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Memory Crossroads

Remembering the Holocaust in Hungary after 1945*

by

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Abstract: This paper confronts the removal of the Holocaust from the Hungarian memorial culture and examines the different forms of broaching the issues of the Holocaust on the collective and individual level, dealing with the relevance of the Holocaust from 1945 until the opening of the two museums of Budapest at the beginning of the 21st century (the House of Terror and the Holocaust Memorial Center). Despite the half a million Jews deported and killed in Auschwitz-Birkenau between May and July 1944 during the national socialist occupation of Hungary, the memory of the Holocaust was suppressed for a long time, remaining a taboo subject even after the communists came into power in 1948. Only after the 1980s did a strong public discussion, which we analyse here through the concepts of the two museums, finally rise.

Introduction

After the German Invasion in Hungary on the 19th of March 1944, the German occupiers put in a collaborative-government under the former Hungarian ambassador in Berlin Döme Sztójay. Miklós Horthy[1] remained regent and head of the State of the authoritarian-conservative regime. After the failed attempt to dissolve the engagement with the German Reich and to leave the war, Horthy was forced to resign as regent in October of 1944.

The government was then handed over to Ferenc Szálasi, who was the leader of the fascist Hungarian party *Arrow Cross* (Nyilas). Recapitulatory, today, Hungarians have to deal with three rightwing dictatorial (in other words authoritarian or fascist) pasts. First there was the authoritarian-conservative regime

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[1] Miklós Horthy was born in 1868 and he was Commander of the k. and k. navy in 1918. On the 1st March of 1920 he was elected without any time-restriction to regent and head of the Hungarian State.

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of Miklós Horthy which was followed by the radical government of Ferenc Szálasi. Both regimes partly operated under the national socialist occupying power[2]. The first deportations of the Hungarian Jews began after the invasion of the German troops. Up to this period in time, the Hungarian government had introduced some anti-Jewish laws - partly on its own initiation and partly inspired by, or pressured to integrate the German model. Hungary had, however, been able to protect its own Jewish population from deportation[3].

The first deportation train of Hungarian Jews went Auschwitz-Birkenau on the 15th of May 1944. Under massive domestic and foreign pressure, Regent Horthy halted the deportations in July 1944. As mentioned by the historians Christian Gerlach and Götz Aly[4], the deportation of over 400,000 people in eight weeks would not have been possible without the help of Hungarian authorities. The *Sondereinsatzkommando* under Adolf Eichmann, which was responsible for the deportation of the Hungarian Jews, was a small commando comprised of 100-200 people[5]. This commando had to rely on the assistance of Hungarian police and gendarmerie forces. This fact is important because the involvement of Hungarian authorities in the deportations was factored out after 1945 for a long time. After this first wave of deportation, only the Jewish population of Budapest and about 80,000 Jewish men who had to do Labor Service (Munkaszolgálat) in the Hungarian army remained in Hungary. After the Hungarian fascist *Arrow Cross* Party took over power in October 1944, about 76,000 more Jews were deported.

The tragic result of the national socialist occupation was about a half million Hungarian Jewish victims; most of these were killed in Auschwitz-Birkenau between May and July 1944. Despite this terrifying number, the collective memory of the Holocaust was suppressed for a long time and remains even now almost unacknowledged in the Hungarian collective memory. The political scientist Randolph L. Braham states that the ruling parties of the various regimes in power since World War II have always tried to interpret the Holocaust in a new way and manipulate it for their political end[6]. Ultimately, history is constantly being revised and re-constructed during times of upheaval.

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[2] The fourth column which is of significant meaning for the historical and memorial culture in Hungary today is the era of the communist reign (1948-1989). We will take a closer look onto that beginning from chapter entitled “The reinterpretation of the past after 1989/90”.

3 The only exception was the deportation of approximately 18.000 stateless Jews who were killed in summer 1941 in Kamenez-Podolsk by German SS and Hungarian soldiers. Beside that, in January 1942 Hungarian units killed about 1000 Jews in the part of Yugoslavia which was annexed to Hungary after the Second Vienna Award.

4 Cfr. C. Gerlach - G.Aly, *Das letzte Kapitel. Der Mord an den ungarischen Juden 1944/45*, DVA, Frankfurt am Main 2004.

5 According to the Hungarian historian Zoltán Vági this number includes also secretaries and chauffeurs. Cfr. Z. Vági, *Endre László politikai pályálya 1919-1945* [The political career of Endre László 1919-1945], Balassi Kaidó, Budapest 2003, p. 150f.

[6] R.L. Braham, *A Holokauszt. Válogatott tanulmányok* [The Holocaust. Selected examinations]. Balassi Kaidó, Budapest 2002, p. 227.

"Living on" in the country of the (Co-)perpetrators? The survivors of Hungary

Historians estimate the number of the Hungarian Jewish survivors on the territory of Greater Hungary at between 180,000 and 260,000 people[7]. Half of them were freed in the country, the other half returned from Hungarian forced labor service and from the Nazi concentration camps. After months in the "eerie and alien world of the camps", as the Hungarian survivor Kató Gyulai has phrased it - and after enduring many hardships on the journey back home - the survivors had particularly vivid accounts or memories of crossing of the border: it meant stepping into an uncertain future, a future, it seemed, that had lost its past. Susan H., who was deported to Auschwitz, remembers:

> After nearly three months, we reached the Hungarian border in August 1945. What else was there to do? We went back because Hungary was our home, the symbol of our 'normal' life; our past was there. I wanted to find out who is alive, who is left for me. I broke down in front of our house. I found out definitely, I was left alone. What an unnatural ending, not even a grave! I felt terribly lonely, I was robbed of my loved ones. I don't belong to a family anymore […] without care or protection from problems, no moral security that only a family can give you, and I had no one to give love or my life[8].

Having survived the imprisonment in the camps did not only mean that the men and women had escaped destruction and that they were able to "live on" to quote Ruth Klüger. It also meant that from then on their lives would forever be connected to the deaths of their loved ones. Most of them had been deported together with family members and friends and almost every one of them lost a parent or a sibling. Some of them returned only to discover they were the only one left alive from a large family. This loss is connected with dramatic memories for many of the survivors and often it is the essential part of their traumatic concentration camp experience. My interview partners (D.E.) often begin to cry when they tell me about the family members they lost, or they sit in silence for a while, or grab for a handkerchief or a glass of water in an attempt to regain their composure. For the survivors, these reflections are in part connected to the question of their own survival. This search has become to be known as "survivors' guilt", and it is connected to the irrational feeling that they should have done something to help the others.

It is characteristic for the experience of the Hungarian Holocaust survivors that they were exposed to a double psychological burden once they returned home: on the one hand, they had to learn to live with their memories around the Holocaust and, on the other hand, they returned to a country whose people had supported the deportation of their Jewish fellow citizens. Many survivors discovered that their property had been "confiscated" by neighbors while they were away. In an interview, Miriam R. remembers the first days of her return:

[7] Cfr. C. Gerlach – G. Aly, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

[8] Report by Susan H.; Yad Vashem Archives O33/2914, p. 24.

> We wanted to start to live like normal human beings again. And the feelings that you had after. You know, you thought that the world stopped and everybody would be crying for us. We came back and the Hungarians [said]: 'We thought you'd never come back.' Remarks like that. You can imagine. […] You came home a broken body and broken soul and that was the welcome. And one day I saw a woman wearing my mother's coat. Walking. In my mother's coat. You know, everything they stole, whatever they could. So, that will be the end[9].

The role that the "ordinary Hungarians" played during the implementation of the Holocaust is important, "given the tendency during the communist period to exonerate the masses"[10]. For lots of the survivors the fact of Hungarian complicity was one important reason to break one's ties with their homeland and to leave for good. Take the story of Zoltán Bodnár, who had been deported from Miskolc and went back to the town right after the war to look for old friends.

> Every place I went reminded me of the horror, torture and immense hate that the Hungarian Nazis still harbored for the Jews. My days and nights were filled with nightmares and painful memories of the bloody past. I felt in my heart and knew in my mind that I could never again be part of a country that had caused so much suffering and grief, one that claimed so many lives. There were other survivors who felt the same and we decided to leave Hungary[11].

Of course, emigration to Israel was one possible option for the survivors. The Hungarian Zionist association and the American Joint Distribution Committee were very active in preparing people who wanted to leave for Palestine. There were about 110 "retraining centers" in the country that prepared Hungarian men and women for the "Aliyah". Nevertheless, waiting for emigration became a frustrating experience for many of the survivors because of the strict immigration policy of the countries they wished to enter. As Elisabeth Raab remembers in her memoirs:

> For over two years we have been in the same situation: the distributed food and second-hand clothing. As much as we have had enough of the handouts and long to exchange our empty existence for a productive life with a purpose, we are not able to move from this spot. We are wasting the best years of our lives. After years of war, we are forced to wait idly for a miracle, hoping some country will eventually take us in, but we have no say in it. We will have to begin again, without money, without skills, without language[12].

It may seem surprising but Hungary was the only country in the Soviet sphere of control that did not "lose" most of its survivors to emigration in the years directly following the war. Re-Integration proved very successful, in part because of the fact that the Joint Distribution Committee had supported the Jewish

[9] Interview with Miriam R.; Yad Vashem Archives O69/209+209a, p. 63.

[10] T. Cole, *Hungary, the Holocaust, and Hungarians: Remembering whose History?* In United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum (ed.), *Hungary and the Holocaust. Confrontation with the Past*, Center for advanced Holocaust studies, Washington DC 2001, pp. 3-19, here p. 15.

[11] Z. and P. Bodnár, *Out of the Shadows. The Legacy of two Holocaust Survivors*, edited by Marsha C. Markman, Bloomington 2005, p. 57.

[12] E. Raab, *And peace never came*, Wilfrid Laurien University Press, Waterloo, Ontario 1997, p. 134.

Community with massive financial aid. Indeed, emigration ran at a constant number until the end of the 1940s, increasing visibly only during (and shortly after) the 1956 uprising. Compared to other Eastern European countries, however, the general Jewish migration out of Hungary was less intensive than elsewhere.

There were of course many reasons for Jewish survivors to leave Hungary: apart from the psychological dimension of coming home and finding their homes in ruins and no family members to welcome them, many of the survivors were not deeply conflicted about leaving this place. "What did we have to do there? Nothing. Nothing. Inflation, no work. The Communists were not better than the Nazis. The Nazis had green ties and the Communists had red. That was the only difference. I had enough of Hungary"[13], explained Eta B. of her motivation for emigrating. Moreover, many of the survivors had relatives who were already living abroad, so they tried to get in touch with the remainder of their families.

The official remembrance of the Holocaust in the first few years following World War II

In the first post-war years we find a certain readiness to broach the issues of the Holocaust, but as the communist regime became more radical, this subject became taboo. On the 6th of February 1945, the Provisional Government revoked all anti-Jewish laws and orders and established Peoples' Tribunals to judge the war crimes. According to communist statistics between the 3rd of February 1945 and the 1st of April 1950, after more than 90,000 examinations, 26,000 people were charged with treason, and nearly 60,000 were indicted for war crimes or crime against humanity. Of these indicted, 476 were given the death penalty and 189 individuals were executed[14]. One of these people was the leader of the *Arrow Cross* Party, Ferenc Szálasi, who was sentenced to death in February 1946 and executed one month later. The trial against the three individuals chiefly responsible for the deportation and destruction of the Hungarian Jews, the Endre-Baky-Jaross trial, began on the 17th of December 1945 and ended in three death sentences on the 7th of January 1946[15]. This trial showed a tendency which became characteristic for Holocaust-interpretation, not only in Hungary: the defendants' witnesses who were also perpetrators in the genocide, tried to blame the Germans for the atrocities. In addition to these trials, nearly 40,000 Hungarians were placed in an interment camp and at least 200,000 Hungarian Germans were charged as guilty and banished from Hungary. Moreover about 62,000 officials and employees were dismissed their positions of civil service[16].

[13] Interview with Eta B., Herzlia 15.02.2006.

[14] I. Deák, *Revolutionäre oder Verräter? Politische Prozesse in Ungarn zwischen 1919 und 1958*, in "Transit. Europäische Revue", 15, 1998, pp. 60-72, here p. 65f.

[15] More about this trial in *Az Endre - Baky - Jaross per* [The Endre-Jaross-Baky trial], edited by László Karsai - Judit Molnár, Sajtó alá rend., Budapest 1994.

[16] I. Deák, *op. cit.*, p. 65f.

Already on the 26th of February 1945 the National Committee had established a commission for the investigation and announcement of the heinous crimes committed by the Nazis or members of the *Arrow Cross* party. The task of this commission was to collect documents, to set up protocol for evidence of the crimes, and to denounce the crimes.

In spite of these trends, we don't read that as a sign for readiness to clarify what happened during the Holocaust. Rather, we see it as a beginning of the documentation of those crimes. These efforts might be interpreted as an attempt to prove to the allied forces that Hungary had become a democratic country which would take responsibility for its future and past. The evidence of democratisation was essential because it was regarded as important criterion for the peace treaties in 1947. To prove itself as legitimate authority, the Hungarian government first of all had to deal with the heritage of the discredited regime. Therefore it became important to define its actions as a crime and to punish it accordingly.

But soon Holocaust memory on the state level queued itself in the line of interpretations which made a contribution to a construction of a new national myth of sacrifice, which suppressed the own involvement in the crimes and which presented the ordinary Hungarian people as a victim. However, these proceedings were not meant as war crime or collaboration punishment alone; their aim was also to legitimize the new political parties in power and to strengthen certain groups as well as redistribute the wealth and to remove the old elites from power. Already in the first post-war years the Hungarian parties had begun to compete for the less significant members of the *Arrow Cross* Party. These members were eventually dismissed from the internment camps and mostly absorbed by the communist party. In those years after the war, the tendency to make a wide berth around the Holocaust issue became more and more noticeable.

The inclination to document the crimes also corresponds to the work of the National Committee for Returning Deportees (DEGOB)[17], which was an organisation with the chief goal of establishing protocol regarding Holocaust survivors. This organisation was founded in March 1945 and had already created 4,600 protocols between then and April 13th, 1946. Obviously, Holocaust memory of survivors is not a uniform memory. After the war, the Jewish Community from various persuasions convened and brought together their separate identities, from orthodox Jews to assimilated Jews[18]. Most of the surviving Jews had moved to Budapest since the capital was the place where they were able to find work and were they could get in touch with the remainders of the Jewish community. In the countryside, lots of communities had been annihilated almost completely.

A type of "competition of the victims" (Jean-Michel Chaumont) can also be observed, above all, between the Jewish survivors and the political persecuted

[17] About the history of DEGOB, see R. Horváth, *A Magyarországi Zsidó Deportáltakat Gondozó Országos Bizottsága (DEGOB) története* [History of the Hungarian State Commission caring for Jewish Deportees] in "MAKOR", 1, 1997. The protocolls are available for researach on the internet: www.degob.hu.

[18] In Hungary there were three Jewish religious trends: the Neolog, the Orthodox, and the Status Quo Ante. Cf. V. Karády, *Zsidóság Európában a modern korban. Társadalomtörténeti vázlat* [The Jews in Europe in the modern era. A socio-historical outline], Uj Mandrtum, Budapest 2000, p. 165.

persons. The fighters of resistance were honoured as freedom fighters, while the Jewish victims were suppressed. After the communists came into power in 1948, even using the word "Jew" was taboo and only circumscribed as "persecuted by fascism / national socialism". Some Jews participated in this process in order to receive recognition as resistance fighters and not just victims. Thereby, also their admission to the communist party simplified[19].

The Jewish community was responsible for drawing the most attention to the Holocaust. They were the key figures at the commemoration. Furthermore, they posted memorial tablets and personally travelled to locations of the war crimes. In 1945, the returning survivors had rarely been welcomed with enthusiasm. Frequently disputes arose because the Jewish properties had been distributed to other owners during the 1940s[20]. A new wave of anti-Semitism grew which was built on the reproach of "Jewish revenge". This anti-Semitism mostly characterised the underclass because these were who found wealth in the fortunes of the Jewish community. The returning Jews tried to reacquire their legitimate possessions but they didn't have much success with their claim. Consequently, it came to numerous complaints regarding the expropriated fortune. On the other hand, encountering the survivors again weighed heavily on the conscience of the people. To reduce or eliminate the guilty feelings, they turned the Jews into a scapegoat.

The disgrace of "Jewish revenge" was also effective because many Jews held high-ranking positions in government organs such as police or state security which they could have theoretically abused with the purpose of revenge. Numerous Jews joined the Communist party because this party promised much sought after equality. Most of Hungary's Jews had been able to survive in Budapest and so many of them were grateful because the Soviet army had protected them from being killed. Here we find a strong divergence in memory of the survivors from the memory of the remaining population who saw the Soviet army solely as a new occupying force. In general, the anti-Jewish atmosphere was fortified by the economic crisis which eventually resulted in the 1946 pogroms in the cities of Kunmadaras, Miskolc, and Ozd.

After 1948, the totalitarian-turned-communist state shifted the memory of the deportation and destruction of the Hungarian Jews and placed it in the background. The new Authorities were much more interested in the consolidation of their power than concentrating on the overhauling of this segment of Hungarian history. The entire responsibility for the abominable crimes was handed over to the German occupiers as well as some radical members of the *Arrow Cross* Party. In the official history the Hungarian population became the most important player in the antifascist fight. At the same time, the preoccupation with the Holocaust was

[19] L. Varga, *A holokauszt és a rendszerváltás Magyarországon* [Holocaust and system-change in Hungary], in *Tanulmányok a Holokausztról* [Examinations about the Holocaust], I, edited by Randolph Braham, Balassi Kaidó, Budapest 2001, pp. 159-199, here p. 159.

[20] More about the expropriation of the Hungarian Jews see in: G. Kádár - Z. Vági, *Hullarablás. A magyar zsidók gazdasági megsemmisítése* [Rape of corpse. The economic destruction of the Hungarian Jews], Jaffa Kaidó, Budapest 2005.

associated with Jews only. Therefore, the commemorations were only conducted within the Jewish community[21].

From taboo to substantial theme - Holocaust memory in Hungary from 1948 onwards

After the communists came into power in 1948, the Holocaust became a taboo subject and even the word "Jew" became paraphrased and even banned from pubic dialogue until the 1980s. At the onset of the 1950s and rising of anti-Zionism the preoccupation with the subject became almost unavoidable. The memory on persecution confined to the Jewish Community. The emigration in the years 1945-1948[22] and 1956/57 led to a shrink up the Jewish Community and it concerned exactly the part of persons who kept most their Jewish identity and tradition[23].

With the end of the 1950´s the public politic of the country changed. Since this time even believing Jews were allowed to exist in the public. Isolated, the research about the Holocaust began. However the Yom-Kippur War in the year 1973 and the following anti-Zionist and latent anti-Semitic movement led to a new phase of repression. In the second part of the 1970s it came to a new breakthrough. During these years there were published some novels and scientific publications. The scientific seating apart with Holocaust was strengthened with the 40th anniversary of Holocaust in the year 1984. Some memorial tablets were unveiled and scientific conferences and seminars took place.

After 1989-90, the expected awakening of the Holocaust memory failed to appear. Confrontation, frank public dialogue, and, above all, taking responsibility for the persecution of the Hungarian Jews still was not happening. Thus, a new wave of Revisionism and anti-Semitism burgeoned. Under Communist rule, all criticism of politics was subdued[24]. After the political shift and with the increasing sense of insecurity, people sought out a scapegoat which would be blamed for any new problems that arose. Also, freedom of opinion made way for deviant political opinions. With the revitalized anti-Semitism and revisionism after 1989-90, countless survivors felt the necessity to illuminate truth about the Holocaust. These years characterised the moment when they began to recollect their war experiences.

The reinterpretation of the past after 1989/90

[21] S. Szita, *Erinnerung und Erinnerungsarbeit in Ungarn. Einige historische Aspekte*, in "Gedenkdienst", 1 , 2005, pp. 5-7, here p. 6.

[22] Between 1945 and 1951 about 20,000-25,000 Jews left the country. V. Karády, *op. cit.*, p. 426. In spite of this high number Hungary is the country with the second highest Jewish population in Europe.

[23] S. Szita, *op. cit*., p. 6.

[24] W. Bergmann – R. Erb, *Wie antisemitisch sind die Deutschen? Meinungsumfragen 1945-1994* in *Antisemitismus in Deutschland. Zur Aktualität eines Vorurteils*, edited by Wolfgang Benz, Dtv, München 1995, pp. 47-63, here p. 58.

The years 1989-90 saw a political change in Hungary, which was accompanied by rewriting, re-evaluation, and updating of history. Old monuments were removed, new ones put up, and forgotten narratives were reproduced[25]. The myth of the national innocence was renewed, associated with the self-image of the Hungarians themselves being victims of Nazism or embodying anti-Nazi resistance. As already mentioned, the term "victim" was expanded to the general Hungarian population after 1945. The entire responsibility for the persecution of the Hungarian Jews was laid on the Germans or some radical members of the *Arrow Cross* Party who were - as officially recorded in history - convicted after the Second World War.

Therefore, the political turn was one climax in the national victim discourse. As the Hungarian Sociologist Éva Kovács has mentioned:

> All kind of victims of the twentieth century went public with their own stories and traumas and demanded that justice be done. The victims of the 1956 revolution played the main role on the stage of the truth telling, the victims of Stalinism followed them, and finally the Shoah survivors[26].

Characteristically, people searched for a new national identity. What followed were numerous debates about the role of the Horthy-regime and how to solidify that memory. At the same time, people searched for a period which might emphasize the national unity. Consequently, the Horthy-regime was romanticized and mystified, and after all these years the Horthy-regime received a significant meaning on the part of the conservative parties[27]. At the same time the role Miklós Horthy playing in deporting Hungarian Jews was totally ignored[28].

Many public personalities tried to acquit the country from all responsibility of having persecuted the Jews. Furthermore, some decisions which might have elucidated past Holocaust events were vetoed. For example, several people who were convicted at the People's Trials of the 1940's were later rehabilitated. In connection with the material restitution of the victims of communism, the compensation of the Holocaust victims was made a theme, but the actual sums paid to the survivors were very minimal. In truth, what people remembered about the Communist regime completely overshadowed what they remembered about the Holocaust.

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[25] A. Assmann, *Europa als Erinnerungsgemeinschaft. Lecture "Geschichte, Gedächtnis, Identität" at the University of Vienna on 16th June 2005. Unpublished Scripts.*

[26] E. Kovács, *The memoire croisée of the Shoah*, in: www.eurozine.com.

[27] B. Mihok, *Erinnerungsüberlagerungen oder der lange Schatten der Geschichtsverzerrung*, in *Ungarn und der Holocaust. Kollaboration, Rettung und Trauma*, edited by Brigitte Mihok, Metropol Verlag, Berlin 2005 (Dokumente - Texte - Materialien 56), pp. 157-168, here p. 159.

[28] In connection with the revaluation of the role of Horthy stands the affiliation of the remains of Horthy and his family from Portugal to Hungary and his re-burial in Kenderes (Hungary) in September 1993.

Holocaust Interpretation. The House of Terror and the Holocaust Memorial

Encouraged by public discussion on the topic, historians soon opened a dialogue of queries regarding the conventional interpretation of the past. Finally, the subject had found its place in political discourse. However, thoughts on the topic were polarized not only when it came to politicians but also within society in general. The conservative parties tended towards the ideology of the Horthy regime, and the left parties were stigmatised as siding with the resembling of the *Arrow Cross* Party and the Communist Party. This can be explained by examining how after 1945 numerous former members of the *Arrow Cross* Party - as previously mentioned - were admitted without problem into the Communist Party. In addition, the new left parties which had existed since 1989-90 were comprised of former members of the Communist Party. In view of these reproaches, the left parties were pushed in a contraposition. These arguments concerning the correct interpretation of the past clarify specifically the concept of both museums in Budapest: the House of Terror and the Holocaust Memorial Center.

The House of Terror at 60 Andrássy Street was originally the headquarters of the Hungarian *Arrow Cross* Party, and from the end of the war until 1956 it was the seat of the Communist State Security (ÁVH). Since 2002, it accommodates a museum which was created mainly through the right-conservative government of that time under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Consequently, the museum is politically biased. This museum commemorates both the victims of the *Arrow Cross* Party as well as the victims of the communist dictatorship. This conception is based on the history of the house. Of course, this concept endangers equality for both groups. In fact, upon entering the museum, the visitor is confronted with two similar memorial plaques in two different colours. One is inscribed: "In memory of the victims of the Arrow Cross Terror", and the other reads: "In memory of the victims of the Communist Terror". Thus, it seems the museum has recognized similar outcomes of both political systems. This concept continued to be shown under the annual exhibits for both 2004 and 2005. The annual exhibit of 2004, called "Tragedy of 1944", was in memorial of Hungary when it was under German occupation. However, the word "tragedy" implicates for the Hungarian nation its role as a victim and the national loss[29]. The annual exhibit of 2005 centred on the soviet occupation of Hungary and was called "Tragedy of 1945". As a result, giving the same title to two different occupying forces equates the two systems. Here we also find another characteristic of the museum which is that it emphasizes Hungary's role as a victim. Consequently, the involvement of state and local authorities and the "bystanders" within Hungarian society in the deportations is factored out. In the permanent exhibition the Holocaust is represented in only two and a half rooms while more than 20 rooms are dedicated to the Communist

[29] B. Mihok, *op. cit.*, p. 160f. Mihok refers here for example to the territorial losses which were described through the term "Tragedy of Trianon".

Terror[30]. Consequently, an imbalance is evident in the sense that the suffering under the Communist Terror is moved into the foreground.

In short, we can see that the memory of the communist regime is meant to be considered most notable. Hungary is thusly relieved of responsibility it should take for the role it played in the Holocaust era of its history. The museum considers it sufficient that a few radical *Arrow Cross* Party members and the German occupiers are labelled as guilty and accountable for the matter. Visitors to the museum view the exhibit through the victim's perspective, where all the blame is shifted around. This becomes more obvious when one steps into the Gulag-room where the visitor has the opportunity to feel what it was like during the transport to Gulag. The room is designed to resemble a train car which one would be more likely to associate with the means of transportation during deportation to a Concentration Camp. Again, there is a tendency to equalize two different systems.

In contrast to the House of Terror, the Holocaust Memorial, which opened in 2004, is dedicated exclusively to the research and representation of the Holocaust. This museum is the fifth of its kind in the world and the first one in Eastern Europe. But even this institution is not free of contradictions. For instance, the connection between the museum and a synagogue, and, therefore, its connection to Jewish belief, was criticized in many circles after the opening of the Memorial because the Holocaust should have been understood as a corporate and not a religious and exclusively Jewish affair. Furthermore, the location of the museum was also criticized, because the complex was constructed in a very isolated area. The permanent exhibition was finalised only in the year 2006, nearly two years after opening of the institution.

However, making the Hungarians liable for some of the actions of the Holocaust is a step in the right direction. Not only the involvement of the Hungarian police and constabulary is emphasized but also the cooperation of the Hungarian people in the deportations. Consequently, the exhibition shows the enrichment of the Hungarian society on the Jewish properties. A weak point of the permanent exhibition is that it ends without providing any parallels to the present. Nevertheless, the realisation of the Holocaust Memorial has to be seen as the first step in the direction of the Revision of the Holocaust and the awareness of Hungary's accountability for actions that took place at that time. The museum contributes to the establishment positively, if this part of the Hungarian history is imprinted in the collective memory. In the opening celebration of the museum, the Hungarian mayor Gábor Demszky asked for forgiveness of the crimes Hungary perpetrated against its Jews. Indeed, we can see a fresh readiness politically to accept the country's own involvement in the obliteration of the Hungarian Jews. Conversely, the Hungarian Parliament mentioned no similar endeavours[31].

[30] The director of the museum Mária Schmidt explained the vanishing of the Horthy-regime in the permanent exhibition with the fact that there are too few documents, and that the representation of the prehistory of the Holocaust is the task of the Holocaust Memorial. Cf. L. Seres, *Andrássy út 60* [60 Andrássy Street], in "Élet és irodalom", 6, 2003.

[31] For the sake of completeness it has to be mentioned that even the parties on the left have to make good a lot for the preoccupation with the communism. Numerous historians pointed out that the social democratic party should have built the House of Terror.

Changing memories

In conclusion, we can claim that the self-critical preoccupation with the Holocaust in Hungary just began in the 1990s, particularly through the developing discussion which coincided with the opening of both museums. As described previously, on the official side it all comes down to a certain acceptance of one's actions. Nevertheless, the memory of the Holocaust is hardly accepted as part of the collective memory of the Hungarian nation, although it is more or less present as an official "lieu de mémoire" (Pierre Nora) via the Holocaust Memorial.

Through the accession talks with the EU, Hungary had to deal with its dark past, since the EU aims to institutionalise the common memory of Holocaust as a core of the European identity and to "denationalise"[32] history in this manner[33]. Here we can also observe a displacement of national self-perceptions in the process of European integration[34]. The altering of Holocaust Memory can surely be attributed to the globalisation of memory[35]. Even if the various European lands remember the Holocaust differently from each other and suffer conflict of memory, national constructs can no longer remain insular as the world grows increasingly smaller.

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[32] H. Rousso, *Das Dilemma eines europäischen Gedächtnisses* in "Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History", Online-Ausgabe, 1, 2004, Heft 3, URL: <http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/16126041-Rousso-3-2004.

[33] This reinterpretation of history is associated with the revaluation of the past in the broader sense of a European idea since the 1990s; T. Judt, *Die Vergangenheit ist ein anderes Land. Politische Mythen im Nachkriegseuropa*, in "Transit. Europäische Revue", 6, 1993, pp. 87-120, here p. 115.

[34] However, the relevance of the alternation of generations for the critical examination with the past shouldn't stay unmentioned.

[35] About the change of the national Holocaust memory to a global one see D. Levy – N. Sznaider, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter: Der Holocaust*, Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 2001.

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