of the Ministries of Interior, and special limitations kept researchers from questions that were taboo, i.e. anything that could have presented an even slightly negative picture of the activities of the Soviet Union and the communist movements.

If we now shift our attention from the institutions to official doctrines that served as guidelines for historians in the countries of the Soviet bloc, this was dialectical and historical materialism, a mandatory subject of study for all university graduates. This doctrine provided an easy key to understanding historical processes, with class struggle being the driving force of historical progress. Less advanced social formations were displaced by more advanced ones, from the slave-holding to the feudal, from the feudal to the capitalist and finally from the capitalist to the socialist–communist formation.

The picture I draw here is, of course, extremely simplified because, in spite of the fact that the communist parties ruling the countries of the Soviet bloc exerted a very high level of control over historical research and historical publications, there were substantial differences both chronologically and regionally. Chronologically, 1956, the year of the twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Hungarian revolution, 1968, the year of world-wide student revolts and of the crushed “Prague Spring,” and 1985, the year of Gorbachev’s coming to power might serve as decisive milestones. Regionally, there was a huge difference between the countries led by orthodox, “hard-line” communists in Bulgaria and Romania or in Czechoslovakia after 1968, the more liberal Poland and Hungary and the more refined dogmatism of the German Democratic Republic. Yugoslavia, with its foreign policy and centralised but still – at least until the death of Tito in 1980 – federal communist power structure, was a very special case.

The best way to provoke a discussion is if we try to set up a balance sheet for the historiographies of the countries of the Soviet bloc. Based on a document proposed by the director of the Institute of History of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in 1991,¹⁸⁴ I will try to list the major areas where the So-

¹⁸⁴ Quoted by Maria Todorova in *American Historical Review*, Volume 97, Number 4 (October 1992), 1109. A comprehensive introduction to the role of historiography in the Soviet system is given in Ferenc Glatz (ed.), *The Soviet System and Historiography 1917–1989*. The

viet type totalitarian system is said to have influenced historiography most unfavourably. I will immediately add certain considerations to each point.

1. Access to archives of modern and contemporary history was limited and consequently the presentation of numerous post-World War One developments was biased, inadequate and distorted. Even if specialists of the earlier periods had an easier life as far as archival research was concerned, here the sources of distortion were different, more of an ideological nature.
2. The schematic application of Marxist social doctrine, of historical materialism, especially the concepts of class and class-struggle was typical. The artificially exaggerated role of the working-class movement and especially of the Communist Party in national histories not only falsified history but also cut it off, separated it from the main trends of national development. Still, it must not be forgotten that in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and even during the 1980s it seemed to be very likely that the communist-ruled monolithic state-party systems would prevail in Eastern Europe for a long time. From this perspective, the history of the internal life of the communist parties that had a major, decisive impact on current national and international developments was far from being unimportant.
3. “Social commissions” were attached to historical scholarship, which led to the categorisation of historical facts into “progressive-revolutionary” and “conservative-reactionary” trends. This could lead to deliberate distortions, a most conspicuous example being when disgraced personages were removed even from the photographs of events in which they participated. Still, quite frequently, a substantial difference existed between vulgar Marxist presentations for *agitprop* purposes and the way these issues were treated in the workshops of historical scholarship. Let me refer here to just one example, to the so-called Erik Molnár debate in Hungary in the 1960s. Erik Molnár was a prominent figure of the Hungarian communist movement, originally a lawyer but well-trained in other social sciences as well. Besides filling numerous senior political functions he was director of the

Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, 1995, especially the study by the editor.

Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences from 1949 to his death in 1966.

The actual starting point of the discussion (around 1960) was the evaluation of the anti-Habsburg movements in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Erik Molnár kept arguing that they were class-conflicts (between the Hungarian nobility, the Hungarian estates and the centralising Habsburg aspirations) rather than struggles for “national independence” mobilising all layers of Hungarian society. In his view, the nobility’s nationalism and a kind of “popular patriotism” in the 17th and early eighteenth centuries were not direct antecedents of modern nineteenth century Hungarian nationalism. These questions were in the foreground of the politico-ideological discussions of Molnár’s day: in the aftermath of the 1956 national revolution, a bit more than a year after the execution of Imre Nagy, the reformist communist leader of the revolution, the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party issued a statement on “bourgeois nationalism” and “socialist patriotism”, and in March 1960 a conference at the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy discussed the historical roots of nationalism. Molnár and a number of his followers argued that most Hungarian Marxist historians had divorced the concept of the Hungarian nation from social class and historical age. Nation and *patria* had not reflected the objective interests of all classes, only those of the exploiting ruling class. These were, of course, most orthodox Marxist views and could be (or could have been) easily interpreted as a historians’ contribution to the struggle against “reactionary nationalism” which had an important role among the causes of the 1956 “counterrevolution”. Still, the historico-political function of these views was quite different: they initiated a number of most productive research projects on how concepts like “people”, “nation”, “*patria*”, and “independence” were interpreted in 16th and 17th century Hungary. At the same time they also initiated debates on other key issues of Hungarian history in which the representatives of what is sometimes labelled the “sociological–realistic–denationalizing” and the “romantic–revolutionary progress–dogmatic nationalist” interpretations of modern Hungary confronted each other.

The “sociological” interpretation was trying – on the basis of plenty of new basic research – to examine the objective socio-economic foundations of political and ideological developments, whereas the “romantic camp”-moving the centre of the debate from early modern to more recent periods-was much more preoccupied with “subjective” factors such as the “correct” or “faulty” policies of leading personalities at major turning-points of Hungarian history. They were interested in “progressive political struggles”, whereas the “sociological” school believed, as one of its representatives, Péter Hanák, put it later in 1969, in analysing the sources of failures.

4. The introduction of “zones of silence” which comprised, for example, negative aspects of the activity of the Soviet Union or of the Great October Revolution, former conflicts among the countries, nations or peoples of the Soviet-led “brotherhood” of Eastern Europe, serious treatment of the Jewish question and the Holocaust, the non-communist political left and critical evaluation of the leading personalities of the inter-war years (Masaryk, Horthy, Pilsudski, Antonescu, Boris III). Scholarship, of course, cannot thrive when topics are designated taboo, but, strangely enough, it was exactly the insuppressible public will to know the truth about various facts of national histories and international relations that led to some of the first cracks and fissures in the edifice of the monolithic Soviet system. Whether it be the secret clauses of the 1939 German–Soviet Treaty about the territorial claims of the Soviet Union, the 1940 massacre of Polish army officers in Katyn by the Soviet army, the evaluation of the Paris peace settlements after World War One, the relationship between communists and social democrats, the 1953 uprising in East Berlin or the 1956 Hungarian revolution, balanced, scholarly evaluations here paved the way towards the transition in 1989–90. (It is perhaps of interest to mention here that a number of Eastern European historians were directly involved in the political transformation of the region. In Hungary between 1990 and 1994, for example, the prime minister, the foreign minister, the minister of defence, three deputy ministers, the president of the parliament and numerous members of parliament were historians, and historians played an important role during the period of transition in Poland as well.)

Academic and Non-academic Historians in Twentieth Century Eastern Europe

I assume that in Eastern Europe more than in other parts of the world, the borderline between “academic” and “non-academic” historians is quite blurred. The most outstanding figures of the profession have nearly always had manifold activities outside their university chairs; journalism, especially, was extremely important for them. The best-known and most productive Romanian historian, Iorga, besides publishing more than a thousand books, regularly contributed to daily papers. The essays of the most prestigious twentieth century Hungarian historian, Gyula Szekfű, had a very important role in orienting Hungarian intellectuals during World War Two. This tradition was followed after World War Two. Influential historians – communists and anti-communists alike – attached great significance to using non-academic fora for the popularisation of their views. This might be attributed to a peculiarity of political life in Eastern Europe: It is extremely loaded with history, i.e. when politicians identify their political platforms and present their programs, they rely on historical analogies much more than politicians elsewhere. Closely related to this peculiarity of the region is that, originally, scholarly exchanges about the evaluation of certain events and personalities could and can lead to passionate political debates. This is either connected to the politically most sensitive nature of the issues at stake or – especially but not exclusively during communist times – to the coded messages historical references carry. Let me refer to some random examples.

Who is to be blamed for the 1526 Turkish victory over Hungarian troops with the ensuing dismemberment of the country? What is the relationship among the Hussite movement, the Reformation and Czech national awakening? Numerous episodes of the Habsburg–Czech, Habsburg–Hungarian relationship, the relationship between Czechs and Germans in Bohemia, the debates about the theory of Daco–Romanian continuity in Transylvania were politically loaded issues for generations of historians. The immense political consequences of the ban on the showing of A. Miczkiewicz’s classic “anti-Russian” play, (*The Ancestors*) in Warsaw in March 1968 are well remembered. There is no space here to go into the details of the role of films and fiction in the realm of “non-academic” ways of addressing historical subjects. Forman, Jancsó, Wajda, Zanussi and a great many other film directors have

become world-famous through the presentation of major dilemmas and conflicts in their national histories. Some of the writers of the stature of Sienkiewicz or Gyula Illyés did more to shape the historical thought of their respective nations than generations of historians.

A peculiar significance is attached in this respect to what Katherine Verdery has most recently described as the “political lives of dead bodies”, i.e. public funerals (in most cases reburials) of outstanding historical personalities. Cathartic experiences of collective remembering¹⁸⁵ include the 1895 Budapest funeral of the leader of the 1848–49 Hungarian revolution, Lajos Kossuth, after his four and a half decade exile, the reburial of the leader of the early eighteenth century Hungarian anti-Habsburg movement, Ferenc Rákóczi in 1906, the commemoration of the 1389 death of Prince Lazar of Serbia in 1989, the return of the heart of Bulgaria’s former Tsar Boris from his place of exile in Spain to post-communist Bulgaria, the reburial of Polish World War II generals Bor-Komorowsky and Sikorski in post-communist Poland and the 1997 reburial of the corpse of Bishop Inochentie who died in Rome in 1768.

This article, which is no more than a short survey offering quite arbitrarily selected examples with the sole aim of provoking discussion, attempts to pave the way for a balanced, concise contribution to the assessment of twentieth century historiography. Coming now back to the introductory questions, let me restate my major points:

- a) Eastern European historiography did enrich the output of twentieth century historical writing not only by covering the history of the region but by innovations in methodology as well;
- b) The role of historiography and of historians in Eastern European political, cultural, and social life has been more decisive than in other parts of the world.

¹⁸⁵ Katherine Verdery: *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies. Reburial and Post-socialist Change*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1999.

Communism in Eastern Central European National Histories

“Proletariats of all countries – unite!” – Class and international solidarity should be more important in Communist countries than the national affiliations. In political practice, however, this solution often did not accord with theory.

Communist politics and Communist ideology make a claim to “internationalism”.¹⁸⁶ According to the Communist conception and political rhetoric, the international class solidarity of workers is far more important than their respective national affiliation. For decades, the slogan “Proletarians of all countries, unite!” appeared on the front pages of Communist Party dailies.

In the “fraternal community” of the countries of the Soviet bloc in East Central Europe, any serious attempts at closer “internationalist” cooperation were unwelcome. Symbolic “friendship meetings”, journeys in “trains of friendship”, spectacular events like for instance the “World Youth Meeting,” or international meetings of “progressive” intellectuals, had little to do with true internationalism.

In political practice, by contrast, especially in Agitation and Propaganda [Agitprop), the national card was often played emphatically. Imperialists and capitalists of all kinds were portrayed as enemies of the nation. This led to a very selective view of history: the Germans, for instance, counted in many official and semi-official Communist narratives as the traditional and, since the Middle Ages, the most dangerous enemy of the East Central European nations – with the exception, of course, of the citizens of the German Democratic Republic, the first democratic and peace-loving state on German soil. In the same propaganda, Russian imperialism was a characteristic of the Tsarist Empire, while the Soviet Union appeared as the guarantor of the freedom of the socialist countries and nations. The Soviet Union was the most important supporter (in word and deed) of the freedom struggles of all suppressed peo-

¹⁸⁶ The author is greatly indebted for the arguments contained in this essay to the considerable source material in Helmut Altrichter (ed), *Gegen Erinnerung. Geschichte als politisches Argument*, Munich 2006, and to the research findings of the project led by Stefan Berger in Manchester sponsored by the European Science Foundation entitled *Representations of the Past: The Writing of National Histories in Europe*.

ples on all continents. Communist propaganda in national colours seemed more credible than the abstract internationalism of the globally exploited workers. “The same socialist content in different national forms” was a common way of putting it.

Struggles over History since 1988–1991

The relentless insistence on the historical necessity of the worldwide victory of Communism under the leadership of the Soviet Union was an essential component of Communist propaganda. After many decades under the influence of this propaganda, how to interpret the collapse of the Soviet Union presented an immense challenge for the intellectuals in East Central Europe. Conflicts over how to evaluate historical events played a key role in the transition to democracy. At the level of daily life, this often led to the post-war period being provisionally removed from the school curriculum. In the Soviet Union, history examinations were temporarily suspended as early as May 1988.¹⁸⁷

In all countries of the former Soviet bloc, questions of national history and questions about how to situate the completely unexpected events in history took over a prominent place in daily political disputes. Everywhere there were complaints that the Soviet-backed Communists and their ideology had destroyed the most beautiful and heroic national traditions. In parallel to this, light was shed on Soviet atrocities committed against the peoples of East Central Europe, for instance the murder of Polish officers in Katyn in April–May 1940 or the terror (the mass murder and deportation of civilians) in those territories which the Soviets occupied during the last phase of the Second World War. In this sense, too, Communism appeared as the destroyer of the most valuable national traditions. Many politicians demanded the rediscovery and the reconstruction of national histories which had for so long been disowned.

In the course of this development, some spectacular events were organised which were supposed to emphasise the post-Communist view of national history: symbolic (re-) burials, the removal of old monuments and the erection of new ones, the choice of new national days. In Yugoslavia, the commemorations of the 600th anniversary of the death of Prince Lazar in 1989 meant a

¹⁸⁷ H. Altricher, *op. cit.*, ix.

return to the founding myths of the Serbian kingdom, which soon replaced the cult of the “Yugoslav” partisans of the Second World War. The return to his homeland of the heart of the Bulgarian Tsar Boris, who died in 1941 in circumstances which remain unclear to this day, was a symbolic break with the Communist legacy in Bulgaria. The reburial of the Hungarian admiral Miklós Horthy, regent of the country from 1920 to 1944, was supposed to indicate the continuity between pre- and post-Communist times. The ceremonial burial of two Polish generals of the “Homeland Army”, Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski and Władysław Sikorski, symbolised the questioning of the legitimacy of the Communist regime in Poland. Many of the monuments put up to the Soviet “liberators” disappeared; new ones were put up which commemorated anti-Communist national heroes like Józef Piłsudski in Poland, Jozef Tiso in Slovakia, Ion Antonescu in Romania, Pál Teleki in Hungary, or acts of violence committed by Soviet foreign policy (in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968).

All these measures were strong reactions against the Communists’ attempt to engineer a complete break with the traditions of the so-called reactionary past of those peoples now ruled by the Soviet Union, and against the attempt to construct the new “fraternal community” of socialist countries on the basis of their shared “progressive” traditions of class struggle. In the official Communist master-narratives of national history, expressed in political speeches and in centrally controlled schoolbooks, the struggle against the ethnically and nationally foreign exploiter was always the focal point. According to this rhetoric, the best patriots were those personalities who had pursued goals of national and class struggle in parallel and combined with one another.

Even before the collapse of the Soviet empire, as a result of the lessening of Soviet ideological pressure, there appeared – if not so much in scholarship, then all the more so in journalism and everyday speech – long banished visions of the historical achievements and tragic sacrifices of the East Central European elites in the inter-war period. After the changes of 1989–1990, this process accelerated. To put it sharply, one can say that the chances of a person, a movement, an institution or a political party of winning a prominent place in the new national pantheon were greater, the more anti-Communist they were deemed to have been. This was also a reaction to the Communist ideological practice, which had been to brand all anti-Communists equally as

“fascists”.¹⁸⁸ The great danger now lay in the fact that occasionally representatives of the extreme right were shown in a positive light because of their anti-Communist attitude.

The Place of Communism in History

In many serious discussions, intellectuals in post-Communist East Central Europe asked what place the Communist regime had in the continuity of their national histories. Was it really true that Communism had been imposed from outside in all countries of the region, or did it also have internal social and political roots in the countries themselves? Could the Communist era be seen as part of national history at all? Was it not instead, in spite of its many victims, only an unimportant temporary episode, historically speaking, even though it lasted a long time? Is it possible to speak of “organic” national histories which airbrush out the Communism period? One frequently posed question, which is closely linked to this problem is: was Communism an attempt to overcome the (economic and intellectual) backwardness of the respective region, or did it on the contrary help to make the gap between Eastern and Western Europe even wider and deeper than before?

A further part of this complex of problems is the responsibility (or rather, the credit) for the end of Communism. Was it the strong and unbreakable backbone of the nations, which had resisted all the maliciousness and demands of the Soviets? Were there true patriots whose unwavering and consistent anti-Communism finally led to success? Or was it not instead more the pragmatic and patriotic Communists who had recognised that the Communist model had no future, and had started to dismantle the system when the decline of the Soviet Union and the international political situation permitted this?

Nowhere in the former Soviet bloc countries was an appropriate legal framework found for the punishment of the crimes committed by the Communist system. No system functions without supporters, but it is difficult to formalise the extent of responsibility of officials at different levels within the hierarchy. As social-psychological research shows, this is hardly avoidable. If we view the trauma of system change as a mass-psychological phenomenon,

¹⁸⁸ Tony Judt, *A History of Europe since 1945*, New York, 2005, 215.

then the regeneration of a society's capacities after such a trauma is essentially impossible without social cohesion.¹⁸⁹ Social-psychological experience teaches that such cohesion is best achieved with the help of scapegoats.¹⁹⁰ The scapegoat function can be transferred onto individuals, smaller or larger groups, but also onto whole countries or ideologies. A decisive part of post-Communist historical discourse was therefore devoted to making Communism in general fulfil this function. Communism as an ideology, and the personalities, groups and parties which represented it, were made responsible not only for the economic and social decline of the countries which it ruled, but also for national tragedies.

Besides the responsibilities of individual Communists and groups of Communists, the question of how to evaluate the role of the Soviet Union in the Second World War was a further central theme for public discussion in all countries of the former Soviet camp. To what extent was the Soviet Union a liberator? Was it not just a new conqueror? Is Soviet guilt comparable to Nazi guilt? How can one compare the Gulag to the Nazi concentration camps? The themes of the historians' dispute in Germany in the 1980s surfaced, but nowhere in the former Soviet satellite countries did they lead to a cathartic discussion which would have facilitated the post-Communist cohesion of these societies. Instead, it led to new divisions.

Sociological appraisals and political science analyses agree that historical themes played an important role in post-Communist elections. Views about historical questions have helped to form the structure of post-Communist societies. Among these questions, the history of refugees, expulsion and forced emigration plays an important role. These events affected more than thirty million people¹⁹¹ and their fate was hardly mentioned in the Communist times; social turbulence is therefore only too understandable. The potential

¹⁸⁹ Jon Mills & Janusz A. Polanowski: *Ontology of Prejudice*, Amsterdam 1997; Zsolt Enyedi & Ferenc Erős (eds): *Authoritarianism and Prejudice, Central European Perspectives*, Budapest 1999.

¹⁹⁰ René Girard: *The Scapegoat*, Washington D.C., 1989; Tom Douglas: *Scapegoats. Transferring Blame*, London–New York, 1995. For an exceptionally rich survey of the classical literature on this, see Frederic Cople Jaher: *A Scapegoat in the New Wilderness*, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1994, 251–255.

¹⁹¹ Paul Magocsy: *Historical Atlas of Central Europe*. Revised and expanded edition, Toronto 2002, 193; Zoltán Szász: "Nationen und Emanzipationen im Kontext der ost- und mitteleuropäischen Wende," in Ursula G. Jaerisch: *Von Lehrte zum Lehrter Bahnhof, West-Östliche Exkursionen zu Helmut Lippelts 70. Geburtstag*, Bonn, 2002, 61–69.

for hatred between neighbours was deliberately suppressed for many years. Traditional conflicts over state citizenship in ethnically mixed border areas also resurfaced. The same questions became the main pillars of several different national master narratives. I would like to illustrate my own general thoughts on this with two case studies.

Hungary: the Crowned Republic

In the official and semi-official Communist representations of Hungarian history in the 20th century, the period of the Republic of Councils, between 21st March and 1st August 1919, played a key role. After the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy, and following the short-lived democratic republic, a Communist-dominated coalition between Communists and Social Democrats took power in Hungary. In the Communist view, this proved the fact that Communism was deeply rooted in Hungary. In the collective Hungarian memory, however, this event has instead always been linked with the tragic territorial losses of the country after the First World War (some two thirds of the previous state territory).

It is assumed that the victorious powers sanctioned Hungary's dismantlement only out of fear that the country's Communism would spread. Without the Communists in power, they would have been much more tolerant and generous. No historical source confirms this, but the myth that the Communists squandered the country survived and awoke with special force in the years 1989–1991. Many Communist officials in 1919 were of Jewish origin. Therefore the anti-Communist rhetoric had anti-Semitic undertones. In the political struggles of the early post-Communist period, liberals – who were often the children of former Communist officials – were often presented as the descendants of the former Communist “squanderers of the country”. For instance, at the beginning of 1990, a radical right-wing newspaper wrote that anti-Semites of old Hungary would not have hated capitalist businessmen, but instead Marxist Freemason intellectuals who sold Transylvania and first invited the Communists into power.¹⁹²

¹⁹² *Szent Korona*, 21st February 1990, 6 f., quoted from László Karsai: *Kirekesztők* (Exclusionists), Budapest, 1992, 150.

According to a representative opinion poll taken sixty years after the end of the Second World War¹⁹³, Hungarian society was divided into three large camps over the question of how to evaluate the impact of the war's outcome on Hungary. About one third of the population believed that the Soviets had indeed liberated Hungary, another third spoke of occupation, and the remaining third thought that neither liberation nor occupation was the right expression. The results of this poll confirmed the thesis put forward by a young Hungarian political scientist on the basis of only thirty case studies: in the structuring of post-Communist societies, shared ancestry and inherited mentalities have driven economically definable differences into the background.¹⁹⁴ This in no way suggests that material factors play no role at all in the structuring of post-Communist societies. It is instead to say that the mechanisms of collective memory influence the structuring of post-Communist societies to a greater extent than in West European societies. History plays an important role in determining electoral attitudes in Hungary: in the above mentioned opinion poll, 43% of the larger party in the governing coalition, the Socialists, and as much as 51% of the smaller coalition partner, the Liberals, said that the Red Army had "liberated" Hungary, while 41% of the opposition conservative Young Democrats (FIDESZ) said that it had occupied it.

The discussion about the fate of the Holy Crown of Hungary shows the complexity of how to deal with the Communist past. The crown, which since the 11th century has been a symbol of Hungarian sovereignty, ended up towards the end of the Second World War in Fort Knox in the USA. At the beginning of 1978, in spite of protests from the majority of Hungarian political exiles, the Americans gave this exceptionally valuable symbol of Hungarian national identity back to the Hungarian state as a sign of détente. The crown was handed over by an American delegation led by US Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, to representatives of the Communist-led Hungarian state in the late 19th – early 20th century Hungarian parliament building. Although part of the agreement was that János Kádár, the First Secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party, would not attend the ceremony, this gesture nonetheless signified American recognition of the legitimacy of Communist power in Hungary.

¹⁹³ *Népszabadság*, 2nd April 2005, 5.

¹⁹⁴ Richárd László: "Posztkommunista társadalom és kollektív emlékezet," [Post-Communist Society and Collective Memory]. *Valóság* 42 (1999) 2, 1–18.

Together with other crown jewels, the crown was kept in the Hungarian National Museum until the end of 1999. The year 2000 was of great significance for the politicisation of this tradition. That year was the thousandth anniversary of the adoption of Christianity and the creation of the Hungarian state, and thus the national celebrations could be linked to the general Christian jubilee. The conservative government coalition mobilised very considerable financial and logistical resources for the celebrations from 1st January 2000 to 20th August 2001, in which a leading role was reserved for the Holy Crown. To open these celebrations of the thousand-year existence of the state, the Christian-National government had the crown brought ceremonially into the parliament building. This gesture was criticised by the socialist-liberal opposition, which argued that the roots of the legitimacy of today's Hungarian state did not lie in a crown bestowed by the Pope, but instead the sovereignty of the people symbolised by the constitution.

Poland: the Christ among Nations

As a result of the two World Wars, Hungary lost about two thirds of its territory. More than one third of all Hungarians became national minorities in other states. In spite of indescribable sufferings, Poland by contrast was able to end both wars as a victor. After the Second World War there was a huge gap, in a country exhausted by civil war, between the Communists' propaganda about liberation and the daily experiences of the masses. Thus the national self-image of Poland as the crucified Christ among people, which had originated in the age of Romanticism when Poland was divided and incorporated into the territory of three different empires, was able to survive almost untouched in the popular collective memory.

There was an important interface between the forced official view of history and the one held by most people. In the apt words of Claudia Kraft: "The Communist theoreticians of Poland's shift to the West linked together (geo-) political and socio-economic ideas in their arguments: they said that the new territorial order after the war corresponded to the conception of Polish history of the Piastic dukes, which was said to have the advantage that it freed the country from the minorities problem which had burdened the Second Republic. In addition, it gave Poland a safe strategic situation against the German aggressor, and opened up the prospect of peaceful coexistence with Po-

land's Eastern neighbours. Just as, according to this interpretation, the Jagiellonian kings' conception of Poland, which extended far into the East, was supported by the "exploiter class" of Polish landowners, so Piastic Poland was presented as the predecessor of the "People's Poland", serving the interests of the population at large.¹⁹⁵

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and of the Communist regime in Poland, and especially after Poland joined the EU on 1st May 1944, this view has become anachronistic. In spite of the long intellectual and political tradition of anti-Communism in the country, and in spite of the triumph of the opposition against the Communist party in 1989, there is still no clear historical discourse about the role of Communism in the national history of Poland. The party political struggles are heavily influenced by the different positions taken on this question. The Social Democrats, many of whom came from the old Communist Party (the Polish United Workers' Party, PZPR) emphasise that the incorporation of Poland into the Soviet bloc represented the only realistic alternative for the reconstruction of the state after the Second World War. The Communists are thereby presented as defenders of the national interest; without their collaboration with the Soviets, Poland would not have been able to resist German imperialism. The division of Poland between Hitler and Stalin in 1939 is usually glossed over.

The thesis that the decades of Communist power have had an exceptionally deep influence on society, and that in this sense all Poles are to some extent "post-Communists", has been propagated with some success. On the right wing of the political spectrum, it is assumed the Communist state was confronted by a society, the overwhelming majority of the population, which defended traditional national values and the idea of the simultaneous struggle against both the Eastern and Western enemies of the Poles. Seen from this perspective, the former Party bureaucrats and other holders of power under Communism count as traitors to the Polish national interest who should be judicially and morally condemned.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ Claudia Kraft, "Geschichte im langen Transformationsprozess in Polen," in H. Altrichter, *op. cit.* p. 132.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 143–145.

Outlook

The long years of theoretical and political effort by Communist ideologues and those in power did not succeed in their attempt to fuse Communist ideas with national ideologies in East Central European societies. It proved impossible to convince those societies that the internationalism of “all proletarians of the world” could be harmonised with the defence of national interests. Practical experience has shown the opposite.

The experience of the system change in East Central Europe, and the process of European integration do, however, show that after the grandiose collapse of Communist internationalism, intellectuals in East Central Europe should not be spared the challenge of developing supranational identities.

The Political Uses of Historical Myths and the Fabrication of Hatreds in Twentieth Century Hungary

Public opinion generally expects historians to deal with clearly defined 'hard' political, economic and social facts. However, a major tendency in our profession today examines a most complicated intellectual–political process: how the past turns into histories, the relationship between memory and forgetting. Historical myths present a peculiar bridge between the past and the present, they are much more embedded into the present than into the past, they are primarily sources of the time and place when they are used. Why the one and not the other myth gets a certain function at a certain place and time is a most interesting issue to be researched.¹⁹⁷ My major point in this paper is that historical myths are not phantasies but well fabricated means/tools that are used and abused in processes of political legitimation.¹⁹⁸ Social psychological investigations show that collective hatreds can best mobilize heterogeneous groups for collective action and powerful myths can have tremendous strength and propaganda value. The more turning points, fundamental changes, extremely fast pace transformations in the history of a state or nation occur, the greater demand emerges for historical–political myths. On the level of day to day political struggles myths are used by all belligerents and this has nothing to do with respectable historical scholarship. Myths themselves are most valuable sources for the study of social psyche that is otherwise hard to access with the traditional tools of historians.

¹⁹⁷ Since 1945 120 new states have come into being in the world and each of them uses history for legitimacy. Jeremy Black: *Using History*. London, Hodder Arnold, 2005, 1.

¹⁹⁸ For a comprehensive introduction to the origins, uses and abuses of historical myths cf. the introduction to the volume: Ignác Romsics (ed.): *Mitoszok, legendák, tévhitek a 20. századi magyar történelemről* [Myths, legends, misbeliefs on twentieth century Hungarian history]. Budapest, Osiris, 2002, 7–27.

Some Theoretical Considerations

I think that the major driving force in the process of the making and use/implementation of political mythology is the need for fast and efficient legitimation in times of quick changes. Max Weber gave a frequently quoted analysis of charismatic legitimation: the rule of the charismatic leader is rooted in his/her suprahuman and supernatural abilities.¹⁹⁹ It is absolutely negligible whether he/she possesses truly special talents, the essential issue is how his/her followers, those subordinated to charismatic rule, think about it. The contents of the myth can be fully or partially refuted but our major concern is why and how myths can make people act. Carl Schmitt's theory of political theology can also guide us in dealing with these problems. He argued that all major concepts of modern state theory are secularized theological concepts. 'Salvation' of ethnically, socially or religiously defined communities of all sizes frequently appear in historical-political myths. The other element in Schmitt's theory is putting the concepts of "friend" and "enemy" into the centre of political analysis, for him collective identity, collective action is shaped and inspired by the definition of the enemy.²⁰⁰ Real social existence (*Dasein*) emerges only through the definition of our enemies. In most myths the destruction of the constructed enemy appears as the major precondition of salvation. The epistemological scepticism or occasionally even nihilism of postmodern thinkers (as Ankersmit, Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard or White) presents myths as an alternative perception and presentation of the past not superior or inferior in comparison with the traditional scholarly approach. There are also a number of categorizations of politically used historical myths²⁰¹ that I have found useful in my work, let me limit myself here to three of them. Raoul Girardet writes about four major groups of these myths:

- conspiracy theories,
- the presentation of some time periods as 'golden ages',
- the hero-saviours who in critical, crisis situations save, even redeem their communities and

¹⁹⁹ Frank Parkin: *Max Weber*. Revised edition, Routledge, 2002, 84–87.

²⁰⁰ For me the best summary of Carl Schmitt's views is Mark Lilla: *The Reckless Mind. Intellectuals in Politics*, New York, NYRB, 2001, 49–76.

²⁰¹ Cf. Romsics (ed.): *Mítoszok, legendák, tévhitek a 20. századi magyar történelemről* [Myths, legends, misbeliefs on twentieth century Hungarian history]. Budapest, Osiris, 2002. 19.

- the myth of the homogeneous unity of nations, classes and other communities.²⁰²

George Schöpflin focuses on national myths pointing out – among others – the myths of ethnogenesis, sacral significance of certain territories, national sufferings as means of European or global redemption, salvation, all of them especially powerful in Eastern and Central Europe.²⁰³

Closely connected to this are the insightful observations of Wolfgang Schivelbush in his *The Culture of Defeat*. By quoting Reinhart Koselleck, he makes the point for his choice of subject: “History may in the short term be made by the victors, but historical wisdom is in the long run enriched more by the vanquished... Being defeated appears to be an inexhaustible wellspring of intellectual progress”.²⁰⁴ He also refers to Nietzsche’s 1871 warning that great victories pose great dangers and that the triumph of the German Empire would entail the demise of German culture. Twentieth-century wars namely aim at much more than military victory; the humiliation and destruction of the enemy nation is a major target. Consequently, defeat is generally not considered to be just a military affair but can become tantamount to the agony of nation.²⁰⁵

Twentieth Century Hungarian Myths

For a nation that experienced nine system changes, six state forms, four border changes, three revolutions, two world wars and three invasions of foreign troops on its territory during the unfortunate 20th century, history is far from being an academic discourse. Closely connected to the frequent changes of political regimes, redrawing of borders, migrations, Hungarian history is a

²⁰² Raoul Girardet: *Mythes et mythologies politiques*. Paris, Seuil, 1996, 9–24. Cited by Romsics (ed.), 21.

²⁰³ George Schöpflin: “The functions of myth and a taxonomy of myths.” In Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin (eds.): *Myths and Nationhood*. London, Hurst and Company, 28–35. Cited by Romsics (ed.), 21. Also published as “A taxonomy of myths and their functions.” In George Schöpflin: *Nation, Identity, Power*. New York, New York University Press, 2000, 79–98.

²⁰⁴ Wolfgang Schivelbush: *The Culture of Defeat. On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery*. New York, Picador, 2004, (First published as *Die Kultur der Niederlage*, Alexander Fest Verlag, 2001) 4.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

most fertile soil for the proliferation of historical myths that shape political rhetoric, history education, collective memories and forgetting. In presenting these Hungarian peculiarities, first, I would like to focus on three turning points in twentieth century Hungarian history and related myths: 1918–1920, culminating in the loss of two thirds of Hungarian state territory, the period from the Communist take-over in 1948–49 to 1956 and the transition in 1989–90. The concluding part of this paper will address two historical–political myths that relate to all periods of Hungarian history and were/are used by very differing political groupings: 'ill fate' and the assumption of 'organic' and 'aberrant' elements/periods in the course of Hungarian history.

1918–20, the Myth of Liberal-Leftish– Communist–Jewish Conspiracy

In a broader historical–political sense the present starts with 1918–20 in Hungary, the responsibility for the tremendous loss of territory and ethnic Hungarian population as stipulated by the June 4th, 1920 Trianon treaty is still on the political agenda. This does not mean mobilization for a reconquest of these territories by any political actor but is a critical issue well used in daily political struggles. Let me refer to just two examples. First, in 1990 the historian prime minister of the first democratically elected post-Communist government defined himself as the prime minister of 15 million Hungarians (the population of Hungary is 10 million, the total number of Hungarian national minorities in the Carpathian basin is about 3 million + 2 million elsewhere). The second example is a referendum in December 2004 about 'double citizenship' to be offered to members of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, Romania, the Ukraine, Serbia and Croatia. The motion was not carried, those voting against it in public discourses were frequently labelled as traitors of the national cause.²⁰⁶

During the aftermath of the First World War in the political vacuum followed by the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy in Hungary a democratic revolution was followed by a Communist–social democratic dictatorship and

²⁰⁶ In more detail: Attila Pók: "Geschichte im Transformationsprozess Ungarns", in Helmut Altrichter (Hrg.): *Gegen Erinnerung. Geschichte als politisches Argument im Transformationsprozess Ost-, Ostmittel- und Südosteuropas*. München, R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2006, 173–189.

in collective memory these revolutions have been closely connected to the territorial losses. The predominance of Jews in the leadership of the ‘Soviet Republic’ resulted in the most powerful twentieth century Hungarian political myth: liberal-leftish–communist–Jewish responsibility for the truncation of Hungary. A number of related hatreds targeted the victorious entente powers, the new neighbours of Hungary, the liberal political elite that was unable to defend the country, a complex myth of a network of conspiracies. Serious research based on primary sources started in the early 1960s, a number of Hungarian historians produced lots of publications refuting these points but these well constructed hatreds, *mutatis mutandis*, are still present in more or less veiled forms, as for example in election campaigns.²⁰⁷

The picture would not be complete if I did not refer to the positive counterpoints to these hate-driven negative myths. In other words: positive myths that were complementary to the powerfully tragic collective memories. One of the most persistent such myths is the idea of a most decisive Hungarian contribution to the defence of European culture and civilization against Ottoman Turkish barbarian imperial expansion from the late 14th to early 18th centuries. Namely, Hungary sacrificed itself as a stronghold of Western Christian civilisation and thus would have deserved a late reward for that in the aftermath of World War One. The idea that the victorious entente powers should have seriously considered these Hungarian historical merits instead of giving in to anti-Hungarian Slav and Romanian propaganda, was an essential element of interwar Hungarian political thought and revived after 1989–90. The cult of King Matthias (ruled from 1458 to 1490), his reign as the greatest golden age of Hungary was closely connected to this idea: he was the last Hungarian ruler who successfully defended Hungary’s great power position against both the Ottoman Turks and the Habsburgs before the collapse of the Hungarian state for 150 years following a battle at Mohács, in the south of the country in 1526.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ In more detail Attila Pók: “The Politics of Hatred: Scapegoating in Interwar Hungary”, in Marius Turda, Paul J. Weindling: *Blood and Homeland. Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900–1940*, Budapest–New York, CEU Press, 2007, 152–165.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Ignác Romsics: A kereszténység védőpajzsától az uniós tagságig. [From the Shield of Christianity to the EU Membership]. In: Ignác Romsics–Mihály Szegedy-Maszák (eds.): *Mi a magyar?* [How to Define the Hungarian?]. Habsburg Történeti Intézet–Rubicon, Budapest, 2005, 202–230.

From 1948–49, the Myth of Constructive Hatred to the Myths of 1956

In the Second World War Hungary lost close to one million people, about 10 per cent of its population. More than 50 per cent of this number were victims of the Holocaust. These unprecedented series of tragedies also called for the clarification of historical antecedents and the Communist political take-over brought about the official explanation: imperialism ('the most advanced form of capitalism') and fascism ('the open terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic, most aggressive groups of the finance capital') and their Hungarian servants carry the responsibility for all the sufferings of the Hungarian people. A most powerful myth was created that in a peculiar way combined a dogmatic Marxist-Leninist internationalism and traditional Hungarian nationalism. The dominant interpretation of Hungarian history that permeated scholarship, politics and education for about three decades after 1948 presented the 400 years after the collapse of the strong mediaeval Hungarian state in the middle of the 16th century as a series of national struggles for independence. The united 'progressive' forces of the nation struggled against the Ottoman Turks, then against the Habsburgs, later against Nazi Germany until the Soviet Union brought about liberty and the preconditions for building up a sovereign, democratic and prosperous Hungary in 1945. The year of the Communist takeover in Hungary was the centenary of the 1848 revolution and struggle for liberty against the Habsburgs. The frequent references to Communists as the heirs to the patriotic leaders of this revolution were a strong effort to strengthen the legitimacy of Communist rule.²⁰⁹ An apparent problem of this powerful myth was that in 1849 the Habsburgs crushed the Hungarian aspirations with the help of Russian troops. The 'obvious' explanation described this as a Czarist intervention that was contrary to the feelings of the Russian people. To prove this much effort was made to present the tragedy of a certain Captain Gusev in the Russian army who refused to follow the Czarist command, openly sympathized with the cause of the Hungarians and therefore with a number of his fellow-soldiers was tried and executed in late July, 1849. By now we know that the story was invented

²⁰⁹ A comprehensive introduction to these issues Árpád von Klimó: *Nation, Konfession, Geschichte. Zur nationalen Geschichtskultur Ungarns im europäischen Kontext 1860–1948*. (Südost-europäische Arbeiten, 117.) München, R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2003.

by a Hungarian writer, still it was widely popularized, even a street in downtown Budapest was named after this fictitious hero.²¹⁰

The Communists argued that it was only them who were capable of implementing the social, political aims of the revolutionaries of 1848. They pointed out the significance of the struggle against the enemies and traitors of the revolution, using the revolutionary myth as a source of legitimacy also for show trials. As László Rajk (1909–1949), Minister of Interior, himself victim of the most important Stalinist show trial in Hungary, a bit more than a year before his arrest argued: “We defend ourselves against the internal enemy with full vigilance... we shall be worthy of our freedomfighter ancestors. Whoever stands in our way, will be annihilated”.²¹¹ It was this powerful, ‘democratic’ and ‘constructive’ hatred rooted in the revolutionary myth that for a time appealed to numerous contemporaries who wanted to believe in the feasibility of a fast, sweeping rebuilding of Hungarian society. A leading leftish liberal intellectual reported on a conversation with József Révai, 1898–1959, one of the four top level leaders of the Hungarian Communist Party some time around late 1945. Mr. Gyula Schöpflin (1910–2004) the prestigious non-Communist leftish writer, raised the issue of the psychology of fascism. He argued that it was an important field of study to try to find out what turns an educated, normal man, even creative intellectuals into SS soldiers, guards of concentration camps, desk- or ‘real’ murderers. The senior Hungarian Communist ideologist got very angry and said: “This is incorrect... fascists are to be hated, not to be analyzed!”²¹² Still, very soon this myth-constructing, hate-loaded propaganda backfired, the accumulated hate-potential could be mobilized against the Soviet puppet Communist leadership.²¹³ The Communist political propaganda kept emphasizing the solid unity of all the ‘progressive’, ‘peace-loving’, ‘anti-imperialistic’ forces against the tiny but most dangerous

²¹⁰ Boldizsár Vörös: “Illés Béla Guszev-ügye, avagy hogyan lett az írói kitalációból történelmi tény 1945 és 1951 között” [Béla Illés’ Gusev issue, or how a writer’s invention turned into a historical fact from 1945 to 1951]. *Múltunk* (2006) 3.

²¹¹ György Gyarmati: *Március hatalma, a hatalom márciusa. Fejezetek március 15. ünnepelésének történetéből* [The power of March, the March of power. Chapters from the history of the commemorations of March 15]. Budapest, Paginarum, 1998, 98.

²¹² “Szélkiáltó. Schöpflin Gyulával beszélget Széchenyi Ágnes” [Shouting with the wind. A conversation between Ágnes Széchenyi and Gyula Schöpflin]. *Mozgó világ*, (1990) 10.

²¹³ Cf. Attila Pók: “Ira populi: Targets of Popular Hatred and Scapegoats in Hungary 1944–1956.” In: László Péter–Martin Rady (eds.): *Resistance, Rebellion and Revolution in Hungary and Central Europe: Commemorating 1956*. London, Hungarian Cultural Centre London–School of Slavonic and East European Studies University College, 2008, 177–190.

minority of reactionary, war-monger imperialists. This myth, however, did not work in the longer run. All the concepts it used were empty, did not connect to traditional national myths, were unable to mobilize elements of collective memory.

In 1956, however the leaders of the revolution successfully appealed to the myth of the revolutionary unity of the nation in its struggle against Soviet oppression. The number of armed freedom fighters was no more than 15 000 but a revolutionary spirit temporarily permeated the society. During the two weeks of the revolution the myth of the unity of the nation, with frequent references to the heroism of the forefathers in 1848–49 was a more powerful weapon than guns.²¹⁴ The memory of Imre Nagy as a symbol of Hungarian national unity was one of the most productive twentieth century Hungarian national myths. The reform-Communist key-figure of the revolution was far from being a strong-handed leader, he was unable to direct the course of events, still his unwillingness to compromise following the Soviet invasion of Hungary, his execution on June 16, 1958 turned him into a martyr, even a saviour. The call for his rehabilitation was a stable common platform for critics of all colours of the Kádár-regime²¹⁵.

1989–90, the Myth of the Negotiated Revolution

My third example deals with the role of myth making during the transition period in 1989–90 and in its collective memory. If we want to define a symbolic date for the end of Communism in Hungary, that is the reburial of Imre Nagy, reform-Communist leader of the 1956 Hungarian revolution,²¹⁶ on June

²¹⁴ Cf. János M. Rainer: “A Progress of Ideas: The Hungarian revolution of 1956”. In Lee W. Congdon and Béla K. Király (eds.): *The ideas of the Hungarian Revolution, Suppressed and Victorious 1956–1999*. Social Science Monographs, Boulder, Colorado. Atlantic Research and Publications, Inc. Highland Lakes, New Jersey. Distributed by Columbia University Press, New York, 2002, 7–41.

²¹⁵ Cf. most recently Karl P. Benziger: *Imre Nagy, Martyr of the Nation. Contested History, Legitimacy, and Popular Memory in Hungary*. Lexington Books. A Division of Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. Lanham, Boulder–New York–Toronto–Plymouth, UK., 2008.

²¹⁶ The most comprehensive political biography on Imre Nagy was written by János M. Rainer: *Nagy Imre: Politikai életrajz I–II*. Budapest, 1956-os Intézet, 1996, 1999. Most recently Karl P. Benziger: *Imre Nagy, Martyr of the Nation. Contested History, Legitimacy, and*

16, 1989. He was executed for his leading role in the 1956 revolution the same day thirty one years before. This reburial probably would not have been possible if three months earlier the commemoration of March 15 had not presented the strength of the opposition. March 15 is the anniversary of the 1848 Hungarian revolution, a pillar of Hungarian collective memory. A succinct definition called it a 'lawful revolution'²¹⁷ as, according to the Hungarian interpretation the Habsburgs obstructed the implementation of the Hungarian demands, legitimate by contemporary legal standards, so the Hungarians had no other choice but armed self-defence. The memory of 1848 was combined with the memory of 1956, the tradition of summarizing the most important demands in 12 points was also a surviving 1848 tradition used in 1956 just as much as in 1989. In terms of the use of public spaces, symbolic references to 1848 were the deepest sources of legitimacy both in 1956 and 1989–90. One of the leaders of the Hungarian liberal opposition was asked in late 1989: who gave you the legitimacy to negotiate with the state party about the change of the political system? The prompt answer: The crowd at the reburial of Imre Nagy!²¹⁸ The crowd representing the people is a 19th century Romantic myth, well exploited in 1989, in spite of the fact that the whole transition process was much more a series of deals than a traditional revolution. Professor Tőkés invented a nice phrase in the title of his book on the Hungarian transition: 'the negotiated revolution'²¹⁹. Still, I think that one of the reasons for the contested memory of 1956 and 1989–90 is that no sweeping, powerful myth acceptable to all political groupings and social layers exists. If I may be provocative: this is a good negative example for the use of myths in the process of legitimization.

Popular Memory in Hungary. Lexington Books, Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Plymouth, UK, 2008.

²¹⁷ István Deák: *The Lawful Revolution. Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians 1848–1849*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1979.

²¹⁸ Information from personal recollections. The politician was Imre Mécs, active participant of the 1956 revolution. Sentenced to death with Imre Nagy but was pardoned and given a life-sentence, free in 1962, but under control up to 1989. After the system-change leading figure of the Association of Free Democrats (SZDSZ, a liberal party)

²¹⁹ Rudolf L. Tőkés: *Hungary's negotiated revolution. Economic reform, social change and political succession*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.

The Myth of Ill Fate

More than two decades ago a well known Hungarian sociologist published the results of a very interesting comparative investigation of the national anthems of about 120 states/nations in the world.²²⁰ It turned out that in both music and text Hungary is most unique: instead of heroism, pride and mobilizing, passionate enthusiasm our anthem is sad, melancholic, it even reflects some apology for collective sins.

*Fate, who for so long didst frown
Bring him happy times and ways
Atoning sorrow hath weighed down
sins of past and future days...
...for our misdeed
anger rose within thy breast...*

There are numerous references to past glory, the vicissitudes of the present (1820s to the early 1840s): external threat, internal strife, groans and sighs.

The idea of a possible death of the nation is a powerful motive of 19th century Romantic – minded intellectuals. Herder made a reference to the possibility of Hungarians vanishing and this left a deep imprint in collective memory though I do not think that apart from specialist scholars anyone has ever read the actual reference. Still, it is frequently referred to as an internationally most influential evaluation of Hungarians and led to the search for responsibility. On the other hand, the myth of the peculiar Hungarian ‘ill fate’ could also function as a factor strengthening the collective identity of the socially most stratified national community.²²¹

²²⁰ Elemér Hankiss: *Diagnózisok* [Diagnoses]. Magvető, Budapest, 1983. See also György Csepeli–Antal Örkény: “Jelképek és eszmék az európai nemzeti himnuszokban” [Symbols and ideas in European national anthems]. *Regio* (1996) 2.

²²¹ Cf. Ferenc Glatz: “A balsors nemzete?” [The nation of ill fate?]. *História*, (1997/1) 3–4, 11.

The Myth of ‘Organic’ Historical Development

The prime minister of the first democratically elected government after 1989–90, József Antall in his program speech said: ‘The last 40 years represent a break in the history of our nation. Now we intend to return to the European heritage....’²²² A seemingly totally different quotation from the by far best comprehensive 20th century Hungarian history: ‘In the continuity of Hungarian history March 21 1919 represents a much larger break than the 1918 revolution’²²³. The issue of continuities and discontinuities is a recurring topos in historical–political discourses in Hungary. Here I can refer to only one more example: the large scale, extravagant celebration of the ‘millennium,’ i.e. the 1000th anniversary of the foundation of the Hungarian state and the adoption of Christianity in 2000 during the rule of the conservative coalition. The central symbol of the festivities was the Hungarian crown, a symbol of Hungarian sovereignty and unbroken continuity of Hungarian statehood. Out of the 469 years from the collapse of the mediaeval Hungarian great power in 1541 to 2000 Hungary enjoyed limited sovereignty only for 51 years (Austro–Hungarian Monarchy), and real sovereignty was accomplished on one third of the pre World War One territory in 1918 for 82 years. The total balance of the 1000 years is thus far from being unambiguous: 541 years real independence versus 326 years of lack and 133 years of one or the other way limited sovereignty. Still, the politically motivated myth called for unambiguity.

As a consequence of the Second World War the Hungarian royal crown (the ‘Holy Crown’) ended up in Fort Knox in the US and was returned to Hungary in early 1978 under the condition that it will be kept in the Hungarian National Museum as a historical relic. However, the conservative government decided to open the millenary celebrations of the year 2000 by a festive transfer of the Holy Crown to the aula of the Hungarian parliament thus emphasizing its role in the legitimization of the Hungarian state. The liberal and socialist opposition passionately opposed this arguing that in a modern democracy as Hungary legitimacy is rooted in people’s will and not in the continuity with a mediaeval monarchy sanctioned by the pope-bestowed crown.

²²² May 22, 1990.

²²³ Ignác Romsics: *Magyarország története a XX. században* [History of Hungary during the XXth century]. Osiris, 1999, 122. March 21, 1919 is the day of the proclamation of the Hungarian Soviet Republic.

Conclusion

A comment on this debate takes me to the provocative conclusion of my paper. This last example also explained a historical myth as a tool/means in the legitimization of political institutions. However, it focused not on mobilizing hatred but on strengthening political cohesion and was most successful in that sense. Historical myths can thus have both negative (hatred inciting) and positive (strengthening social cohesion) political functions IRRESPECTIVE of their historically true or false contents. In other words: historical myths themselves are not negative or positive, they can have both socially–politically benevolent or disastrous consequences. My investigations are thus far from being abstract academic discourses. I feel worried about the fast proliferation of hate and hate speech in current Hungarian public and private life. As a cure and prevention, a look at the roots and nature of hatred in the context of related myths and their open discussion can hopefully be of some use.

Why was There No *Historikerstreit* in Hungary after 1989–1990?

To some the question in the title of this paper might seem odd in relation to a country where so many public debates have addressed historical issues during the last fifteen years. This was especially the case during the immediate post-Communist years that will be the focus here, specifically the prime minister-ship of historian József Antall (1990–1993). A “*Historikerstreit*” is, however, very different from a series of debates on historical issues. As it emerged in 1986 in its powerful form in the Federal Republic of Germany, it consisted of a political–historical discourse on two most crucial questions about mid-century German history: the uniqueness of National Socialist persecution and destruction of the Jews in Europe, and the responsibility of German society as a whole for this tragedy.²²⁴

Holocaust and Trianon

The question I would like to concentrate on is why Hungarian “political–historical” discourses during these years did not focus on the specifically Hungarian aspects of these issues: the connections between “traditional” anti-Semitism and the Holocaust on the one hand, and Hungarian society’s responsibility for the Holocaust on the other. How can one explain the phenomenon that, in the frequently quite fervent historical–political public discourses, relatively little attention was paid to a key problem of twentieth-century Hungarian history: is the Holocaust in Hungary the ultimate stage in the long-term evolution of Hungarian anti-Semitism, rooted in early-modern and modern Hungarian economic, social, and cultural history’, or does the behaviour of Hungarian society during the Holocaust have more recent antecedents and can be traced from what we might call the “Trianon-syndrome,”

²²⁴ For a summary of the German case, see “*Historikerstreit*”: *Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung*. Munich–Zurich, Piper Verlag, 1987, especially the contributions by Christian Meier and Jürgen Kocka.

that is, the social trauma caused by the tremendous territorial losses following World War I? In other words, the purpose of this paper is to situate these problems among the historical issues that arose during the debates inside and outside the parliament during the years of the first post-1989–90 government. I would like to pose the following question: why in such a past-oriented society, where historical analogies are frequently more instrumental in defining political platforms and programs than economic and social political issues, the attempts to formulate a sincere and courageous confrontation with this problem did not develop into a nation-wide debate? Why, in short, was the responsibility of Hungarian society and its political elite for the destruction of two thirds of Hungarian Jewry not part of the period's self-examination?

Levels of “Undertaking History”

An examination of the historical issues discussed by politicians, as well as the general public discourses, offer us at least three levels of “undertaking history.” In addition to the scholarly research and publication with their accepted methods of scrutiny, history as a collective memory has an important cohesive force, which is frequently used and abused by politicians to achieve political mobilization and legitimization. Both are different from history education on the primary and secondary levels where the presentation of historical complexity is limited by the capabilities of students.²²⁵

In this paper my focus is on the second level as reflected in acts of parliament, statements of politicians, and historically motivated rituals and exchanges in the media.

History and Historians in the Transition Process

In the political program of the “democratic opposition” published in June 1987, the last section was dedicated to “1956 in contemporary Hungarian

²²⁵ On this subject, see my article, “Undertaking History’ – Shaping the New Europe,” in *Approaches to European Historical Consciousness: Reflections and Provocations*, ed. Sharon Macdonald, Hamburg, Korber Stiftung, 2000, 163–67.

politics.” It argued that a re-evaluation of 1956 was a basic precondition of a new “social contract” as a way out of the crisis. Simultaneously, the Communist Party leadership also realized the significance of the re-evaluation of the recent past. The Party Conference of May 1989 appointed a small team of experts to evaluate the last four decades of Hungarian history. The relevant chapter of the team’s report blamed the Party leadership (and not internal and external hostile forces) for creating a crisis situation in October 1956 and used the term “popular uprising” (instead of the common official usage, “counter-revolution”) to describe the events from October 23 to November 4. This terminology was cited in a broadcast interview’ with a member of the Politburo, Imre Pozsgay, on January 28, 1989 and had an enormous political impact. The February 11–12 Central Committee session that adopted this document also decided to allow the introduction of a multi-party system in the country. The re-evaluation of 1956 thus served as a “historical basis” of the ensuing talks between various groups of the opposition and the Party.²²⁶

1956 in the New Parliament

The next major steps with significant historical implications along the road of the political transition included the reburial of the leader of the 1956 revolution, Imre Nagy, on June 16, 1989, and the proclamation of the republic on October 23. The statement of the interim head of state, Mátyás Szűrös, on this latter festive occasion referred to the liberal national revolution of 1848, the proclamation of the republic in November 1918, the years of pluralistic democracy between 1945 and 1948, and the 1956 revolution as the antecedents of the new republic. Following the successful “round-table” negotiations, in the first freely elected parliament in forty years, 386 members of parliament (MPs) represented six parties with the center-right wing Hungarian Democratic Forum (*Magyar Demokrata Fórum* – MDF) as the strongest force. Twenty-seven of them were historians, including the prime minister, the speaker of the house, two ministers, and several secretaries of state. The average age of the MPs of the parties in the governing coalition (MDF, with the

²²⁶ For the most recent summary of this process, see Ignác Romsics: *Volt egyszer egy rendszerváltozás* [Once upon a time there was a change of systems]. Budapest, Rubicon, 2003.

Smallholders and the Christian Democrats) was well beyond fifty, so most of them experienced 1956 as adults.

In the opposition, the majority of the liberals (representatives of the Alliance of Free Democrats [*Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége* – SZDSZ]), were generally younger (born in the late 1940s and early 1950s), most members of the Alliance of Young Democrats [*Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége* – FIDESZ] were born in the first half of the 1960s, and the Socialists included all generations who unreservedly cherished the memory of the 1956 revolution. Thus at its opening ceremony, the new parliament, in the presence of the head of the Habsburg family, a descendant of the last king of Hungary, and Béla Varga, the speaker of the last democratic parliament after World War II, enacted the memory of the 1956 revolution into law.

Professor György Szabad, an expert in nineteenth-century Hungarian history and the speaker of the new parliament, defined 1956 as the new democracy's most important connection to the Hungarian past. The parliament also successfully requested that the Soviet leadership condemn the 1956 intervention: this indeed happened a few days before the dissolution of the Soviet Union when Prime Minister Antall visited Moscow in early December 1991.

Debates on the Coat of Arms and the National Holidays

Although the acceptance of the 1956 revolution as the immediate historical antecedent of the new republic was unanimous, diverging views surfaced when it came to two other historical issues on the new parliament's agenda: the choice of a new coat of arms and new national holidays. Although the overwhelming majority of MPs voted for the old coat of arms with the royal crown, used before the last proclamation of the republic in 1946, a group of liberals argued in favour of the coat of arms without a crown as initiated by the leader of the 1848 revolution, Lajos Kossuth, in 1849. Their point was that the crown stood for continuity with the pre-1945 regime and symbolized the territorial integrity of pre-World War I Hungary that might offend the sensitivities of the neighbouring countries.

Society in general seemed to be more divided about this issue than the MPs. According to a public opinion poll of November 1989,²²⁷ 49 percent preferred the “crown” and 34 percent the “Kossuth version.” Among young citizens, more educated people, residents of Budapest, and Protestants and atheists, the “Kossuth version” was more popular; while older people, Catholics, less-educated people, and residents outside Budapest preferred the “crown.” Comparable differences in interpreting Hungary’s historical heritage also surfaced in the parliamentary debates on the choice of the primary national holiday. The fact that August 20, the day dedicated to the founder of the first Hungarian Kingdom, Szent István [Saint Stephen], was selected, could be and was interpreted by parliamentary and non-parliamentary critics of the government as a return to pre-1945 conservative traditions. As early as September 1990 the largest oppositional party, the liberal SZDSZ, published an evaluation of the first 100 days of the government that, among other things, argued:

Fears rise about the undisguised nostalgia, which the parties of the governing coalition feel for the pre-1945 Hungary. The spirit of the coalition recalls the Hungary between the two World Wars. The governing parties decreasingly admit the continuity between 1956 and 1945–47, and increasingly refer to our historical deadlock of Horthyite²²⁸ Hungary. This was alarming to everyone who wished that the transformation of the form of government not bring back the vanished world of the former upper classes, but show the way towards a democratic Europe at the turn of the millennium.²²⁹

Horthy and Hungary’s Role in World War II

Hungary’s role in the Second World War entered the agenda of fierce political debates when on July 30, 1990, a former high-ranking officer of the Horthy army and a member of the MDF faction appeared in parliament wearing the

²²⁷ Quoted by Heino Nyssönen: “Historical Debates in the First Free Elected Parliament in Hungary 1990–1994”. (Manuscript, 1997), 7.

²²⁸ The reference is to Miklós Horthy, head of state between 1920 and 1944.

²²⁹ Nyssönen, 14.

old uniform and declared that Hungary's "crusade" against the Soviet Union was legitimate because World War II was fought against the threat of Communism. Then, following a family request, on September 3, 1993, Miklós Horthy, Hungary's head of state between 1920 and 1944, was reburied in his home village, Kenderes. The event was officially a "private affair" in the presence of six members of the government and about 50,000 people. The re-evaluation of Horthy and his regime became an important issue because, according to some politicians close to Christian–Democratic government circles, the Horthy regime was more legitimate than the Communist regime imposed on Hungary by the Soviet Union. The day before Horthy's reburial, liberal intellectuals set up a "counter-event" under the title "Final Good-Bye to the Horthy Regime."

Restitution and Retribution

These historical controversies were far from being academic and symbolic political exchanges, especially with regard to compensation for nationalized and otherwise confiscated (or stolen) properties; these were historically determined practical matters. In the first relevant 1991 laws,²³⁰ compensation was restricted to property "lost" after June 8, 1949; this left most Jews and/or their descendants uncompensated. Additional 1992 laws,²³¹ however, broadened the basis for compensation back to 1939. It was in the course of public

²³⁰ Hungarian Parliamentary Law 1991 :XXV (A tulajdonviszonyok rendezése érdekében, az állam által az állampolgárok tulajdonában igazságtalanul okozott károk részleges kárpótlásáról [On the partial recompensation of the damage unjustly caused by the state to the properties of the citizens, aiming at the regulation of property relations]); Hungarian Parliamentary Law 1991: XXX11 (A volt egyházi ingatlanok tulajdoni helyzetének rendezéséről [On the regulation of the proprietary rights of real estate formerly owned by the churches]).

²³¹ Hungarian Parliamentary Law 1992:XXIV (A tulajdonviszonyok rendezése érdekében, az állam által az állampolgárok tulajdonában az 1939. május 1-jétől 1949. június 8-ig terjedő időben alkotott jogszabályok alkalmazásával okozott károk részleges kárpótlásáról [On the partial recompensation of the damage caused to the properties of the citizens as a result of the application of legal *acquis* passed between May 1, 1939, and June 8, 1949, aiming at the regulation of property relations]); Hungarian Parliamentary' Law 1992:XXX11 (Az életüktől és szabadságuktól politikai okokból jogtalanul megfosztottak kárpótlásáról [On the compensation to people who were divested of their lives and liberty for political reasons]).

discourse related to these laws that the place of Jews in Hungarian society was seriously debated. Other than in this context, the subject did not frequently arise in the early 1990s.

The Antecedents of the 1989–1990 Transition Process

The “practicality” of these debates also surfaced in the evaluation of the decades of Communist rule. Many pseudo- or semi-scholarly books were published about Communist crimes with the single purpose of proving the brutality of the Communist elite without differentiating among periods of open terror (1949–1962), of relative consolidation (during the 1960s and 1970s), and of the beginning of the decline (starting in the mid-1980s). The parliamentary “reflection” of these publications was the “Justitia” plan dealing with the possibilities of “making justice” for the crimes committed during the Communist era. Was there any way to ensure that, after the fall of Communism, the “perpetrators” would not be better off than the “victims”? What about the statute of limitation? These questions in turn led to an expansion of the scope of the debates. Questions about the social basis of the Hungarian Communist Party arose: were 20 percent of the active population forced into the Party? Was the number of “true” Communists just around 30,000, and was this figure relevant for 1945, late 1956, or late 1989? Did the majority of the Hungarian population (at least between 1962 and the early 1980s) accept the aims and the methods of the Party leadership?

Another set of questions examined the cause of the decline and collapse of the Kádár regime and dealt with the “hierarchy” of four major factors:

- The fundamental transformation of the international political and economic environment;
- the structural deficiencies of the economic and political pillars of the Socialist-Communist system;
- the activities of the two main groups of dissidents (national-populist and democratic opposition); and
- the divisions in the Party leadership as a result of the work of the reform Communists.

The respective debates were largely shaped by the political issues of the day. The Christian-Nationalist side presented the socialists as direct successors of the former Communist elite, whereas the liberal and socialist politicians frequently referred to their conservative rivals as representatives of the worst destructive conservative-nationalist traditions of the interwar and Second World War period.

I hope this short survey shows that the two issues (the relationship between “traditional” anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, and Hungarian society’s responsibility for the latter) that, in my opinion, should have been in the centre of the “mainstream” historical debates were marginalized. Furthermore, they seemed to have been “expropriated” by the radical right together with the evaluation of the post-World War I revolutions and the Trianon peace treaty.²³² Why did this happen?

In order to attempt an answer to this question, respective developments from May 1990 to May 1994 have to be organized into five major groups.

Official Symbolic Commemorations, Paying Tribute to the Victims of the Holocaust

Continuing the policy of the Németh government, just a few weeks after the new government entered office (July 8, 1990), the president of the republic and the prime minister attended the unveiling of a monument dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust on the territory of the former Budapest ghetto; the minister of the interior spoke at the unveiling by the Danube of the monument dedicated to Jewish Hungarian martyrs (October 14); and the president of Israel was most cordially received in Budapest (June 1991). However, occasionally the intention to hold a dignified, festive commemoration yielded to political practicalities. For example, in József Antall’s March 19, 1991, commemoration in the form of a “pre-agenda statement” in parliament, he said:

²³² For the emergence of the radical right in Hungary, see Ferenc Fehér and Ágnes Heller: *Magyar-Szómália felé?* [Heading towards Hungarian-Somalia?]. *Népszabadság* (January 9, 1993); also published in István Feitl (ed.): *Jobboldali radikalizmusok tegnap és ma* [Right-wing radicalism yesterday and today]. Budapest, Napvilág, 1998, 221–26. For a comprehensive survey, see László Bartus: *Jobb magyarok: A szélsőjobb útja a hatalomhoz* [Better Hungarians: The extreme right on the road to power]. Budapest, L. Bartus, 2001.

[In 1944] Hungary had already waged war for years, serious tribulations, violations of law occurred, or rather laws contrary the concepts of human rights and humanism were effective. But nobody should forget that until March 19, 1944, Europe's largest Jewish community was still alive... tens of thousands of foreign refugees and homeless people lived in relative security... the political parties that are here today are heirs to the political ideas that opposed Hitler's Germany and believed in parliamentary democracy.²³³

The facts referred to here are, of course, true, but no word was spoken about those who carried the responsibility for the ensuing horror. Three years later at a similar commemoration, the speaker of the house tried to be more balanced when he said, "...the foreign occupation committed the worst crimes against the nation and unfortunately there were accomplices to these anti-human and antinational crimes."²³⁴

Nothing was said, however, about the responsibility of the Hungarian state apparatus that was active during the deportations.

Legal Measures

In 1991 and 1992, the Hungarian Parliament passed several laws on compensation and restitution regarding "unfairly" committed damages to Hungarian citizens between 1939 and 1949. After an extensive debate in 1992, a most promising law (May 12, Law XXXII) was passed in Parliament relating to compensation for individuals unlawfully deprived of their freedom and their lives for political reasons. This meant a straightforward recognition of the Hungarian state's responsibility. As significant as this law might have been (and the leaders of the Hungarian Jewish community recognized it as such), its great symbolic and practical value was substantially reduced by two factors.

First, it did not offer compensation to the Jewish inmates of forced labour camps, to the members of labour battalions, and to those who were murdered in the course of deportation.

²³³ *Országgyűlési Napló 1990–1994* [Parliamentary reporter], 6759.

²³⁴ *Idem.*, 34087.

Second, the originally suggested sum of one million HUF (Hungarian Forint) to be paid for the loss of one life was, after six years of debate, finally reduced to a ridiculous 30,000 HUF, the equivalent of about USD 150. The huge moral advantage of initiating this compensation process at a time “when the issue had not been put in the glare of the spotlight even in the advanced democracies,”²³⁵ thus became insignificant.

Another legal matter showed a similar picture. The Paris Peace Treaty (Act XVIII of 1947, Article 27, Clause 2) obliged Hungary to return the assets of Hungarian Jews who perished without known heirs “to Hungarian organizations of those affected by the discriminative laws” within twelve months. The March 11, 1993, Hungarian Constitutional Court Resolution pointed out that this obligation had not been met and this unconstitutional situation was to be remedied by the Hungarian Parliament by the end of 1993. This did not happen.

The debates frequently brought, and continue to bring up, the comparison of Auschwitz and the Gulag and their respective victims. Instead of a sincere, collective acknowledgement of this terrible chapter of Hungarian history, the noble intention of taking the unavoidable legal measures for symbolic compensation thus led to confrontations and the opening of old wounds. This was not a favorable political and social environment for a “Historikerstreit.”

Moral and Financial Support to Jewish Cultural and Social Institutions

Following the dynamic events in 1989 and early 1990 (among other things, reopening the Budapest office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee on June 15, 1989; Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress, opening his organization's first office in a Communist country on July 10; the creation of the Hungarian–Israeli Friendship Association on December 19; and the launching of cultural periodicals), the revitalization of Jewish cultural and social life in Hungary continued at full speed. In September 1990, two new schools (the American Foundation School and Lauder Javne) were opened, a Jewish Community Centre was built, the National Rabbinical

²³⁵ See the article by Péter Feldmayer in *Magyar Hírlap* (January 5, 1992).

Seminary started a teacher training section, and the state contributed to the reconstruction of numerous synagogues. An unfortunate statement by György Landesmann,²³⁶ the chief rabbi of Budapest, about the lack of values in the Hungarian national cultural heritage and the ensuing debates, however, revealed a great social sensitivity over definitions of Jewish contributions to Hungarian culture.

Latent Anti-Semitism

Fortunately we can rely on the results of excellent sociologists, such as András Kovács,²³⁷ when we attempt to uncover the dominant attitudes toward the Jews in post-1989–90 Hungarian society. Keeping in mind the methodological difficulty caused by the fact that most people are unwilling to tell the truth about their prejudices and hatreds, on the basis of extended empirical investigations the number of anti-Semites in Hungarian society during the 1990s can be estimated at 25 to 33 percent. This attitude is, of course, far from a belief in the necessity of the destruction of Jews, but it indicates the support of views such as: Jews can not find their places in present day Hungarian society, the interests of non-Jews are different from those of Jews, Jews were responsible for Communist rule in Hungary, and the emigration of Jews should be encouraged. These notions are part of a larger trend of rising xenophobia and violence directed against foreigners.²³⁸ These general tendencies certainly show huge regional, social and age stratification, but from our present perspective they can be defined as an additional obstacle to an open and sincere “Historikerstreit.”

²³⁶ *Heti Magyarország* (February 26, 1993).

²³⁷ András Kovács: *A latens antiszemitizmus mérése* [Checking latent anti-Semitism], www.mtapti.hu/mszt/1994/kovacs.htm

²³⁸ Charles Hoffmann: *Cray Dawn: The Jews of Eastern Europe in the Post-Communist Era*. New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 1992, 104–109 and György Csepeli and Antal Örkeny (eds.): *Gyűlölet és politika* [Hatred and politics]. Budapest, Minoritas, 2002.

Openly Anti-Semitic Publications and Statements

Unlimited freedom of speech, the proliferation of poor quality publications (frequently by non-professional publishers) allowed for numerous openly anti-Semitic statements in the early 1990s. István Csurka, one of the most successful writers of the Kádár period, in his January 14, 1990, radio broadcast identified the representatives of the Communist dictatorship as Jews. The ensuing clamour was more a spectacular scandal than a serious debate over the social basis of Communism in Hungary, in the same way as Csurka's numerous other public statements stirred up passionate hatred. Csurka and the followers of his "national radicalism" raised important, critical issues (such as who supported Communism in Hungary; who controls economic, cultural, and political power in post-Communist Hungary; what will be the future of the national cultural heritage in the globalization of the world; and so on), but because they approached everything with disgusting anti-Semitic fury, they pushed the issues beyond the scope of honest, respectable, and serious debate.

Csurka's views fed what is sometimes described as the anti-Semitism of the mob.²³⁹ These anti-Jewish stereotypes, deeply embedded in popular culture, were suppressed in socialist Hungary. The fact that they could be openly aired after the collapse of Communism does not necessarily mean that they had become more powerful. A prime example of another type of more sophisticated, intellectual anti-Semitism is the views of a populist poet, Sándor Csoóri, who, in a fall 1990 article, argued that Jewish attempts to assimilate pose a major threat to Hungarian national culture.²⁴⁰ The ensuing debate reproduced more stereotypes of the confrontations between "populist nationalists" and "urbanist cosmopolitans" between the two world wars than it touched upon the real social, cultural, and political problems of the day.

What did not happen was a continuation of a debate connected to György Száraz, a non-Jewish writer and journalist, who in 1975–76, a time when the pro-Arab official Hungarian position caused some second thoughts for numerous Jewish Hungarian Communist officials, published an essay and a book

²³⁹ For an analysis of Csurka's views, see Zsófia Mihancsik: "A Vasámapi Újság antiszemitizmusa és populizmusa" [Anti-Semitism and populism of the radio program Sunday News], in Csepeli and Örkény, 364–99.

²⁴⁰ "Nappali hold" [Daylight moon]. *Hítel* 18 (1990).

under the title “In the Footsteps of a Prejudice.”²⁴¹ The lack of an open and sincere re-examination of the Hungarian society’s attitude towards the Holocaust, the shocking ignorance of numerous young people concerning the facts of this most tragic chapter of Hungarian history, together with the emerging strong collective identity among young Jewish intellectuals pushed Száraz’s work into the foreground of public interest. Száraz pointed out how at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Hungarian religious anti-Semitism was transformed into socially motivated anti-Semitism. He also described the emergence of legends about the conspiracy of cosmopolitan Jews against the territorial integrity of post-World War I Hungary. The impressive scholarly output from the second half of the 1970s on addressing the cultural, social, and economic history of Hungarian Jews and Hungarian anti-Semitism was hardly reflected in the post 1989–90 political and everyday discourse.²⁴² Ancient stereotypes resurfaced as if no substantial research had ever been undertaken. One might also argue that because Hungary’s literary, artistic, and scholarly output on the Holocaust was unrivalled in the Soviet Bloc, there seemed to be no need to discuss this issue because other historical–political questions were more essential for the new, open, democratic public opinion.²⁴³

I cannot share this view and argue that in spite of serious political and even financial efforts to address the past and present of the Hungarian Jewry the situation was unfavourable for a serious, sincere debate for other reasons.

Looking for a Counterpoint and Continuity

The attitude of the Christian upper-middle class in the process of being resurrected could have been negatively balanced by the former hypercritical dogmatic Marxist evaluation of the “reactionary” Horthy regime.

²⁴¹ György Száraz: “Egy előítélet nyomában,” (In Pursuit of a Prejudice) *Valóság* 8 (1975). An enlarged version was published as a book under the same title. Budapest, Magvető, 1976.

²⁴² For example, works by György Borsányi, Mária Ember, Tibor Erényi, Ferenc Glatz, Péter Hanák, Gyula Juhász, Elek Karsai, Miklós Lackó, György Ránki, Szabolcs Szita, Károly Vörös, and Miklós Szinai.

²⁴³ Randolph L. Braham: “Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust in the Politics of East Central Europe,” in *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Post-communist Eastern Europe*, ed. Randolph L. Braham, New York, Columbia University Press, 1994, 8.

The task of the moderately conservative nationalist elite, who carry an exclusive responsibility for the nation, was the search for its historical roots. József Antall, Jr., the new prime minister, could proudly refer to his father's merits. As a high official of the Horthy regime, József Antall, Sr., saved many Jews and had been recognized as a "Righteous among the Nations" by Yad Vashem. The new establishment looked both for a counterpoint, a "cursed" "anti-period," and "blessed" continuities, and this political aim could hardly be implemented by presenting complexities and fine shades of motivations. This was, of course, not peculiar to this regime. If we look at Hungarian history – how leading politicians of the early Horthy regime related to the liberalism of Dualist Hungary, or how official Communist rhetoric evaluated the Horthy regime – we repeatedly see black and white simplifications. To make things even more complicated, a call for a balanced evaluation of the Horthy regime, arguing that it was not Fascist or semi-Fascist, but noting that from a conservative authoritarian platform it tried to curb the radical right, was part of the liberal criticism of dogmatic Marxist historiography. In a post-Communist political-ideological environment the same view could have a politically strong apologetic message.

Lack of Adaptive Mourning

Due to the clashes between the decades of official representation of "fraternal unity" with the peoples of the Soviet Bloc and the sorrowful semi-official and private collective memories of the Trianon trauma (in addition to the lack of collective mourning), Trianon with its revolutionary antecedents and aftermath was (and still is) an unhealed wound in the national body. The dimensions of national disaster were far beyond imagination. Who or what could bring such a fundamental change in the life of a nation, taking one thousand-year-old Hungary to the brink of complete destruction? That phenomenon must be of some extreme, hardly rationally conceivable force. Resurrection is rarely possible without self-examination and atonement, as some kind of guilt must be lurking in the air. If an individual or a small group is struck to a comparable extent, the first step towards recovery is the ritual of mourning. Mourning and its rituals, funerals expressing sadness but at the same time acceptance and acknowledgement of the tragic loss, are the necessary prerequisites for healthy life. This "adaptive mourning" frees the individual or the

community from the obsession with the past and opens the possibility of contemplating a vision of the future. This adaptive mourning was not a feasible alternative for Hungarian society after World War I – no nation in the world would have acknowledged the acceptance of the loss of two thirds of its homeland and more than one third of its national community. Nonetheless, despite the lack of “adaptive mourning,” the causes of the tragedy and the culprits had to be determined. To blame the victorious Entente powers or the new neighbours, exclusively external factors (as was the case with the Bulgarians), was not a realistic alternative because they were still in a position to impose further losses on the country. There remained one serious option: the national community could find some part of itself that it could cut off or remove and then project the guilt onto the amputated part.²⁴⁴ The part of the Hungarian self that became that object was the “familiar foreigner,” the Hungarian Jew. Hungarian Jewry was sufficiently familiar to be seen as part of the self, and yet sufficiently foreign for exclusion from the new conception of what it meant to be Hungarian. This amputation, unfortunately, turned out to be very concrete: not very long after the Red Terror of the Hungarian Soviet Republic (which also had Jewish victims) hundreds of Jews were killed by the White Terror. This was a completely new phenomenon in Hungary: politically motivated pogroms demanding a high death toll of Jews were not part of former Jewish-Gentile relations in Hungary.

Let me make the point more emphatically: it is not the frequently referred to *numerus clausus* law of 1920 (in which the remnants of Hungarian liberalism did not use the word Jew or Israelite when limiting the number of Jewish students in Hungarian higher education),²⁴⁵ but the anti-Jewish brutality of the White Terror that introduced a qualitative turn in the history of anti-Semitism in Hungary, which can be defined as a major step on the road to the Holocaust. The Holocaust in Hungary is thus more closely connected to nationalism than to traditions of anti-Judaism and modern anti-Semitism. If we study the anti-Jewish arguments of the period of the Second World War, we see that they are rooted much more in the social, political, and economic realities of World War I and postwar Hungary than in the anti-Judaic intellectual heritage

²⁴⁴ Jeffrey S. Murer: “Pursuing the Familiar Foreigner: The Resurgence of Anti-Semitism and Nationalism in Hungary since 1989,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, Chicago, 1999).

²⁴⁵ Law XX VI/1920 declared that the ethnic, racial affiliation of students in higher education should reflect the respective composition of the country’s population.

of the nation. In the aftermath of another differently traumatic transformation, similar mechanisms of scapegoating surfaced to infiltrate the political discourse. This was yet another factor contributing to the creation of an unfavorable environment for sober, sincere debate.

The Logic of Party Politics

The logic of party politics in the newly rediscovered pluralism was also conducive to divisions, to allocating responsibility rather than trying to face national tragedies without constantly looking for the current political message of any action. No doubt, Jews were quite visible in the leadership of the two main opposition parties, the Alliance of Free Democrats and the Young Democrats, and were also connected to the Socialists whereas the ruling coalition practically lacked a Jewish presence. The political confrontations between government and opposition (quite natural in every functioning democracy) were thus occasionally interpreted as a Jewish–Christian conflict. This was further complicated by the practical debates about the definitions of “Hungarian” in connection with the preparation of a new bill on the rights of national and ethnic minorities, which was passed in 1993.²⁴⁶ Under certain conditions this law gave special privileges to the registered minority groups that were demanding them, but the leaders of the Jewish community refused the national or ethnic minority status and only a very small splinter group created the National Alliance of Jews in Hungary. The old debate on ethnic-national or religious definition of “Jewishness” did not re-emerge. Hungarian society, however, did not recognize the great significance of this gesture showing the completion of the assimilation process.

Let me conclude by referring to a historical issue that was in the foreground of Hungarian political life on the eve of the sixtieth anniversary of the beginning of the Hungarian Holocaust. Following the recommendations of the Pál Teleki Memorial Commission, the Cultural Commission of the Budapest municipal government decided to erect a monument to Pál Teleki, an internationally widely acknowledged geographer, who was Hungary’s prime minister in 1920–21 and 1939–41. A man of great contradictions, he made

²⁴⁶ Georg Brunner: *Nationality Problems and Minority Conflicts in Eastern Europe*. Gütersloh, Bertelsmann Foundation Publishers, 1996, 132–34.

tremendous efforts to keep Hungary out of World War II, and opened up Hungary's borders for Polish refugees. But as a professed anti-Semite he also proudly carried responsibility for passing the first major piece of anti-Semitic legislation in Europe, the numerus clausus law of 1920. It was also during his tenure as prime minister that the Hungarian Parliament passed the second racially based anti-Jewish law in 1939. All political parties represented in the Hungarian capital's Cultural Commission agreed that the Teleki statue be unveiled on April 3, 2004, the anniversary of Teleki's tragic suicide in 1941. That happened to be very close to the day the mandatory use of the yellow star by Jews was introduced sixty years earlier. A strong civic protest movement initiated by a few intellectuals thus made the politicians stop the process and "temporarily suspend" the implementation of the decision to honor Teleki. Perhaps for the first time after 1989–90, the "frontlines" of a public discourse on a crucial historical issue were not defined by party affiliation, and a wide-ranging debate about the complexity of Teleki's personality and politics began.

Are we witnessing the beginning of the Hungarian "Historikerstreit"?

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Historical Scholarship and Politics in Post 1989 Hungary

How global is historical scholarship in the age of globalization? How uniform are paradigms, methods, the types of questions asked, aims, pleasures, fears and worries of historians all over this planet? As hardly anyone in this profession has a real grasp of what is being globally published and taught under the heading of history, the horizon of most respective manuals is restricted to the Euro-Atlantic world with some references to Eastern Asia. Even this horizon is, however, broad enough to place individual cases into a perspective responding this way to the call of four Cs of Comparison, Connection, Contextualization and Categorization referred to in the LaPietra report.²⁴⁷

In a most insightful recent AHR article²⁴⁸ Thomas Bender argues that during the last quarter of a century a new American history has been written. In his short but most succinct historiographical survey Bender points out three major periods in the 20th century history of synthesizing approaches to US history. The Jackson-Turner-Beard type of political economic narrative in the 1940s gave way to intellectual history and next during the 1950s social history started dominating the field. In addition to that during the last 2–3 decades the horizon of historical inquiries has been broadened, the post-modern challenge has questioned the legitimacy of master narratives of any kind. Parallel with that major worries about “hyperspecialization” and fragmentation of historical studies led to critical voices expressed (inside and outside the profession) concerning the vaning of the civic role of historians – be it their national or broader intellectual responsibility. Is inclusion possible without delusion, is it possible to respect post-modern reservations about ruling master narratives without undermining the need for moral judgements by historians?

Are concepts as Historismus, Positivismus, Marxismus or Anti-Marxismus still applicable (as Prof. Georg Iggers asks in his recent global synthesis of the

²⁴⁷ The La Pietra Report is available at: oah.org/activities/lapietra/index.html

²⁴⁸ Thomas Bender: “Strategies of Narrative Synthesis in American History”, in *American Historical Review*, Vol. 107, Issue 1.

history of historiography²⁴⁹) in any form when describing current historiographical tendencies? What about the objectivity issue so masterfully presented by Peter Novick?²⁵⁰

This short article makes an attempt at presenting the historiographical developments in Hungary during the last two decades by taking problems that American historians also face as primary points of reference. In addition to that (fully aware of my extremely limited knowledge of developments there) I picked two further points of comparison, the state of the art in Germany (my question here is why it has not come to a “Historikerstreit” type controversy in Hungary) and in Eastern and Central Europe.

As a final introductory remark I would like to point out that I differentiate among three forms or levels of doing or “undertaking” history. Besides the sacred halls of the guild’s workshops at universities and other research centres, history is used (and abused) a lot in political representation and for educational purposes. Targets, methods, assumptions and achievements widely differ on these three levels, the widest gap obviously opening up between the professional and the two other levels²⁵¹.

Now I have arrived at my basic point in this paper: As far as Hungary is concerned, a fundamental transformation of the profession started in the mid-1960s with first economic history being in the avantgarde, then from about the mid 1980s on this function is taken over by social history and most recently by a peculiar mixture of anthropological, psychological and intellectual historical approaches. As to personell and institutions there is a distinct continuity, although the proliferation of new reviews, publishers and professional gatherings has been quite remarkable during the last two decades. In the field of the political representative uses of history, however, quite understandably, 1989–90 represents a true rupture and the bulk of my paper is devoted to presenting how some issues that are equally important for the guild and for politics became bones of contention between the two greatly diverging approaches. Afterwards I discuss some “domestic” issues of the Hungarian guild

²⁴⁹ Georg G. Iggers and Q. Edward Wang with the assistance of Supriya Mukherjee: *A Global History of Modern Historiography*. Pearson–Longman, 2008.

²⁵⁰ Peter Novick: *That Noble Dream. The Objectivity Question and the American Historical Profession*, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

²⁵¹ Cf. Attila Pók: “Undertaking History”, in Sharon Macdonald (ed.): *Eunstory Series, Shaping European History* vol. I. *Approaches to European Consciousness: Reflections and Provocations*. Hamburg, 2000, 163–167.

and of the political sphere respectively and by way of conclusion I try to compare the Hungarian case to my previously mentioned points of reference.

If there is anything that in 'doing history' in Hungary can be compared to the German *Historikerstreit*, that is the so called Erik Molnár debate²⁵². The Marxist lawyer (founding director of the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences 1949 to 1967) from the early 1960s challenged the at that time dominating master narrative of the 'revolutionary progressive' interpretation of Hungarian history. According to the "classics" of this view (Aladár Mőd and József Révai) Hungarian past is a series of failed revolutions and struggles for liberty. The failures were due to a smaller extent to the treacherous behaviour of most of the ruling classes and to a greater extent to external (Mongolian, Turkish, Habsburg, German and western imperialist) interventions. So, as Mőd and his followers argued, the counterrevolutionary intervention of 'reactionary' Austria (supported by the 'archreactionary' czar) in 1849 prolonged Hungary's longstanding backwardness that had originated in the Ottoman Turkish occupation of most of the country from the mid 16th to late 17th centuries. The Compromise of 1867 between the Hungarian political elite and the Habsburgs was a sell-out by the Hungarian ruling class and the interwar 'fascist' Horthy system was imposed on Hungary by anti-Communist Western imperialism. Molnár and his followers blamed this approach to Hungarian history as being 'ahistorical', 'naive' and first of all 'non-scholarly', feeding illusions to this nation instead of increasing its knowledge about itself, though it had paid dearly for daydreaming. The 'Molnár-group' argued that the dogmatic Communists divorced the concept of the Hungarian nation from social class and historical age, as *natio* and *patria* had only reflected the interests of the ruling classes and not those of the 'working people'. These were, of course, class struggle centred, truly dogmatic views and could easily be interpreted as a historian's contribution to the struggle against 'reactionary nationalism' which was given a leading position among the officially defined causes of the 1956 "counterrevolution". Still, under the circumstances of Kádár's slowly consolidating Hungary (where those "who were not against us were with us"²⁵³) these views initiated a number of most productive research projects on the history of the interpretation of concepts like 'people', 'nation',

²⁵² Cf. Attila Pók: "Politics and History in Kádár's Hungary," in: Ferenc Glatz (hrsg.): *Begegnungen. Schriftenreihe des Europa Institutes Budapest*. 19. Budapest, 2003, 99–110.

²⁵³ János Kádár made this statement at a meeting of the Patriotic People's Front on December 8, 1961 but he borrowed it from an emigré writer, Tibor Méray.

‘patria’, ‘independence’ resulting in a debate reaching out to contemporary history.

The two platforms that emerged in the course of these debates were frequently labelled as ‘sociological – realistic-denationalizer’ versus ‘romantic revolutionary – dogmatic nationalist’ interpretations of Hungarian history. The ‘sociological interpretation’ (let us not forget that sociology was referred to by many Communist ideologues as a reactionary bourgeois discipline) was trying – on the basis of plenty of new basic research – to examine the economic-social background to political and ideological developments whereas the ‘romantic’ camp was much more preoccupied with the subjective factors, the correct or faulty policies of leading personalities at major turning points of Hungarian history. It was especially in two fields where the newly emerging ‘sociological’ economic history school reaped pretty rich harvest: the agricultural development of the 16th and 17th centuries and the genesis of Hungarian capitalism. There had been consensus in previous research that during the second half of the 15th century Hungary was *a par* with West European social, economic, political and cultural development. The falling behind in the 16th–17th centuries was generally attributed to external factors: the one and a half century of Ottoman rule and Habsburg exploitation. New research now shed light on the internal factors, as, for example, the complex process of the emergence of the second serfdom. Recently some younger colleagues of mine suggested that the presentation of the non West European peculiarities of Hungarian social economic development in the 1960s and 1970s served eminently daily political interests. Namely, it would have wanted to supply historical evidence proving the organic, deep-rooted nature of Europe’s post World War Two division. The ensuing debate clarified that the analysis of the in comparison with the core West diverging pattern of early modern Hungarian (and East Central European) economic and social development had for a long time been a key issue in German, Hungarian, Polish etc. historiographies. It is, however, hard to deny that in a political climate when Hungary seemed to be so much integrated into the Eastern half of a divided Europe (and world), research into the history of European regionalism and the origins of East European backwardness was politically strongly motivated.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁴ A short, recent summary of these debates has been presented by Gábor Gyáni: “Hungary’s ‘Sonderweg’, in *Budapest Review of Books*, 11(1–4) 65–71(2001). A review of László Péter: *Az Elbától Keletre. Tanulmányok a magyar és kelet-európai történelemből* [East of the Elbe: Studies in Hungarian and East European History]. Osiris, Budapest, 1998.

Still, relevant historical questions always relate to the present of the historian. That was also true of the research subject that has perhaps mostly contributed to the ‘rejuvenation’ of Hungarian historical scholarship in the late 1960s and early 1970s: Hungary’s position in the Dual Monarchy 1867–1914. In the aftermath of 1956, a cruelly suppressed national revolution, a number of historians, pondering about the perspectives of small peoples, nations in Eastern and Central Europe, started appreciating the framework that the Habsburg Monarchy offered for the coexistence of the peoples in the region. Economic historical investigations arrived at the conclusion that during the last third of the 19th century Hungary’s economic growth rate was somewhat faster than that of the other parts of the Monarchy. The interest in economic history also reflected the political atmosphere of the time: the economic sphere seemed to be much more open for changes, reforms aiming at more efficiency, than the rigid political structure. Going far beyond the traditional explanations of the desintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy after World War One (where just the ‘machinations’ of the entente and some leaders of the national minorities or the oppression of the national minorities were blamed), a careful balance was set up of the external and internal desintegrating and cohesive forces of the Monarchy. Critics of this view spoke of “white-washing” the “reactionary” Habsburg Monarchy. According to this criticism (a peculiar mixture of romantic nationalism and dogmatic Marxism) historians should concentrate on elucidating the conflicts between ‘reactionary’ and ‘revolutionary-progressive’ forces, assuming that it is possible to divide actors of history into these two groups.²⁵⁵

The subjects of controversies that shaped the emergence of a number of historians without nationalist, dogmatic Marxist bias, among others, included the mediaeval and early modern roots of Hungarian national identity, the anti-Habsburg struggles of the 16th and 17th centuries, the history of Hungarian social democracy and even the short period of multiparty democracy after World War II.

It was representatives of this ‘demythologizing, sociological, realistic’ tendency who dominated the profession by the time of the 1989–90 changes: the

²⁵⁵ The chief initiator of this debate was Péter Hanák especially with his article: *Hungary in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy: Preponderancy or Dependency?* Austrian History Yearbook, 1967. Vol. III. Pt. I. 260–302. A survey of the debate from a later perspective. Péter Hanák, *‘1867-Európai térben és időben’* [1867 in the European Space and Time], *Beszélő* (November 1997), 40–50.

popular historical bimonthly *História*²⁵⁶ airing these views reached a circulation of 30-40 thousand and a new generation of high school history teachers enthusiastically followed it. New horizons have opened up, Hungarian historians have through many ties been connected to the mainstream of the profession: be it the Annales school, Bielefeld, British or US social history, the economic history world congress was held in Budapest in 1982, a similar event of Enlightenment studies in 1987.

The profession was widely represented in the post 1990 political elite: close to 10 per cent of the new, freely elected MPs were historians, including in the first 1990–1994 government the prime minister, the minister of foreign affairs, the minister of defence, the speaker of the House, a couple of secretaries of state, numerous ambassadors. Small wonder that the first sessions of the new parliament were dedicated to a number of historical issues. However, already at the first decisions the scholarly and political views started to diverge. Namely, a decision had to be made about Hungary's new coat of arms. Most historians were in favour of reintroducing the coat of arms initiated by Lajos Kossuth in 1849 without a crown. This coat of arms was the symbol of the revolutionary changes not only in 1849 but also in 1918 and 1956. The majority of MPs, however, voted in favour of the coat of arms with the crown. Their main argument was that the crown had always been a symbol of the continuity of Hungarian statehood and not that of royal power. In this respect a number of historians but also a few liberal and socialist politicians – argued that as the Holy Crown expressed the full territorial integrity of the Hungarian Kingdom, neighbouring countries might interpret it as a sign of Hungarian irredenta.

Closely connected to this issue was the decision about the number one national holiday. There were three candidates: March 15 (1848), August 20 (day of the founder of the Hungarian state, Stephen the Saint) and October 23 (1956). The parliamentary decision was fully in line with the previous decisions concerning the crown: August 20 turned out to be the winner. No doubt: without the conversion to Christianity enforced by Stephen (who ruled Hungary from 1000 to 1038) the Hungarian society and culture could have hardly been integrated into “Western civilization”. The construction of a collective memory focusing on this tradition has been – especially since 1998 – a major priority of the governing political elite. Scholarship, of course, does not

²⁵⁶ *História* has been published since 1979.

deny this, emphasizes, however, that the Hungarian cultural heritage was the result of the whole multinational, multiethnic, multi-confessional population of the Hungarian state. The contribution of the non-Hungarian ethnic groups (more than 50% of the population up to the early 20th century) to the Hungarian cultural heritage, problems of their assimilation, acculturation, dissimilation have been a major issue in the Hungarian historiography of the last decade or so. Special attention along this line is dedicated to the history of Jews and anti-Semitism.

Hungary's role in World War Two has been the subject of some of the most important historical–political debates of the last decades. Late July 1990 at a parliamentary session a former high ranking officer of the Horthy army spoke about the legitimate, justified Hungarian participation in the anti – Bolshevik crusade against the USSR. Respective scholarship has produced a great number of sober analyses of this most tragic period of our national history. It was pointed out that well deserved recognition of the often heroic achievements of simple soldiers is not to be mixed up with a criticism of mistaken strategies and war aims. These issues fit into a broader controversy on continuities in 20th century Hungarian history focusing on the four decades of Communist rule. Namely: is this period just an off the main track period imposed on Hungarians by the Soviet Union or Communism also had internal roots? There is here an especially striking discrepancy between the balanced, sophisticated scholarly investigations and the political discourse. In the latter some loud voices declared a continuity between the authoritarian Horthy regime (Admiral Miklós Horthy was governor of Hungary from 1919 to 1944) and the post Communist period. A symbolic expression of this approach was the reburial of Miklós Horthy in September 1993: an event officially declared as a 'family affair' with 7 cabinet members present in a crowd of 50000. It is quite interesting and illustrates the complexity of the picture that the same colleagues, who 10–20 years earlier were standing up against a simplifying, orthodox Marxist totally negative, Mephistolian Horthy picture, now had to argue against presenting Horthy as a statesman of a great format. The evaluation of Horthy became a major bone of contention between liberals and socialists on the one hand and Christian-national rightish parties on the other. The former referred and refer to a continuity between 1918, 1945–47, 1956 and the post Communist present and refused a cult of the antiquated, conservative, authoritarian Horthy regime, a dead end (as they call it) in historical–

political thought. It is quite remarkable under these circumstances that the so far best Horthy biography was published by an American colleague²⁵⁷.

1956 is, of course, also a key issue in this historical–political public discourse about continuities in 20th century Hungarian history. If, namely, the main line of ‘organic sequence’ is between the Horthy regime and the post 1989–90 political system, the 1956 revolution dominated by reform Communist leaders aiming at the reestablishment of democracy and national sovereignty, standing up against Stalinist Soviet imperialism, building on the “democratic potential” of the nation that was given a chance to bud between 1945 and 1947, is difficult to incorporate. You can do that with a twist: by trying to present it as an anti-Communist (and not anti-Stalinist) national uprising, even a ‘bourgeois’ or rather ‘civic’ revolution. Extensive scholarly investigations of the last decade show how heterogeneous the social background and political profile of the participants of this revolution were, a great number of publications analyze the major political tendencies and the international political situation that made the Soviet intervention possible. The current dominating political representation on the other hand calls for a single colour picture of the 1848 of the 20th century: the Hungarian people revolted in order to get rid of Soviet imposed Communism, an interpretation that is, of course, directly connected to the present political battlefield. The socialists, who relate themselves to the reform Communist leaders of 1956, are thus not the heirs to this great national tradition, just the opposite, they are heirs to Kádár’s party who with Soviet help crushed the revolution and introduced a new wave of terror.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ Thomas Sakmyster: *Hungary’s Admiral on Horseback*. East European Monographs, Boulder. Distributed by Columbia University Press, New York, 1994. For all the issues in this subchapter in more detail: Attila Pók: “Geschichte im Transformationsprozess Ungarns,” in Helmut Altrichter (Hrg.): *Gegenerinnerung. Geschichte als politisches Argument*. Oldenbourg, München, 2006, 173–189.

²⁵⁸ On the conceptualization and interpretations of 1956 most recently László Péter, *Introduction* in László Péter and Martyn Rády (eds.): *Resistance, Rebellion and Revolution in Hungary and Central Europe: Commemorating 1956*. Hungarian Cultural Centre London. School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College, London, 2008, XIII–XIX. See also János M. Rainer: “A Progress of Ideas: The Hungarian Revolution of 1956,” in Lee W. Congdon and Béla K. Király (eds.): *The Ideas of the Hungarian Revolution Suppressed and Victorious* East European Monographs, No. DCXIX. Distributed by Columbia University Press, New York, 2002, 7–41.

These examples, I hope, will suffice to show to what a great extent the professional and political approaches to historical issues diversified in Hungary during the last two decades.

Let me now turn, to the internal affairs of our guild. As far as the key issues of historical research are concerned, they show as much continuity as the dilemmas of the Hungarian society. Limits and possibilities of national self-determination and modernization: are the two aspirations complimentary or they have to come into conflict with each other? To what an extent is the relationship of Hungarians and non-Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin embedded into the European great power policies and their conflicts? The recent (i. e. those of the last two decades) scholarly approaches to these 'classical' questions, of course, substantially differ from earlier interpretations. Let me refer here only to two new phenomena. One is the increasingly non-ideological approach which is reflected in the choice of research projects. Instead of focusing on periods of revolts, social and national confrontations, most attention is paid to the periods of consolidation, peaceful work, everyday life, national and social survival strategies, collective memories and traditions of cohesive and to a much lesser extent disruptive forces. The relationship between man and natural environment is an important issue and the state is evaluated more as a servant of its citizens than an institution of national or imperial expansion or defence.

The other new phenomenon, closely connected to the first one, is the renewal of social history that with lots of broadly comparative micro-level investigations gives a much more concrete understanding of the modernization process of embourgeoisment, the beginnings of Hungarian capitalism than earlier less empirical, more theoretical analyses based on general, national level data. Especially important is the recent questioning of the theory of the so called "dual structure" of later 19th, early 20th century Hungarian society, a discourse of great political significance as well. The issue at stake, namely, is whether you can speak about the parallel existence of a backward, Christian feudal and a modern, bourgeois, Jewish, progressive Hungary or rather the picture is much more complex, it is not possible to divide Hungarian society into progressive and conservative camps along these lines.²⁵⁹ An additional

²⁵⁹ A synthesis based on these new approaches is already available: Gábor Gyáni–György Kövér–Tibor Valuch: "Social History of Hungary from the Reform Era to the End of the Twentieth Century." *Atlantic Studies on Society in Change*. No. 113. Distributed by Columbia University Press, New York, 2004.

remark here: more and more younger colleagues apply inter- and multidisciplinary methods and the traditional organization of our academic life along disciplines is an obstacle to their professional advancement.

A few words on the “historical workshop” of politics. Besides the already mentioned legislation concerning the national coat of arms and the national holidays it is quite interesting to mention the 2001 law on Hungarian heroes²⁶⁰ which is dedicated to “those anonymous men and women who with or without arms have fought in defence of Hungary or the Hungarian nation or sacrificed himself or herself for the homeland.” Starting 2002 the last Sunday of every May has been the memorial day of Hungarian heroes. Not independent of the election campaign of April–May 2002, in February 2002 a new museum under the name the House of Terror was opened in Budapest on the premises of former intelligence and secret service headquarters used by the Horthy regime, by the fascists in power late 1944 and early 1945 and also by the Communist regime up to 1956. The museum most consciously presents Fascist and Communist terror as equal evils and clearly shows that though both regimes were externally imposed on the country, much of the “dirty work” was done by Hungarians themselves. Little attention is paid to the respective peculiarities and the differences in the death toll of the two terrors with the Holocaust being given little visibility (the explanation is that a special museum has been dedicated to it) and the political message is that the major governing party, the Socialists are heirs to the perpetrators of Communist terror.

No doubt, for a nation that experienced 9 system changes, 6 state forms, 4 border changes, 3 revolutions, 2 world wars and 3 invasions of foreign troops on its territory during the unfortunate 20th century, history is far from being an academic discourse. Not as if the 20th century had been tranquil and peaceful for lots of other nations, but Hungarians definitely belonged to the more troubled group. The euphoria and trauma of the transformation starting in 1989–90 has not shaken the edifice of our profession but has brought up lots of issues in the political representative uses of history. If you look around in our region, the best parallel is Poland, as it is these two countries (Poland and Hungary) where historical scholarship was able to emancipate itself from nationalist and orthodox Marxist, Stalinist schematic stereotypes from the 1960s

²⁶⁰ LXIII/2001. This legislation goes back to two previous laws on tribute to national heroes: VIII/1917 and XIV/1924.

on. Less fortunate Soviet Bloc countries – as Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria or the GDR – started this process only after 1989–90 which included substantial personnel and institutional changes.²⁶¹ (This, of course, does not mean, that good and important works would not have been written and published in these countries during the decades of Communism.) Neither in Poland nor in Hungary did, however, come to a German type of “Historikerstreit”, the impact of Jan Gross’ *Neighbours and Fear*²⁶² in Poland came closest to that.²⁶³ The pluralism of political life, the limited but on a competitive basis for an ever increasing number of researchers accessible domestic and international funding, however, has contributed to the proliferation of projects, publications, conferences and dooms all (no doubt existing) attempts at a dominant master narrative of national history to a failure. This is a major difference in comparison with the pre 1989–90 period when the political will could be easier (but not without any difficulties) be imposed on scholarship.

My final thoughts are borrowed again from Tom Bender who argues that in the American historiography of the last decades the relation of the nation to both supranational and transnational solidarities is a major concern of respective scholarly investigations.²⁶⁴ Historians are challenged to rethink the boundaries of their national histories and it is very much likely that traditional “national issues” will be better illuminated by the study of the US or Hungary in a context larger than itself. This sounds quite self-evident but has for a long time as far at least, of course, the Hungarian case is concerned, not been the case. This opening up of the boundaries – to repeat my main point – started in my country more than 40 years ago – but had to face substantially new challenges (both political and academic) during the last two decades.

²⁶¹ Cf. Sorin Antohi, Balázs Trencsényi, Péter Apor (eds.): *Narratives Unbound. Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*. CEU Press, Budapest, New York, 2007.

²⁶² Jan Gross: *Neighbors: the Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*. Princeton University Press, 2000., *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz*. Random House, 2006.

²⁶³ Cf. Attila Pók: “Why Was There No Historikerstreit in Hungary after 1989–1990?” In Randolph L. Braham and Brewster S. Chamberlin (eds): *The Holocaust in Hungary: Sixty Years Later*. The Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies. Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Social Science Monographs, Boulder, Co. Distributed by Columbia University Press, 2006, 241–256.

²⁶⁴ Thomas Bender: “Strategies of Narrative Synthesis in American History,” in *American Historical Review*, Vol. 107, Issue 1.

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