

“US” AND “THEM” JEWS AS THE OTHERS

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Abstract

This paper examines whether the reemergence of “the Jewish Question” in post-2010 Hungarian public discourse has also re-surfaced the “Us” and “Them” distinction between “Hungarians” and “Jews” that has been latent within the Hungarian population, and whether this symbolic exclusion of Jews from the Hungarian “nation” creates new, additional Jewish and quasi-Jewish groups as “others”, to be lumped together with the “other others”.

The current “Jewish Question” debate in Hungary may have less to do with actual Jews, and more to do with creating the populist fiction of a homogeneous, isolated, ethnic nation, reminiscent of the ethnic nationalist concepts championed during the 1920s and 1930s with tragic consequences.

The paper’s first premise is that the state “protectively” treats Hungarian Jews as a distinct group, as a community that is distinguished by its “otherness”, separated from the “Us” of the national narrative. The second premise is that an “outgrouped other”, which doesn’t identify with the government’s concept of an ethnic nations, is depicted with stereotypes that historically described Jews, regardless of its background, origins or religion.

In this context, the questions we must ask, as populist, ethnic nationalism is being resurrected in Europe, are, how can affiliated Hungarian Jews, and “outed” “non Jewish Jews” take part in a nation that rhetorically excludes “them”, while cynically attempting to promote “their” (Jewish) separateness in a seemingly positive manner? Why is this separation sensitive, and perhaps even dangerous? How can Hungarians (who are cast as Jewish) credibly participate in Hungary’s internal and external politics and democracy?

Introduction

Academics usually find it hard to write about contested present-day issues. Most (used to) believe that we need a certain distance to be able to take a dispassionate, analytical view of a situation. Standing too close, or being involved in the middle of the examined events could make one short sighted and increase the risk of having a biased perspective. Being aware of this challenge of the risk, and even taking responsibility for the anthropological, subjective perspective, as an outsider, still a foreigner in this country, and as an ethnologist observing the Budapest Jewish population during the last decade, I will attempt to analyze the controversial, current day (2010–2016) circumstances of Hungarian Jews and non-Jews in Hungary. Researching the present is challenging because from the moment of writing this paper in April 2016, two years have passed

while it underwent the peer-reviewed publication process. During these two years many more events occurred that support the proposals elaborated below. The sophisticated doublespeak which this paper analyses has become less sophisticated. An openly racist, antisemitic journalist was honoured with a high level state award, which led to a significant protest movement by those who had also received this award. In addition, critical voices have been gradually silenced through either bankrupting opposition media outlets, or having them be bought out by companies owned by individuals within the inner circle of the Orbán-government when then changed the critical tone of these outlets.

The 2018 parliamentary election campaign could be considered the most powerful evidence of an open anti-Other and anti-Semitic rhetoric. The 2018 campaign was almost singularly built on demonising George Soros, a Hungarian-American Jewish philanthropist and businessman. The Government's anti-immigration campaign, carried out over the last three years resulted in billboard series with the slogans “Let's not allow Soros to laugh at the end” and “Stop Soros”. In addition to a “national consultation”, or referendum about “Soros's plan”. The government created and broadcasted on every “state organised” media and advertising outlet (free daily newspapers, local weekly magazines, flyers and TV channels) fear-mongering videos (even before the official campaign) describing how Soros wants to force illegal immigrants from the Middle East with different cultures and different religions on Christian Hungarians. The government claims that Soros's plan is to purposely destroy European nations, Hungarian national identity, national culture and the native language. Through his NGOs and “foreign agents” he would destroy the Hungarian nation. Even though the government denied that the scapegoating has anything to do with Soros's Jewish origins, the billboards were easily “decoded”, not only by analysts, but by average citizens who drew and wrote phrases like “Stinky Jew” on these billboards. George Soros himself sent several public letters noting how this hate campaign resembles those from the 19th century which used caricatures of the “Jewish puppet master” pulling the world's strings.

In the framework of social and cultural ethnology and anthropology, I apply the anthropological methodology of formal and informal interviews participant observation. I also analyze the official communications (written statements, speeches, interviews) of the government and of the representatives of the different formally organized Jewish communities. I will also rely on existing scholarship; but since this topic does not yet have an extensive body of academic analysis, I also draw on mass media reports as primary sources (most of these reports are interviews with academics, or written by academics), as well as reports published by international committees and watchdog organizations.

Eventually, in a diachronic and synchronic socio-political framework, I will attempt to interpret the inconsistent, paradoxical and often unreasonable (from any perspective) relationship between

the Hungarian State and the Jewish communities, adding to the second group unaffiliated and affiliated Jewish Hungarians, and those people who unwillingly find themselves considered Jewish in the battlefield of a revived “Jewish Question” where the battle ranges from sophisticatedly coded rhetoric to open debates and political conflicts.

This paper examines whether the post 2010-rhetoric in Hungary uses the “Jewish Question” as a marker to bring to the surface the “Us” and “Them” separation that has been latent within the Hungarian population, and whether this symbolic exclusion creates a new Jewish group as “others”, together with the “other others”.

The “Jewish Question” debate that emerged after 2010, in both academic and political discourse, might have less to do with actual Jews and more to do with creating the fiction of a homogeneous, isolated, ethnic nation. The debate about the “Jewish Question” has a larger impact, which is translated into public policy, public discourse and the societal atmosphere in a pervasive anti-otherness. At the same time, observing the inconsistencies and struggles by the Hungarian state to promote a concept of a collective national identity – apart from drawing ethnic boundaries – it is impossible not to notice how the government’s “populist” ethnic nationalism serves to conceal the economic decline, the increasing systemic state level corruption and the backsliding democracy.

The “Jewish Question”, used as a political card, is being revived in two ways: first, symbolically separating the Jews from the State (“Us” and “Them”/“You”, and secondly, talking about the Jews as a group with collective characteristics, collective identity, collective interests.

The rhetorical ambiguity of a conflict

One of Hungary’s most prominent writers, György Spiró, author of many award winning novels, works of poetry and theatrical plays, said in an interview in April 2016:

“I have nothing to do with Judaism, even though the Nazi race laws would have categorized me as one hundred percent Jewish through parentage, on both my father’s and my mother’s sides. My father’s distant cousin was the famous Munkács ‘Miracle Rabbi’, and a distant relative of my mother was a Catholic saint, Edith Stein; but I have nothing to do with them. I didn’t know them. My culture is not their culture. I am not assimilated, which is one of those loathsome words that they use; but rather, I am Hungarian. Sometimes people are called Jews and excluded from the field of Hungarian literature, but this isn’t a question of my identity, it’s question of the Nazi’s identity; it’s their problem. They too can be killed, and then what?”

This paper will elaborate on the conflictive complexity rooted in the special relationship between the Jews and the newly established European ethnic nation states. Similar to the situation in countries which, with the rise of a concept of national identity in the 17th and 18th centuries, adopted a concept of civic nation, Jews in Hungary were gradually accepted and integrated into

the Hungarian nation as nationals, while they could keep their religion. Certainly in Hungary where academics talk about an unwritten “social contract”, an “assimilation contract” that emancipates the Jews and grants Judaism equal recognition as a state-supported religion, with the understanding that Jews would become ‘real Hungarians’, including, occasionally, the adoption of Magyar surnames, mother tongue and behavior patterns and shed their “weird” appearance and conduct. Some Jews – later labeled as “urbanists” took the opportunity as a status upgrade, enabling them to take advantage of opportunities and be accepted into fields previously unavailable to them (public schools, universities, a wider range of jobs, political participation as Hungarians, etc). The ‘contract’ was negotiated in public discourse throughout the 19th century, especially after 1848/49, when Jews living in the Hungarian territories fought in the national uprising mostly on the Hungarian side. This period was described as a “symbiotic love affair”, when Jews as Hungarian citizens gained full acceptance among most if not all the elites, political, societal, academic, economic, etc. Once again, during WWI, Jews proved their loyalty and adherence to the Hungarian nation. Nevertheless, during this “belle époque” of integration, a measure of societal stigmatisation of Jews was still operating, though this targeted mainly Orthodox and Hasidic Jews because of their distinctive appearance and behavior. Antisemitic jokes against traditional Jewry could be found in several Jewish magazines as well. Nevertheless, until 1919, the state sought to treat all its citizens, Jew and non-Jew, equally; incidents, the political concept underpinning the Hungarian statehood included the acceptance of Jews both as individuals and as a faith-based collective – requalified as ‘Hungarians of the Mosaic faith’, with civil rights (close to) equal to those of every other Hungarians. During this period, Budapest had a Jewish mayor, there were Jewish members of parliament, academics, journalists, etc., all of whom saw themselves as Hungarian citizens acting on behalf of their fellow Hungarians.

This beautiful “symbiotic love affair” resulted in a society where Jews now considered themselves as patriotic members of the Hungarian nation, organically and creatively participating in the national civilization as Hungarians. As the quote above indicates, questioning their Hungarianness appeared to most of Hungary’s Jewish citizens as absurd and incomprehensible. This blind trust in their national standing included confidence in the political leadership, even during the interwar Horthy regime, which was among the first European governments in the 20th century to introduce a form of institutionalized antisemitism.

The sudden legal separation of Jews and non Jews that took place with the “Numerus Clausus” in 1920, the first anti-Jewish law to be introduced in Europe following WWI. The introduction of additional anti-Jewish laws in 1938 and after, following the Nazi model, coupled with the role of the Hungarian administration as well as private citizens in the Holocaust came thus as a significant shock in Hungary, as it had in Germany and Austria. This was not only a brutal

violation of the integration contract, but also signified the fatal failure of the whole historic process of assimilation. Henceforth, the rule imposed on Hungarians with any Jewish heritage was that one should maintain silence about one's Jewish identity. Two generations grew up after 1945 in this silence, becoming often completely unaware of their Jewish heritage, ignoring sometimes even the tragic fate shared by their ancestors during the Holocaust. After the transition from a communist authoritarian regime to a capitalist liberal democracy in 1989, Hungarian Jews celebrated euphorically what many called a "Jewish renaissance", and began reconstructing a Jewish life on Western models. However, this newly created Jewish life was still organically part of the complex, conflictual and ideologically fragmented Hungarian social and political scene.

This paper discusses how the current government has gradually moved toward treating "the Jews in Hungary" as a special not-completely Hungarian group, ostensibly with affection and a sense of being their guardian against discrimination, and how this positive treatment along with a redoubled patriotic populist ethnic nationalism and the use of a culturally loaded double speak has resulted in the emergence of a pervasively anti-Semitic public discourse which has penetrated every level of society, reminiscent of the situation in the 1930s.

In 2013, the Hungarian Government, in support of its 2014 candidacy for the chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), issued a document with the title "Fact Sheet: The Hungarian Government's Steps To Combat Anti-Semitism" (referred to subsequently in this paper as the "Fact Sheet"). The "Fact Sheet" lists all the measures and steps taken by Hungarian Government to combat antisemitism. The "Fact Sheet" states "Incidents of anti-Semitism" have been promptly followed-up by high-level official condemnations on the part of the Hungarian government or by legislative changes. In combating anti-Semitism, the government focuses on 1) law enforcement and legal measures; 2) Holocaust education and remembrance; 3) support for Jewish cultural renaissance in Hungary". This document identified the results that had already been achieved and the plans for the future – for example, banning hate speech, banning Holocaust denial, agreeing on the compensation of Holocaust survivors living in foreign countries, a 50% increase in the amount paid as restitution to Holocaust survivors, having the Prime Minister's Office co-organize and sponsor the Jewish Summer Festival in 2013 with a grant of 58 million HUF, renovating and rededicating an early 19th century synagogue in the historic Óbuda neighborhood of Budapest and participating in many other heritage projects. As the document describes it, the Neologue Hungarian Federation of Jewish Communities (MAZSIHISZ) "welcomed Parliament's nearly unanimous decision to allow for an expedited naturalization process for people of Hungarian descent, including Jewish Hungarians who had lost their Hungarian citizenship for any number of reasons". According to the "Fact Sheet", the Federation called the new Act a "historic restitution" for Holocaust survivors and their descendants. The

Government initiated a monitoring system to provide a comprehensive, professional analysis of antisemitic phenomena in Hungary. The monitoring of antisemitic acts is performed by the Brussels Institute, which was founded by the Action and Protection Foundation (TEV). TEV, the document states, is an “independent non-governmental organization”, founded in 2012, which carries out its research according to methods developed and recommended by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The “Fact Sheet” underlines that Prime Minister Orbán has repeatedly affirmed the principle of “zero tolerance” against all forms of anti-Roma or antisemitic manifestations and atrocities. This “Fact Sheet” quotes him as follows: “every minority in Hungary is protected, including the national minorities, but also the Roma and the Jewish minorities” (January 18, 2012).

In 2013, the Hungarian Government officially announced that the next year would be proclaimed as a Holocaust Memorial Year and dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the Hungarian Holocaust. The government provided significant financial funding (approximately 5.5 million USD at April 2016 exchange rates) for a Holocaust Memorial Year Fund/Civil Fund that would provide grants for various commemoration events, educational projects, conferences and research, as well as the construction of memorials and renovation of synagogues and cemeteries. In addition to this, the Government planned to build a new Holocaust museum at an estimated cost of 5 billion HUF (18,100,000 USD at April 2016 exchange rates).

The “Fact Sheet” also lists among Hungary’s achievements that the same FIDESZ party that was in power when the document was drafted in 2013 also founded the Holocaust Museum and Documentation Center in 1999, shortly before joining the European Union. In 2001, the Hungarian Government declared April 16 to be the national day of the Holocaust in Hungary. Additionally, the “Fact Sheet” lists the government’s high-level public condemnations of antisemitic acts and rhetoric in chronological order.

The “Fact Sheet” also mentions that Hungary is a member of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research and considers as binding the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, which, among other things, commits signatories to promote education about the Holocaust in schools, universities and communities, and encourages education on the topic in other institutions. Based on a 1997 agreement with Yad Vashem, more than 500 Hungarian teachers have benefited from the opportunity to take summer courses at the Holocaust Memorial Center. In addition, as noted earlier, the observance of Holocaust Remembrance Day in public schools was introduced by the first Orbán government (1998–2002) in the 2000–2001 school year. Holocaust education is compulsory and is an integral part of the national curriculum: 1) for 5th–8th graders, the Holocaust in Europe and Hungary, 2) for 9th–12th graders, the path to the persecution and genocide of Jews.

Several civil society organizations (eg. The USC Shoah Foundation, the Yad Vashem Institute, the Zachor Foundation for Social Remembrance, the Jewish Community Roundtable) are engaged in Holocaust education, which enables a multi-faceted and comprehensive representation of the topic. The government notes with pride that Israel's former Deputy Prime Minister, Nathan Sharansky, opened the world's first Israeli Cultural Institute in Budapest on 2010. Hungarians and Israelis, together with the Jewish Agency for Israel, initiated the establishment of the Institute, which, according to the "Fact Sheet", is supported by the Hungarian Government. The "Fact Sheet" also claims that the Government has renewed its dialogue with the Jewish communities (the Jewish Communities Roundtable) and now conducts regular consultations with all major Jewish organizations and religious communities in Hungary.

During a 2013 conference on "Jewish Life and Anti-Semitism in Contemporary Europe", organized by the Tom Lantos Institute and hosted in the Hungarian Parliament building, then Deputy Prime Minister Tibor Navracsics delivered the opening speech (filling in at short notice for Prime Minister Orbán, who, it was reported, had injured his foot playing football the day before) in which he said: "We know that the institutions of the Hungarian state were responsible for the Holocaust... The perpetrators were Hungarians; it was Hungarians who fired the shots and it was Hungarians who died, and this is a huge responsibility that we here in Hungary and in Central Europe must face". In 2014, there were many other speeches delivered by high-ranking government officials in which they acknowledged the responsibility of the Hungarian State and expressed the deep sympathy of the Hungarian nation for the tragedies, apologizing for the crimes committed during the Holocaust.

The question arises, however, considering all these generous gestures noted above, how the situation could deteriorate to the point where, a few months after the "Fact Sheet" was published, Randolph Braham, considered the most authoritative expert in the world on the Hungarian Holocaust, wrote an open letter to the Hungarian Holocaust Documentation Center requesting that his name be removed from the library, which had been named after him. Braham also returned the Order of Merit, which he had received from the Hungarian state in 2011, because of his disappointment with the Hungarian government's stand on Holocaust. The Nobel Prize laureate and Hungarian Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel had also returned his award earlier for similar reasons. In addition to the hundreds of articles written during 2014, accusing the government of "falsifying history" in its characterization of the role of Hungary during the Holocaust, severe criticism was directed at the Government's hastily erected monument to the "Victims of the German Occupation". Thirty members of the United States Congress wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister "urging" him to "reconsider" building the monument, given that the leadership of the Hungarian Jewish community, which suffered so greatly during the Holocaust in Hungary,

believes that the proposed monument “whitewashes the fact that there were Hungarians complicit with the systematic murder of their relatives”.

Perhaps one of the high points of the conflict, which exploded into public view in 2014, was when the Federation, which had received grants from the government’s Holocaust Memorial Year Fund, returned all the funds (about one million USD) and announced that it would not participate in Holocaust Memorial Year events organized by the Government. The press called this action by the Federation “the Jewish boycott” even though the term was never approved by Federation leaders. Instead, the Jewish community leaders emphasized the need for dialogue about the key disputed issues. The conflict was covered extensively by international media, and the main Hungarian newspapers kept it on the front pages for months. In 2014, there were hundreds of statements, petitions, protests, objections and press releases that came from the Washington Holocaust Memorial Museum, from cultural centers, several embassies, universities and academic communities, a letter addressed to the government from thirty members of the US Congress, and from prominent individual public figures condemning the Government’s approach regarding how the history of 1920–1945 is being presented, and how hidden Anti-Semitism is kept alive by the government.

2010 regime change and the revolution of new nationalism

One year after the publication of the “Fact Sheet” described above, it became evident that many of its achievements and plans had backfired on several levels. Instead of processing historical traumas and integrating different historical narratives into a dialogic narrative, many of the achievements and plans of the Government ended in severe conflict. The debate not only bitterly divided the Hungarian Jewish communities and the government, but also created rifts within the academic community, by characterizing the “Jewish Question” as the “problem of the Jews” and placing it in the center of political and academic discourse.

Analyzing only a few examples below, it is clear that the result of these conflicting narratives was facts were blurred and ignored. Certain aspects of the Hungarian Holocaust were emphasized while others were trivialized. And the use of double speak as a type of “dog whistle” which, while seemingly inaudible, was heard loudly and clearly by segments of the population attuned to its possible connotation, became a staple of public discourse. The question is whether there is a coherent strategy behind this official public messaging, and if there is, what is it? And if there isn’t, where does this incoherency lead?

The above-mentioned apologies in the name of the Hungarian government seemed deeply sincere; and they were received internally and externally very positively, even cathartically. However, in analyzing these deeply emotional, apologetic, self-reflective speeches more closely, it is unclear what the specific actions are for which these senior officials feel it necessary to apologize. Which

officials should be held accountable? In their apologetic speeches, the dates of the events and the names of the responsible people are glossed over or not mentioned at all, or (when they don't blame the Germans) they focus only on the Hungarian Arrow Cross party members.

The ambiguity might have to do with an important sentence in the Preamble of the new Fundamental Law, enacted in 2012, which replaced the pre-existing Constitution. "We do not recognize the suspension of our historical constitution due to foreign occupations. We deny any statute of limitations for the inhuman crimes committed against the Hungarian nation and its citizens under the national socialist and the communist dictatorship. (...) We date the restoration of our country's self-determination, lost on the nineteenth day of March 1944, from the second day of May 1990, when the first freely elected organ of popular representation was formed. We shall consider this date to be the beginning of our country's new democracy and constitutional order".

The 2012 Fundamental Law, which serves as Hungary's constitution, essentially declares that Hungary lost its sovereignty before the massacres, crimes and tragedies of the Holocaust happened. Also, if we read how the Holocaust is presented on the home page of the Government's Holocaust Memorial Year website, there is a slight difference between the Hungarian and the English versions. It is worth noting that the English version of the Fundamental Law has a paragraph between the two above-quoted paragraphs, which cannot be found in Hungarian version. The first sentence of this additional paragraph in English, as well as other government communications which present different messaging to Hungary's domestic audience than to the international community, is an example of the official use of double speak. The incorporation of these rhetorical statements and their translations into monuments, textbooks and museums, together with the apologies that don't implicate specific individuals or highlight the Horthy regime's direct involvement raises numerous questions.

A so-called "National Cooperation Plan", enacted in 2010, declared that 2010 was a "revolution" and the Hungarian people began a new era, redefining the nation, defending all Hungarians within and outside the borders of the former territories, laying out the principles of ethnic national cooperation. A governmental order was enacted that made it mandatory to display this declaration in every public institute. In 2010 many public institutions were still ridiculing at document; one after the other announced that it was happily ignoring this rule, including the Constitutional court, the President of Hungary and the Lord Mayor of Budapest. However, by the time the Fundamental Laws were enacted, most of these institutions had different leaders and definitely less power.

Both the Fundamental Law and the National Cooperation Plan laid out a harmonious concept of ethnic nationhood, cultural reform and the reinterpretation of history. From 2010 to 2016, the

government centralized the governance of educational institutions (or attempted to centralize them several times in different ways) and established several new cultural umbrella organizations for art, culture and history.

One particularly noteworthy example of these new government affiliated research centers is the “Veritas Institute”. The word “Veritas” means “truth” in Latin. The main mission of these new institutes is to “take back” the historical narrative that had been hijacked and dominated by the “left liberal academia” since 1949 and finally tell the Veritas, i.e. the truth. Peter Boross, Hungary’s Prime Minister from December 1993 to July 1994, was behind the idea to establish the Veritas Institute. This institute has come to play a major role in the Hungarian government’s attempts to “deal” with the problematic issues of Hungary’s 20th century history. While the Veritas Institute claims that its mission is to clean the “leftist falsification” and dogmatic narratives created by the communists, who it claims are still predominant in Hungary’s academic institutions, others have called the institute’s methodology “revisionist history”, “whitewashing” and the “falsification” of history. Mária M. Kovács provides a detailed description of how Boross’s concept was inspired by the ideology of the extreme ethnic nationalist party, Jobbik, to rehabilitate the Horthy regime and resurrect Hungary’s dormant ethnic national identity. M. M. Kovács cites how Boross attacks those who might question whether Horthy was innocent of crimes against Jews. According to her, his attacks use well known arguments, and paraphrases Boross’s words from an interview: “that it is time for them (Boross, the Veritas institute, the Government, the Hungarians) “to step up against a small minorities’ conceptual dictatorship”. “Horthy was not responsible”. Mária M. Kovács lays out an extremely well-reasoned argument explaining this conflict, demonstrating that the approach taken by the Veritas Institute, and those with a similar ideological bias, is that those who don’t agree with the rehabilitation of the Horthy era do not belong to the nation of “Hungarians” as imagined by the Government.

The Veritas Institute’s re-interpretation of history started with a conference entitled “From Occupation to Occupation”, and continued with subsequent conferences and lecture series books focussing on the 1918–1945 period. One of the criticisms that the new institute has had to face was the accusation that it was building a cult around Admiral Miklós Horthy, the Regent of Hungary between 1920–1944, and downplaying the responsibility of the Hungarian people and leaders for the Holocaust. Former Prime Minister Boross, at a conference about Miklós Horthy organized by the Veritas Institute said “there was no antisemitism where I lived”.

A personality cult around Regent Admiral Miklós Horthy initially was promoted by the Jobbik party, while the government only celebrated the general era of 1930s; however, several parliament members were involved in the unveiling of a bust of Horthy in the entrance to a Calvinist church near Szabadság Tér (Liberty square) in Budapest.

The assumption that the official, repeated apologies of the Hungarian government regarding the Hungarian leaders' responsibility refer only to the "occupied" Hungarian government (led by Sztójay and Lakatos government and then Szálasi) could mean that the acceptance of Hungarian responsibility is limited to the few months when Nazi troops were deployed in Hungary, basically after the "loss of sovereignty". Mária M. Kovács and Krisztián Ungváry view the situation differently and argue that sovereignty was not exactly lost. Mária M. Kovács calls the Fundamental Law's statement a "false deduction" and argues that after Germany deployed troops in Hungary, the pre-existing government and public administration continued to govern. As a matter of fact, the deportations could never have been carried out as "effectively" as they were in Hungary – deporting all Jewish Hungarians residing in the countryside within a few weeks – without the entire Hungarian administration's active facilitation, starting with Horthy's strategies, then with the brutality of the Hungarian gendarmerie and the Arrow Cross, and finally, the MAV railway company's diligence. What many historians called the "falsification of history", Mária M. Kovács describes as the "chronic and constant double speak" of the government, a technique already used in the Horthy era, that kept the society quiet, and led the Jews to believe that the government would protect them, even while it remained committed to its alliance with the Germans as well.

Both Mária M. Kovács and Krisztián Ungváry pointed out that Hungary still retained a significant level of decision-making authority despite the presences of German troops within its borders, mentioning that both governors after the occupation were appointed by Miklós Horthy – who was still in power for several months after the "loss of sovereignty". Historians who are experts in the Horthy era underline that the anti-Jewish laws that legalized multiple forms of discrimination against Jews, as well as the first deportation that resulted in the slaughter of 18,000 Jews, were implemented prior to the German occupation, under full Hungarian authority. Ungváry summed it up as follows: "Hungary was indeed an island of peace for many people until 1944, but not for its Jews. Apart from the more than 100 laws and regulations passed against Jews, there were pogroms in several places (in Kisvarda in 1938, and in Munkács and Máramarossziget in 1942), mass murders (a total of 700 Jews died in Southern Hungary in 1942), the mass deportation of some 17,000 people to Kamenyec-Podolski, continuous deportations of those who escaped until autumn 1942, not to mention inhumanely forced labor, which itself caused the death of more than 10,000 people by 1944. This isn't as much as the millions of deaths elsewhere, but I wouldn't call it a small number either".

However, Sándor Szakály, the Veritas Institute director, sought to deny that Hungary was already deporting Jews in 1941. Instead of using the term „deportation”, Szakály said in an interview that indeed, „some historians consider this event to be the first deportation of Jews from Hungary” but in his opinion it can more properly be considered “a measure taken by police against aliens”.

After being subject to significant criticism by reputable historians, he explained that he used this expression because these Jews did not have proper documents that could prove their Hungarian citizenship. The statements used caused outrage on all sides of the political and academic spectrum, and many demanded his resignation. Randolph Braham interpreted his statement and the views of the Veritas Institute „as part of the rehabilitation of the Horthy era”. Nevertheless, two years later, in 2016, the Hungarian government honored Szakály with the Commander Cross Order of Merit (Magyar Érdemrend középkeresztje). In 2015, he was awarded the World Prize for Hungarians (Világ Magyarságáért Díja) and he also has received the highest National Guard Award several times, most recently in 2015 (Honvédelemért kitüntető cím, I fokozat).

Ironically, while the director of the Veritas Institute received the Commander Cross Order of Merit for „the rehabilitation of the Horthy era” as Braham called it, a few years earlier the Nobel prize laureate Elie Wiesel, had returned the Grand Cross Order of Merit (one grade higher than the Commander Cross), objecting to „the rehabilitation of the Horthy era”. Wiesel condemned the president of the parliament and other senior Hungarian government officials for attending a ceremony honoring writer József Nyirő, who was a member of the Arrow Cross Party dominated parliament. Wiesel declared “I found it outrageous that the Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly could participate in a ceremony honoring a Hungarian fascist ideologue”. When the current government tried honoring, with statues, plaques and street names, historical figures who were collaborators, contributors or open antisemites, the disagreement grew even more heated. As mentioned earlier, both academics and non-academics participated vociferously and extensively in these highly charged debates. The main issue which separated the position of the Government, Veritas academics (Gábor Újváry, Tibor Zinner, Sándor Szakály) and certain journalist from the right and center right from most other academics, many of whom had dedicated their lives to researching this period (Mária M. Kovács, László Karsai, Krisztián Ungváry) is the nature of Hungarian responsibility and extent of collaboration throughout the war. An issue which engaged academics for throughout 2015, concerned the “rehabilitation” of the name and academic status of Bálint Hóman (a historian, politician and contributor to the anti-Jewish laws that preceded the deportations) and clearly showed the academic dichotomy, which was similar to a boxing match between two scholarly sides: the academics from “older institutes” versus academics from the “new regime” Veritas, the government’s historical research arm. After international academic and political outrage (again), the Prime Minister of Hungary eventually gave up on the plan to erect a statue in honor of Bálint Hóman. Illustrating the significance of this issue, even the President of the United States, Barack Obama, mentioned it in a public speech: “It’s why, when a statue of an anti-Semitic leader from World War II was planned in Hungary, we led the charge to convince their government to reverse course. This was not a side note to our relations with Hungary, this

was central to maintaining a good relationship with the United States, and we let them know”.

In view of this duplicitous doublespeak by the government, the sincerity of the state’s earlier apologies is called into question, given that the government’s view is that those sins for which its high-ranking representatives apologized were committed during a period which the Fundamental Law clearly claims are not part Hungarian history by stating that Hungary had lost its sovereignty.

The controversy over the Fundamental law’s concept of nation, and the doublespeak concerning culture politics was manifested in many governmental plans and proposals. However, there were two significant issues that led to the Federation rejecting participation in the Holocaust Commemoration Year, giving back the money received and attempting to form its own commemoration, called “Memento70”.

The first issue was the name, “House of Fates”, chosen by the government for the planned new Holocaust center for “innocent children” who died in the Holocaust. In addition to the name, the content of the museum was being planned without consulting with the Jewish community. The name was considered a cynical antithesis to the title of the book set during the Holocaust, by Nobel prize winning author Imre Kertész, translated into English as “Fateless” or “Fatelessness”. The name “Fateless” suggest the opposite of the meaning implied in the name “House of Fates”. “Fateless” implies a lack of fate, or a stolen fate, not an inevitable fate as implied in the name “House of Fates”. In analyzing the speech’s grammar, we see that the passive voice is used often, even though the passive style and the lack of an active voice for the subject is not characteristic of the Hungarian language. Sentences that don’t name the actors, or use “fatalist” concepts and expressions, like “people were dragged into antisemitism” reject responsibility without taking responsibility for the rejection of it.

The second issue was one which drew international attention and continues to cause significant outrage: the construction of a monument as a Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation on March 19th, 1944. The plans and a detailed description were submitted in an official government act nr. 2056/2013. (XII. 31.) and approved by the Prime Minister’s Office just before New Year’s Eve in 2013. The plan clearly described the meaning of the symbols used, and even the significance of the artistic style, not leaving much room for interpretation or misunderstanding the message carried by this piece of art.

The monument sought to portray Hungary as the angel Gabriel, and Germany as an attacking eagle. According to the official description, the intent of the monument is to depict Hungary as a victim to the German occupation, and that its sovereignty was lost on March 19th 1944. The angel’s facial expression depicts a beautiful face with closed eyes, conveying helplessness and abandonment, but also acceptance of defeat. The document states that while the angel Gabriel is a man of godlike form (and it should be noted that the angel Gabriel is also used to depict

Hungary in a triumphal statue on Heroes square, surrounded by statues of the ‘patriarchs’ of Hungary) who would be made from bronze with a beautifully perfect, nuanced and soft body the eagle should express brutality, and will be made of black iron, wild and cruel. Furthermore, the positioning of the angel’s body will exemplify the crucifixion of Christ. The angel Gabriel’s posture would convey three ideas: acceptance of defeat, crucifixion and also offering a blessing, which could be interpreted to mean – as the documents states – “a new beginning”. Indeed, the monument, which was eventually unveiled in July 2014, corresponds closely to the original plans. It was placed on the square (never officially inaugurated) in the middle of the night. There was no public discussion about the memorial before the plan was approved. The monument, which is still guarded by police, stands on Budapest’s Szabadság Tér (Liberty square) not far from the bronze Miklós Horthy bust mentioned earlier. Even though, this monument was one of the two significant issues that led to the Federation withdrawing from the state’s official Commemoration Year events, when the Prime Minister later communicated with the Federation, he said that they could discuss the House of Fate, but not the Occupation memorial.

Published information about the project went viral, leading to demonstrations against it because it was a “Falsification of history”. The protests grew into a large civil protest movement. In January 2014, academics from various institutes issued a statement objecting to the “falsification of history” that this monument conveys. The list of academic publications and articles written by journalists on the monument is almost endless, as the civil protest is still ongoing. After its objections failed to stop the construction of the monument, the Federation asked for discussion, consensus and dialogue, in accordance with the Round Table promised in the “Fact Sheet” (elaborated above).

As mentioned before, Randolph Braham wrote an open letter addressed informally to the Holocaust Documentation Centre asking that it remove his name from the library named in his honor. He also asked it to inform whomever it may concern that he is returning the Order of Merit award he had received from the Hungarian State in 2011 because: “The straw that broke the camel’s back in my decision was the government’s resolve to erect a national statue relating to the German occupation – a cowardly attempt to detract attention from the Horthy regime’s involvement in the destruction of the Jews and to homogenize the Holocaust with the “suffering” of the Hungarians – a German occupation, as the record clearly shows, that was not only unopposed but generally applauded”. In an interview, Braham said he was “stunned” by the “history-cleansing campaign of the past few years calculated to whitewash the historical record of the Horthy era”.

In May, 2014, thirty members of the U.S. Congress signed a letter addressed to the Prime Minister, asking him to reconsider the construction of the Nazi occupation monument: “while there were individuals in Hungary who actively helped those persecuted by the Nazis, it cannot be ignored that there was also a portion of the population at that time that willingly participated in

Nazi activities, including the deportation of Hungarian Jews” (...) “According to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, one of the preeminent institutions on the history of the Holocaust, in mid-May 1944, Hungarian authorities in coordination with the Nazis began to systematically deport Hungary’s Jews”. The main point of the Prime Minister’s response was that this is not a Holocaust monument, it is a monument focusing on the loss of freedom, the loss of sovereignty: “The composition erected now is a freedom fighting people’s memorial of the pain of having its liberty crushed”. After several months, when the Prime Minister eventually responded to the Federation, he spoke (according to Mária Kovács and other academics) in the name of “all Hungarians” to the “Jewry”. On one end of the “dialogue” are the Hungarians, the ones that feel the nation’s pain as those who identify with the monument; on the other side, opposing the government and the Hungarian nation, are the “Jewry”. M. Kovács’s observation lends supports to my argument that the rhetoric used in these actions and speeches “creates” a new Jewish community that is formed by people who previously did not want to be considered Jewish at all.

TEV, the previously-mentioned organization established with government funding to combat antisemitism, in its 2015 January report on antisemitic speech and incidents, dedicates nine pages to the communication process and conflict regarding this monument under the title “Community Responses and Answers”.

Parallel with the Federation’s failed attempts to organize a discussion with the Government about the concept conveyed in the planned monument, civil protests – organized by mainly non-Jewish groups – resulted in a “Living Memorial” and the “Freedom park stage”, projects that organize discussions, performances and debates. These attempts at dialogue, performances and a tangible “Living memorial” present a counter-narrative to that which the government sought to convey with the monument. “The Living memorial” is framed by photos, candles, symbols, personal documents, lists of murdered families, rocks with dates of on which people were murdered, shoes, luggage and many other symbolic objects that people bring with the intent to show that Hungarian Jews were part of the fabric of Hungarian society; and yet they died in forced labor camps under Hungarian authority, in crimes committed by the Hungarian gendarmerie. It portrays people who were shot randomly without consequences. One of the photo series collected from the Yad Vashem’s archives contains two pictures showing Jews being put on trucks to be deported in 1941 to today’s Ukrainian territories, a third photo shows them on a field where they were left without any food or water, and the fourth photo shows the open mass grave with their dead bodies. These photos document the event mentioned above as the “first deportation”, contrasting with the Veritas Institute’s narrative of a “police measure against aliens”. The “Living memorial” was “built” and it is still being built. Every day since 2014 people have continued to bring different artefacts to it. Some photos and copies of documents disappear occasionally; but the site is there. Many public figures, academics, activists

involved themselves in the “Living Memorial” activities. There brochures in 10 languages displayed as part of the monument, explaining the reasons for the civil protest. This civil community has staged protests every day from January 2014 through the time of this writing (April 2016) against the falsification of history presented by the government’s monument. Ironically, by Spring 2016, the area around the monument had become the venue for various other anti-governmental protests as well. Nurses and teachers demonstrating for better work conditions use the square as a symbolic space for anti-government voices seeking justice.

The debate around the memorial was just one example of a conflict between two sides in the academia, which cannot necessarily be characterized as “left” and “right”, but rather as “governmental” and “non-governmental”. Sándor Horváth writes: “If indeed there is any debate on this issue, it is between professional and civic organizations on the one hand and the Hungarian government on the other”. Horváth supports his assumption by quoting a prominent Hungarian historian active in the United States as an emeritus professor at Columbia University, István Deák, who among so many others made a strong statement: “what is going on in Hungary today, where the official leadership both apologizes for the sins committed by the Hungarian state against the Jews and points an accusatory finger at everyone but its own country, creates an impossible and dangerous public mood. It is infantile to perpetually accuse the West of conspiracy, to attack the United States with arguments once used by the nationalist Horthy and the Communist Rakosi regimes, and to harbor perpetual grievances. The West is not rushing towards intellectual, moral, and financial bankruptcy; its main concern is surely not how to put the Hungarian people in chains”: Horváth says that this statement later was “adopted across the board by historians in Hungary”.

Since 2010, it has become almost routine among “the old regime’s” academics to organize conferences and debates about the Hungarian Government’s “history whitewashing”. The Hungarian Academy of Sciences played a big role in these debates. At a conference in May 2014 in the Department of Philosophical and Historical Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungarian academics from “the old regime” claimed that the monument is disgraceful. As Krisztián Ungváry puts it: “it is exceptionally sneaky to argue that the monument “is dedicated to the memory of every victim, as government party politician Antal Rogan has claimed. The German occupiers were responsible only for a relative handful of victims. Easily 99 percent of the deaths were caused by the Hungarian authorities who enthusiastically deported the Jews, and it was also the Hungarians that profited”.

The culture politics of the last six years forced academics to take a stand on the “Jewish Question”

Unlike Warsaw’s new Jewish museum opened in 2014, “Polin”, where the expressed intent is to convey the history of Jews as the history of Poles and Poland, and where even the lack of Jews in

today's Poland is shown as a hole in Polish society, the Hungarian Government separates itself from the Jewish spaces, and calls this chapter of Hungarian history, the Jewish "fate". This controversial communication strategy serves to exclude Jews from being acknowledged as part of the Hungarian nation by constantly keeping the "Jewish Question" on the agenda through "rubber bones" or "baiting". At the same time, it seems that some of those who might have once been considered Hungarian Jews have accepted their "separate group"-ness. As Péter György, a highly-regarded expert on the politics of memory, wrote: "the Holocaust Memorial Year has created a Jewry as it has not existed before 1945".

To support this assumption I will give three examples of this forced divorce between "Hungarians" and "Jews": as mentioned earlier, the Jewish community (Jewish archives, museums, and many Jewish and non Jewish organizations) created a separate commemoration Memento70, The second argument for the interiorized separation is that eventually, together with Chabad, the Federation proposed the establishment of an interactive memorialization, education and cultural center named „The House of Co-Existence”. The word "co-existence" emphasizes that „Jews and Hungarians” lived side by side, as opposed to being part of the same existence, which is how they strove to exist. Since the 1849 Jewish emancipation within Hungary, the majority of the Jewish community in Hungary has sought to share in a common Hungarian identity.

Politics of cultural exclusion

During 2015–2016 refugee "crisis", several Hungarian security and other governmental officials consolidated the "otherness" of the Hungarian Jewish community and the xenophobia that continues to exist within Hungarian society by explaining Hungary's refusal to accept those seeking asylum – determinedly categorizing them only as "migrants" – and claiming that these "migrants" were a threat "because it is not by coincidence that the terror attack happened in France", Hungary is in danger "because its well known that next to France, Hungary has one of the largest Jewish communities in Europe". This opinion kills two birds with one stone: while linking Muslims seeking asylum to terrorism, it managed also to blame, between the lines, the claimed terror threat on the Jewish community. The twist in this type of rhetoric coming from the government is, that it has added another argument that, on the one hand, attempts to demonstrate its support for Hungary's Jews, while at the same time insinuating that the Jew's are the reason Hungary must show greater vigilance towards a heightened terrorist threat. Government leaders and national security officials often follow these characterizations of a heightened terrorist threat to Hungary by stating that "The government needs to defend the Jews living in Hungary". The current highly respected president of the Jewish Federation, András Heisler condemned that "politicians explained several times the security risks of migration waves with the fact that there is a significant Jewish community in Hungary" and this would make Hungary a target [of terrorism]". According to Heisler, and many other public Hungarian figures, Hungary needs to defend

all its citizens. In the last sentence the president of the Federation emphasizes the identity concept that he represents: “Jews are Hungarians. Every Hungarian citizen is a Hungarian. The key to the relationship between the state and the Jewish community might lay in this emphasis on Jews being part of the Hungarian nation, like all other Hungarian citizens”.

The identity concept, that Jews are not only Hungarian citizens but also full members of the Hungarian nation, has never been fully internalized into the public consciousness. Questioning that Jews were fully Hungarian led to the murder of 550,000–600,000 “Hungarian citizens killed as Jews” in the Shoa, despite of the 19th century assimilation “Hungarianisation/magyarisation”. As noted earlier, the shock with regard to the expulsion from the nation of Hungarian Jews was particularly hard to bear. As János Kőbányai, a writer, phrases it, Jews lived in a “symbiotic love affair” with the Hungarians in the multiethnic Habsburg Monarchy, contributing, through their naturalization and acceptance of Hungarian as their mother tongue, to the independence fight with the Habsburgs, a fight which lifted Hungarians from what they considered oppression and resulted in dual leadership of Austro-Hungary after the treaty of 1867.

Given this confusing experience of being considered a separate people, excluded from the nation, during the Holocaust, the reorganized Jewish community after communism, after 1989, wanted to be considered Hungarian, and refused to be defined as a separate autonomous national or ethnic minority along with Slovenians, Germans, Slovaks, Romanians, Roma and other groups that were granted autonomous collective rights, with their own schools and cultural system, and even voting for their own separate “nationality representative” in local elections.

Focusing only on the clashes in the official public sphere, during the communist period of anti-Zionist rhetoric, anti-Capitalism was a convenient, legally acceptable code to continue to distinguish Jews when ethnicity/religion was a taboo. After the 1990s, the political elite’s language used the simple populist dichotomy that separated the “liberals” as Jews, as the eternal foreigners, the aliens, the parasites, the exploiter enemies of the hard working poor and pure “true traditional nationals”, the real Hungarians with rural values and deep historical roots on this land, as opposed to the rootless urban, cosmopolitan, communists, or the capitalist. bankers clan. As we could see above, the conspiracy theories are keeping alive the stereotype of the Jew as the eternal conspirator who can be found behind every catastrophe; and although this conspiratorial group may move its headquarters from Moscow to New York or Israel, its strategies, goals and powers are the same. A mediocre, sensationalist journalist toolset which, by 2010, not only has increasingly legitimized the language of the far right, but also of the government’s political discourse, became more and more part of the elite’s political doublespeak and even the academic rhetoric. The underlying identity concept is deeply internalized like a “metaphor we live by” burned into cognitive perceptions and semantics.

Legal redefinitions of belonging?

As mentioned, when it replaced the former constitution in 2012, Hungary enacted a new Fundamental Law in which the first section defines Hungary as part of Christian Europe, and “recognize(s) the role of Christianity in preserving nationhood”.

“We are proud that our king Saint Stephen built the Hungarian State on solid ground and made our country a part of Christian Europe one thousand years ago.

We recognize the role of Christianity in preserving nationhood.

We value the various religious traditions of our country.

We proclaim that the nationalities living with us form part of the Hungarian political community and are constituent parts of the State”.

The opening lines of the Fundamental law resonate with wording previously used as a slogan only by extreme, ethnic nationalist parties. It is a sentiment that has been expressed with increasing frequency, especially after the refugee crisis and the “freedom fight” with EU leaders: “Hungary belongs to the Hungarians”. The policy and rhetoric with regard to a Hungarian ethnic national identity based on ethnicity, kinship, and Christianity as the 2012 Fundamental Law suggests, combined with other rhetoric that separates “Jewish culture” from the remainder of “Hungarian national culture”, could indicate the symbolic but legal separation of Hungarian Jews living in the Hungarian state as equal citizens, but excluded from the Christian nation founded by Saint Stephen. In this framework, Hungarian Jews, in accordance with the Fundamental Law, constitute the “various others” (though not recognized as another national minority. Incorporating ethnic Hungarians from the territory of “Greater Hungary” creates a popular sense of ethnic nationalism. It culturally and societally draws ethnic borders and implies that it is possible to exclude even citizens from the *Corpus Nationum*. In accordance with this ethnic national principle, fifteen national minority groups have separate collective national minority rights and political representatives. The fact that it excludes the non-ethnic Hungarians, and that it repeatedly states that Christianity is the National religion, was just one of the many critical points that were the focus of heated debates by the EU council, international institutes monitoring Freedom of religion, and academic, constitutional analysts.

The idea of ethnic national purity can be found by various statements coming from government representatives: for example during the “refugee crisis”, the Prime Minister’s speech given to the Hungarian ambassadors on September 7th, 2015, clearly distinguished real Hungarians and the Hungarian Roma people: “We have to live together with a few hundred thousands Roma. (...) We are the ones who have to live with this, but we don’t demand from anyone, especially not in from the West, to live together with a large Roma minority”.

On one hand the politics of symbolic exclusion has also contributed to the thesis supported above: the creation of “newly outed” Jews, “Zombie Jews”, non-Jewish Jews that are trapped on the other side of governmental nationalism. Jews and non-Jews are re-imagined by a current political mainstream, public discourse and the newly established academic institutes which discuss Hungary’s past. At a 2014 roundtable, György said “Jews are made Jews, and the purpose is, to eliminate them from getting involved in Hungarian politics and Hungarian history...” and “2010 made me Jewish... the fact that I am somehow Jewish, doesn’t matter how, it’s just a cultural-historical circumstance”. In another interview he said “I stick to my principle to be a non-Jewish Jew”.

On the other hand, the tension has strengthened the increasingly separated, organized Hungarian Jewish communities, by instilling in them a distinct and stronger Jewish identity, while also weakening their possibilities for identifying with the national narrative. This second, revitalized distinctly Jewish community is what researchers have called a “Jewish renaissance” or “Jewish revival” and it is included in the “Fact Sheet” as something that should be supported. While probably the silent *auslander* Zombie Jews form the majority of the estimated total Jewish population, of which only about 8-10% of the estimated total number are overtly affiliated with this distinct and strengthened community.

Perhaps the fact that the government is uncomfortable with the “non-recognizable” Jewish Hungarians is manifested also in that the new Church Act, enacted in 2012, does not recognize the two Reform Jewish congregations, even after their winning their appeals to the Supreme Court, Constitutional Court and, eventually, the International Court in Strasburg. Not only did they win all these cases, but in an interview with me, the lawyer for the Reform Jewish congregations, Tamás Bellák, said that the Reform congregations received promises from every single government official up to the highest echelons of power that they will regain their recognized church status. However after a four-year struggle, which appeared to be on the verge of a successful conclusion, at the last moment the Prime Minister’s Office notified them that their claim was not approved. Having in mind that the Church Act did recognize three other Jewish communities EMIH (Chabad), the Federation (Neologue/‘Conservative’) and the Orthodox communities, it’s not easy to understand why the Reform congregations – especially after the legal justification – would not get the same right. The rabbi of the Bet Orim Reform congregation, Ferenc Raj told me “This government wants the visible Jews. The ones in a black kaftan, beard and kaftan. Or doesn’t want them at all. In this regime the Jews are marked, visible and distinguished clearly”.

Summary

According to the Freedom House 2016 report, Hungary's national democratic score dropped to half of what it had been 10 years earlier. From 2.00 to 4.00 The government's intent, following its 2010 election victory, is to build a new nation through the "real régime change" a revolution in 2010 (instead of the supposedly failed 1989 one that was eventually still dominated by "leftists"). This new regime scores low when measured against international criteria of democratic governance, and since 2010, it is increasingly considered by international organizations, NGOs and even in reports issued by the U.S. government to have gradually built an authoritarian, centralized regime. It has removed the pre-existing system of checks and balances, calling "checks and balances" an American concept that is foreign to Europe, and promoting an "illiberal" "Christian" version of governance. The government often calls commentary that can in any way be interpreted as criticism (external and internal) of its policies an attack on Hungarian state sovereignty, and attempts by foreign powers to undermine and intervene in the freedom of Hungary. The government claims that foreign media are misled by the "left-liberals" whose main purpose to destroy the national identity and the nation-state's cohesion. The government's answers to criticism usually contain arguments that are historically well known in defensive anti-otherness narratives. For example, on the official website of the governing Fidesz party we can read the following statements, which are repeated every time Hungary is criticized: "...Hungary has become the most scrutinized Member State of the EU, so it is no surprise that the resolution today, yet again, resorts to labeling, bending the truth and factually false statements. (...) The leftist and liberal political groups discredit themselves once more: while they are ready to abuse their majority in the EP to hold plenary debates and pass resolutions on Hungary – even when there is in fact no Hungarian legislation to scrutinize – they remain silent on recent events in Romania. The double standards applied not only discredit the political groups but unfortunately also the European Parliament itself. This must stop!" The Prime Minister makes sure to stress that it is only the strong "independent Hungarian foreign policy" of the Fidesz party which truly safeguards "Hungarian interests". Any rival party or individual serves "the interests of others". These others are simply called in official speeches and statement – as mentioned above – "the left liberal" whose plan is to support the "international attacks against us".

The reason behind the doublespeak of the government could be simply a political strategy reinforcing the power and ensuring popularity. On one hand, it apologized repeatedly in speeches for the Holocaust while, at the same time, it constructed monuments and statues, or renamed streets and squares to honor a member of the fascist Arrow Cross parliament. On the one hand this doublespeak reinforced its conservative, ethnic nationalist voter-base, and even seduced some from the groups professing progressive, universalist European values, by sounding "friendly"

apologetic and protective to the Jews. It's also possible to assume that government competed with the Jobbik party in claiming certain ideas as its own. In particular, before the 2014 elections, the Fidesz party appeared to have hijacked Jobbik's extremist views, and wrapped them in a “decent nationalist” conservative language which even Jobbik voters had to agree to (for example regarding the German occupation memorial, and the refugee crisis).

As opposed to Mária Kovács, who sees an agenda and a strategy behind these concepts, Péter György, in his writings and articles, calls this the “politics of amnesia” – a sloppy, messy culture-politics that jumps back and forth between ideologies, and lacks any concept or credibility. While the communist ideology wanted to delete the past, this approach remembers and rewrites a different past, deleting communism from the collective memory which goes hand in hand with deleting the twenty years prior to 2010 as well. It establishes a new regime, a new regime change, as the description of the German Occupation memorial says as well. The angel Gabriel's “crucifixion” conveys defeat, but a chance for new beginning.

As we can see, the discussions and debates resulted in thousands of academic articles, blog posts, editorial opinions, petitions, objections, open letters, comments, statements, tweets both online and offline. The conflict became public and open, escalating to the highest political and international level. The U.S. State Department's Deputy Assistant Secretary from Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, together with the U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism and the Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, as well as the head of the World Jewish Congress, visited and held multiple meetings with government officials. The conflict's main modality is political, academic, symbolic, cultural and verbal, but it has a very strong societal impact that “outed” a different Jewish community than the willingly organized one. The separation could even stretch to encompass the so-called “Jews” by political association: all the “left liberal enemies of the nation”, or “those” that are not with “Us” (meaning the government's nationalist “us” group – regardless whether they have anything to do a Jewish heritage).

In statements like that which the Prime Minister delivered at the World Jewish Union congress held in Budapest in 2014, he sought to prove wrong those accusations of antisemitism that he had received previously when he talked about “Jews and Hungarians” as separate people. While obviously struggling – like many other politicians – to repeat that Jews are considered Hungarians, Hungarian citizens, he still continued to use the “We” and “You” distinction which is so deeply burned into popular and political thinking. “We”, the Hungarian leaders in power will “defend and protect“. “Them/You” the Jewish fellow citizens. Precisely how the government respectfully talks about “You, the Jewish people” sometimes using the expression “We respect Your culture”. In Hungary, many Hungarians (Jews and non-Jews alike) are trapped into a “Jewish narrative” through the doublespeak of the “Jewish Question”.

Within the Jewish community, there is a perception that antisemitism is increasing, further exacerbating feelings of insecurity. According to a November 2014 report by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights, Jews in Hungary are overwhelmingly concerned about what they perceive as increasing antisemitism. In Hungary, three quarters of the respondents (75%) said that they frequently hear that Jews have too much power in the country, and more than half of the respondents in Hungary (59%) have heard Jews being blamed for the current economic crisis, or that Jews have exploited Holocaust victimhood for their own purposes (57%). Worldwide media headlines about the purported “increase” in antisemitism in Hungary motivated donors to support additional Jewish organizations and educational projects as well as several initiatives that attempt to combat antisemitism (see the TEV – Action and Protection Association).

Those looking for signs of a Jewish communal renaissance might point to post 2010, when there was a significant increase in the number of Jewish organizations established, leading to there being more Jewish organizations in existence now than at any time in recent memory. The Israeli Cultural Center, Moishe house, Dor Hadash, Lativ Kollel and Tikva Hungary, Minyanim and dozens of other communities offer a variety of Jewish programs every single day. The capital of Hungary, Budapest, feels like a place with a thriving diverse Jewish life, with hundreds of religious, secular, academic, cultural and civil organizations, dozens of daily Jewish programs, events, celebrations, publishing houses, magazines, and recently a new Jewish TV channel. The three officially recognized Jewish communities receive government support, including maintaining the synagogues, Jewish cemeteries and educational institutes. On the other hand, the negative reports on the general governmental xenophobia, emphasized “otherness” of different ethnicities and religions, the sophisticated antisemitic gestures of the government like the glorification of Arrow Cross figures from the Hungary’s ignoble past, and the pervasive antisemitism in Hungarian society. The two sides don’t seem to add up; however they might complement each other in drawing ethnic boundaries and creating separate patterns of ethnic cohesion. The creation of ethnic boundaries almost always leads to ethnic tensions. The more unstable and threatening the environment is perceived in Hungary for the Jewish community, the more existing Jewish communities (from religious, Zionist, hip and cool to secular) tend to dissimilate and separate themselves from the “national majority” and seek to become part of communities with a Jewish character.

Rather than as a defensive response to the symbolic, political separation through antisemitism, instability and insecurity, the increasingly wide Jewish infrastructure is often characterized as a positive indicator of a strong Jewish community within a supportive governmental environment that compensates for the bad image created by the antisemitic Jobbik party. An Haaretz article from February 2015 reported on a “friendly government” and “Jewish renaissance”.

I believe that the deepest root of most conflicts between the “Hungarians” and those labeled collectively “Jewish” can be found in the failure to accomplish/achieve certain steps that the post-dictatorial states need to achieve in order to rebuild not only their legal system, public administration and economic rules, but also their own collective state or national self-definition. To create a socially and morally, genuinely responsible, national self-image, a state needs to face, negotiate, accept and process its history, taking into consideration its diverse societies and experiences, as well as the cross-historical perspectives/interests regarding the interactions with the neighboring countries. However, a populist leader might also intentionally avoid bringing people together into a cohesive whole, in order to intentionally create the “us” and “them” needed for the populist to establish both a victimized power base (the ‘us’) and the victimizing ‘other’ which is understood to be the enemy. The rejection of full responsibility, by declaring in the Fundamental Law that Hungary lost its sovereignty in March 1944, and the very careful omissions and the ambiguity of long-awaited and celebrated speeches recognizing Hungary’s responsibility in the Holocaust still seem to “whitewash” the Horthy era, blaming only the Germans and Arrow Cross leaders. Both legally and in a durable, tangible memorial, it expresses the narrative that the Jewish sufferings happened during those years after March 19, 1944, when Hungary had lost its sovereignty. Furthermore, the intensity of Holocaust Memorial Year and the debates around it irritated the population. The newly recreated tension clearly creates a barrier for the discussion of a shared history that keeps the society divided. When, in 2002, Imre Kertész won the first Nobel prize in Hungarian literature after publication of “Fatelessness”, or when 2016 the movie “Son of Saul” (directed by László Nemes Jeles) won the second Oscar in the history of Hungary, two thirds of Hungarians said they a) are not interested, b) will not watch the movie, c) it does not concern them, d) “it is not my story”, e) it is again about the Jews and the Holocaust; they think they have had enough of the penitence, enough of apologies. The other one third said they will or have already seen the movie. The movie did not get negative criticism at all in Hungary.

The Government, whether it wanted to or not, managed to disentangle the Holocaust from Hungary’s memorialization of the victims of WWII. The conflicts and doublespeak around the Holocaust year got the society even more irritated about the holocaust memorialization. The lack of a clear acknowledgment of the role of Hungarian officials and private Hungarian citizens in the anti-Jewish policies from the 1920’s onwards is closely connected to the fact that in the mainstream narrative (channeled, for example, in a centralized, unified education) it is still failing to view the history of Jewish Hungarians, or Hungarians persecuted as Jews, as a shared Hungarian history.

As a state that “respectfully” treats the Hungarian Jews as a distinct group, which it wants to “protect” (from the demonised “refugees” and extremists), it goes so far as to sacrifice national funds to commemorate “their” tragedies. It seeks to distinguish this community by its ethno-

cultural, religious and peoplehood characteristics. Hungarian Jews, non-Jews unwillingly cast as Jews by the “different” perspectives, have become marginalized. Their contribution is questioned when it comes to crucial questions of the nation. Viewing Jews as a collective community of interest and attributing to them a collective identity, whether they want it or not, the government has stripped the Hungarian “others” (Jews, non Jews alike) of their authority or credibility to represent or communicate the nation’s interest or take part in the construction of the post 2010 “new regime”.