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THE POLITICS OF PUBLIC SPACE AND THE LEGACY OF THE HOLOCAUST IN POSTCOMMUNIST HUNGARY

A short 14 years have passed since "annus mirabilis" 1989. Many things seemed to justify that designation (Ash, 1999, p.156). Among its wonders one counted what Rudolf Tokes would eventually coin as Hungary's "negotiated revolution" (Tokes, 1996). Miklos Haraszti, one of the participants in the erosion of the former regime's power, called this wonder "the handshake tradition" (Haraszti, 2000, p. 273) born out of the outcome of the 13 June-18 September 1989 National Roundtable (see Tokes, 1996, pp. 304-360). While describing the tradition as the first "consensus-seeking democracy...in Hungarian history," 10 years later Haraszti was wondering how long it would last. His concern seemed to indicate that the "tradition" was no tradition at all; for if there is something that "traditions" are associated with, it is longevity. Four more years having passed since, Hungary might nowadays successfully compete for the title of Europe's "Miss Political Polarization." A "dialogue of the deaf" occasionally accompanied by street scuffling and mutual incrimination threatens to plunge the country way back into what is more and more resembling the turn of last century's cleavages.

Nothing illustrates better the current deep divisions than the politics of "public space." Public space is a meaningful mirror of political competition. It is, as Romanian historian Andrei Pippidi writes, "symbolic history" at work (Pippidi, 2000). As such, symbolic history is always entangled in the separate, but nonetheless, associate process of a "clash of memories." Budapest has been recently the scene of three significant such clashes.

1. Who Remembers What?

On 13 February, politicians representing the ruling coalition of the Socialist Party (MSZP) and the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) marked at the Buda Castle the 59th anniversary of the liberation from Nazi rule in a ceremony boycotted by the main opposition party Alliance of Young Democrats-Hungarian Civic Party (FIDESZ-MPP). The day before, FIDESZ had stayed away from a ceremony at which Culture Minister Istvan Hiller and Defense Ministry Political State Secretary Imre Ivancsik, accompanied by Budapest Deputy Mayor Janos Schiffer and Israeli Ambassador to Hungary Judit Varnai Shorer laid a wreath at

the 13th district memorial to the victims of World War II and the martyrs of the Nazi occupation of Hungary and the Arrow Cross.

A FIDESZ representative on the Budapest city council, Andras Kupper, said his party was "outraged that this terrible event...should be remembered as [the capital's] liberation." He stressed that "during the Soviet occupation, tens of thousands of innocent Hungarians were robbed, raped, executed, and deported." Schiffer, however, countered that "13 February 1945, was a day of liberation for all those who were not shot dead, who were not deported to Auschwitz, who, surviving the horrors of wars, came out from the basements of their destroyed building." He did not, of course, miss the opportunity to add that Kupper apparently sided "with those who should have been brought to justice for their war crimes."

In turn, in a speech delivered at Buda Castle, Foreign Minister and MSZP Chairman Laszlo Kovacs said that divisions in Hungarian politics along a democratic right and a communism-tainted left were no longer relevant, and that the genuine dividing line now ran between political forces committed to democracy and those threatening it. He was apparently responding to a FIDESZ-initiated move in the European People's Party (EPP) to isolate from politics people with a communist past like Kovacs's own. Finally, the SZDSZ representative at the Buda Castle ceremony, deputy Imre Mecs, used the opportunity to call on Hungary to face its own past. Germany, he went on to explain, has not been afraid to do so, and though the experience had been painful, that country is now a model democracy ("Magyar Hirlap," "Nepszabadsag," "Magyar Nemzet," 13, 14, and 24 February 2004; "Nepszava," 13 and 14 February, and AFP, 14 February 2004).

On 14 February, in a "counter-commemoration," about 800 members and sympathizers of the neo-Nazi Blood and Honor Association held in Budapest's main Heroes Square a memorial ceremony in honor of those who lost their lives in the failed attempt by German and Hungarian soldiers to break out of Buda Castle in the face of the Soviet attack. At a makeshift monument formed by a cross with a military helmet placed on it, they attacked both the governing party and FIDESZ. The latter party's National Council Chairman Laszlo Kover had indeed called on the government to prevent the demonstration, claiming that the coalition intended to allow the event in order to discredit the FIDESZ-organized right-wing "civic [polgari] groups" in case disturbances break out ("Magyar Hirlap" and "Magyar Nemzet," 12 February 2004). The demonstrators in Heroes Square pledged to be "soldiers of honor"

worthy of the tradition of the Hungarian Royal Armed Forces, the German Wehrmacht, and the Waffen SS. Led by Blood and Honor Executive Chairman Janos Endre Domokos, participants in the counterceremony later took flowers to the site where Arrow Cross leader Ferenc Szalasi is believed to be buried ("Magyar Hirlap," "Nepszabadsag," "Magyar Nemzet," "Nepszava," and AP, 14 February 2004).

Finally, a third symbolic history clash over public space focused on the controversial figure of former Prime Minister Pal Teleki. The erection of a statue honoring Teleki's memory had been commissioned by pro-FIDESZ associations and civic groups and had been approved by the Budapest city council in January. The unveiling ceremony was slated for 3 April. In the wake of protests from the Alliance of Hungarian Jewish Religious Communities (MAZSIHISZ), which considered the Teleki statue to be a symbol of "institutional, nationalistic anti-Semitism," and from the Simon Wiesenthal Center, the council first suspended, and later rescinded the authorization. Hungarian Jews felt that a statue honoring the man who, in his first stint (1920-21) as Miklos Horthy's prime minister, introduced the 22 September 1920 "numerus clausus" law in universities -- the first such law to be introduced in Europe, see Lendvai, 1999, p. 395 -- was a slap in the face. Under Teleki's second (1939-41) term, previously enacted, relatively mild legislation on who was to be considered Jewish was replaced by a much harsher law stipulating that anyone with one parent born into the Jewish faith was to be considered a Jew (Janos, 1982, p. 302). Teleki was apparently also involved in the drafting of the "First Jewish Law," under the 1938-39 radical-right government of Kalman Daranyi -- this time establishing quotas for Jews allowed to practice business and the liberal professions.

For most Hungarians, however, Teleki's 1939-41 premiership is rather associated with the short-lived recuperation of northern Transylvania under the 1940 Second Vienna Award, with the attempt to steer a middle course between conservatives and radical-right politicians at home, and to balance a pro-German with a pro-British orientation in foreign affairs. Indeed, Teleki committed suicide rather than face the choice of attacking neighboring Yugoslavia as a German ally or resisting a German invasion (Janos, 1982, pp. XXXV, 300, 307).

While still the country's prime minister, Viktor Orban said on 27 December 2000 that he considered Teleki to be his model politician. His visions, the former prime minister said, are far more helpful for contemporary Hungary than "other fashionable ideas." Like Teleki, who

had pursued a policy of revision of the Trianon-imposed borders, "our starting point must be our own national self-interest," and that concept "is not an abstract category, but the common interests of the entire Hungarian nation," Orban said (see "RFE/RL Newslines," 29 December 2000). In the eyes of incumbent Socialist Culture Minister Istvan Hiller, however, Teleki's responsibility for the discriminatory laws overrode any consideration for the late prime minister's antiwar stances. "We do not want to have a [Teleki] statue in Buda Castle, especially not on the 60th anniversary of the Holocaust," Hiller said in parliament.

I believe the three incidents encapsulate much -- alas, too much -- of what Hungarian politics is currently about. They speak volumes about the abundance of what Timothy Garton Ash describes as "residual" mutual perceptions in postcommunist Gentile-Jewish relations (Ash, 2002, p. 41); they illustrate the mutual anathematizing of political rivals; they show that words are used both with the purpose of preempting perceived threats and demonizing adversaries; and they constitute one more proof that pessimists (among whom I count myself) are right when they believe that there is always room for worse. All three incidents are also illustrative, each in its own way, of the political instrumentalization of the Holocaust. Indeed, a closer look at the pronouncements cited above demonstrates that none of the three groups (the Socialist-Liberals, the conservatives, and the far right) is really innocent of the attempt.

Symbols are about the past but are for the present. And I have yet to run into any book or article that is written with a readership of the past in mind. Viewed from this perspective, the "public space" and the "public discourse" form a single, albeit entangled, dimension. In analyzing anti-Semitic aspects in Hungary's postcommunist political discourse, the Hungarian sociologist Andras Kovacs perceives that discourse as being largely a reflection of attempts at "creating an identity on a symbolic level" by different political parties and currents (Kovacs, forthcoming). I shall eventually return to this highly significant concept. For the moment, suffice it to point out that the process of forging political identities encompasses both disputes about symbolic public space and disputes on the implications of overt or encoded public discourse. Are we to treat those symbols in a postmodernist manner where "anything goes"?

Let me illustrate this dilemma with but one example. One can, as George Schopflin does when he analyses "commemoration," see in it a process, a "ritualized" recalling of what societies stand for. "A society without memory is blind to its own present and future, because it lacks a moral framework into which to place its experiences," he writes (Schopflin, 2000, p.

74). There is on its face little to argue against that perception. No polity can function without - to use Benedict Anderson's terminology -- a positive "imagined community" to which reference can be made (Anderson, 1991). The symbolic aspect of memorials and commemorations is even more pronounced in societies whose national identity is fragile, and whose future is uncertain. The distortion (but not obliteration!) of national symbols in East-Central Europe under the communist regimes and the search for either new or renewed "symbols" in the wake of regime change made Jacques Rupnik (1992/1993:4) note that "demolition of [communist] statues, restoration of former denomination to streets, are but the exterior aspects of the search for a 'usable past,' whose force is proportional to the fragility of national identity and uncertainty in face of the future." Viewed from this angle, the intent to erect a statue to Teleki is perfectly comprehensible.

But one cannot ignore the other side of the coin, and that side is particularly strong in societies that left behind one past but are uncertain of what it should replace it with and who should be chosen to symbolize it. Which past is deemed as worthy to be "used" or "re-used"? Schopflin notes: "It is very difficult for one community to look with nothing worse than indifference at the commemoration pursued by another. Yet if we are all to survive in the European tradition that I believe is our heritage, living in diversity is a *sine qua non*." This, he adds, is difficult at moments, but "if we have the confidence in ourselves, in our values, then the commemorations of the others need not be seen as offensive." His advice is particularly directed at national minorities, which are told that "majorities have the same rights to cultural reproduction as minorities and those rights should be respected" (Schopflin, 2000, pp. 77-78). The question arises, however, whether cultural reproduction entrenched on the commemoration of those who denied, or contributed to the eventual denial of BIOLOGICAL reproduction of others may not be off the line of what Schopflin calls the "European tradition." There is, it seems, no end to subjectivity.

I shall therefore subjectively divide this study into three chronological parts. In the first part, I deal with the "hows" and the "whys" of handling the legacy of the interwar era and that of the Holocaust under Hungary's first postcommunist government of Jozsef Antall (Since there is no significant discontinuity between the cabinet headed by Antall and the short-lived cabinet lead by his successor Peter Boross, I choose to discuss policies towards the legacy of the Holocaust as being part of a single unity). In the second part I attempt to understand the reason for the transformation underwent by Viktor Orban from a grassroots, liberal,

anticommunist rebel into a conservative politician. The third and last part of this study deals with the policies of right-wing "inclusion" pursued by Orban and its impact on handling the legacy of the Holocaust. As the reader would undoubtedly note, I am leaving out the 1994-98 first MSZP-SZDSZ coalition, but I shall refer to its impact whenever I consider that impact important.

Next to a government by generals, there might be no group of people less fit to govern than historians. The cabinet led by Jozsef Antall between May 1990 and his death in office on 12 December 1993 had three of them, all in key positions: the prime minister himself, Foreign Minister Geza Jeszenszky, and Defense Minister Lajos Fur. I am not claiming, of course, that a late-20th-century defense minister whose background is farming would opt for cavalry as the backbone of his country's military force just because he knows horses best. But repeated statements of the three politicians during their term of office demonstrate that their main frame of reference was past-, rather than future-oriented. And when in Hungary one says "past," one has said "Trianon" -- the national trauma of several generations of Hungarian politicians and intellectuals.

Catapulted to the head of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) rather unexpectedly after the resignation of Zoltan Biro in October 1989, Antall's background should have predicted his performance in office. Never a dissident under the communist regime, he came from a traditional Hungarian family and in numerous interviews after becoming prime minister Antall would emphasize his commitment to public service, Christian values, moral rectitude, and democracy (Tokes, 1996, pp. 365-366). His father served as a civil servant in Hungary's wartime government and was commissioner for refugees from 1939 to April 1944, when he was arrested by the Gestapo for having rendered assistance to Hungarian and Polish Jews (Tokes, 1996, p. 365). Jozsef Antall Sr., who died in 1970, would eventually be conferred the title of "Righteous of Nations" by Israel's Yad Vashem (Deak, 1994, p. 119). Though theoretically possible, to assume that Prime Minister Antall was an anti-Semite or oblivious to the suffering of the Jews during the Holocaust is therefore a far-fetched proposition.

Antall's education and his family socialization had made him into an (albeit closet) anticommunist and, above all, into a nationalist (Antall Sr. was a member of the Independent Smallholders' Party [FKGP] and was elected to parliament during the short spell of post-World War II democracy). His famous 13 August 1990 statement that he perceives himself as

being the prime minister of not only 10 million Hungarians, but as the prime minister "in spirit" of 15 million Magyars -- that is to say the leader of ethnic Hungarians beyond the Trianon borders as well -- speaks for itself (MTI, 13 August 1990). To the extent that the Holocaust was to play any part in the postcommunist task of nation rebuilding, for Antall it was consequently one that would emphasize the role played by people like his father, rather than that played by Holocaust perpetrators and by collaboration with the Nazis (Karsai, 1999, p. 139).

Much of the same applies to Jeszenszky and Fur. Addressing a largely Jewish audience on Holocaust Day 1994, Jeszenszky -- by now no longer foreign minister -- remarked that apart from having over half a million Holocaust victims, Hungary had also given refuge to Jews. According to Jeszenszky, Hungary also had a traumatic, Holocaust-like experience in the 1921 Trianon Treaty, which tore apart large segments of the Hungarian nation from motherland (cited in Kovacs, forthcoming). The statement is an emblematic exemplification of what may be termed --following U.S. historian Peter Gay's terminology -- as "comparative trivialization," though when making it Jeszenszky was obviously not intentionally trivializing (on "Holocaust trivialization" see Shafir, 2002a, pp. 60-75 and 2002b, pp. 105-132).

As for Fur, who acquired a rather unenviable reputation for saying the wrong thing at the wrong time when it came to Hungary's neighbors, it seemed that most of his ideas were drawn straight from Johann Gottfried Herder. In February 1992 he told an audience in Miskolc that "the concept of the Hungarian nation in the Carpathian Basin is not limited to the citizens of the Hungarian Republic." A "Hungarian nation in Europe," he said, must mean "a Hungarian-speaking united nation." Consequently, "to defend national security in the Carpathian Basin is inseparable from the defense of the whole Hungarian nation." Hungarian state institutions, he said, were duty-bound "to do their best to stop the endangering of the Hungarian minorities outside the Hungarian borders" (cited in Berend, 1993, p. 122). His deputy, Erno Raffay, headed an MDF committee tasked with restoring the so-called Irredenta statue, erected under the regime of Admiral Miklos Horthy and symbolizing the territories torn from the "mother country" by the Trianon Treaty (Berend, 1993, p. 123).

Not one, but three Trianon statues would eventually be restored and put in place under the rule of Prime Minister Orban. The first was unveiled in June 2000 in Zebegeny, some 40 kilometers north of Budapest, in a ceremony attended by FKGP Chairman and Agriculture

Minister Jozsef Torgyan; on the same day, at a ceremony attended by FIDESZ Deputy Chairman Lajos Kosa in Debrecen, the "Hungarian Suffering" statue, erected in 1933 and pulled down by the communists in 1945, was restored to its place after having been recently discovered in a basement (AP, 4 June 2000). Finally, in August 2001, in the presence of Defense Minister Istvan Simicsko, a 10.5-meter-high "Trianon Memorial" erected in 1934, was restored to its place in Nagykanizsa, close to the Croatian border; in 1952, the communist government had ordered it taken down, dismantled, and buried, but as part of the "Hungarian Millennium" ceremonies the statue was unearthed and cleaned at a cost of 53 million forints (\$185,000 at the then-exchange rate) covered by governmental funds ("RFE/RL Newslines," 9 August 2001; AP, 12 August 2001; "Magyar Hirlap," "Nepszabadsag," "Magyar Nemzet," 13 August 2001).

Against this background, one may start understanding that the legacy of the Holocaust in postcommunist Hungary is in part a function of a "clash of memories." And not only the legacy of the Holocaust, but also that of communism, as we shall eventually observe. Is this manipulation? Yes, it is. But to the same extent, it is also self-manipulation. One chooses to "remember" one's own heroes and one's own traumas (that is to say, to represent history for one's own community) not for the sake of deliberately dismissing the traumas suffered by the other, but for enhancing the cohesiveness of one's own kin.

2. Identity Creation on a Symbolic Level in the Jozsef Antall Era

But "kin" can mean many different things. It can mean relatives and it can mean folk; it can mean the nation-state within its current borders or the nation including diasporas for whom Hungary is the kin-state; and it can also mean "Volk" in its Germanic sense of an organic community of past, present, and future generations based on "Blut und Boden" (Blood and Soil). No evidence I am aware of places Antall in the last category.

There is plenty of evidence, on the other hand, to place him and his government in the category of "kin-statesmanship." I believe that this was the main, though not necessarily the only, motivation that determined Antall to allow Admiral Horthy's reburial in September 1993 and to refer to him shortly before as a "Hungarian patriot," who "should be placed in the community of the nation and the awareness of the people" (cited in Brahm, 1993, p. 140).

Ministers in Antall's government attended the funeral and Antall himself visited the grave shortly before his death. At that time (indeed, already when appointed prime minister, see Tokes, 1996, p. 403), Antall was conscious of his terminal illness. Horthy's reinterment was modeled on the 1906 reburial of Ferencz Rakoczi, and would later serve as model for Antall's own funeral (Verdery, 1999, pp. 16-17). Whether Istvan Rev (cited in Verdery, 1999, p.133) is right or not in interpreting the similarity of the Horthy and Antall funeral processions as implying the elimination of the epoch that had parted Horthy from Antall, I would not venture to guess.

Intentions aside, this was bound to lead to the "clash of memories" I mentioned above. Let me emphasize that we do not deal here with Horthy's complex relationship and attitudes towards the Jews, but with "who remembers whom and why" and with "who remembers what and why." Istvan Deak, who has extensively written on him, calls Horthy "neither a fascist nor a liberal." The regent, he writes, "was not a monster, but he was not a humanitarian either. He was no democrat, but never tried to be a dictator. He claimed to have been a lifelong anti-Semite; still, under his reign and despite the deportations, more Jews survived the Nazi terror, in sheer numbers, than in any other country within Hitler's Europe, except perhaps Romania" (Deak, 2000, pp. 55-56).

Yet for many Jews Horthy remains the head of a state that sent to the death chambers at least 550,000 of its citizens (Braham, 2001, p.198), most of whom perished before he was deposed by the Nazis in October 1944. Of those, some 430,000 were exterminated at Auschwitz after the mass deportations carried out between 15 May and 7 July 1944. The deportations took place under the Nazi occupation, following the dismissal of the Miklos Kallay government and its replacement by the cabinet headed by pro-Nazi General Dome Sztojaj. At that time, Horthy was still head of state (he was deposed, arrested, and sent into exile in October), and hence cannot be fully exonerated of responsibility. Yet most Budapest Jewish survivors owe their lives to Horthy's having stopped the deportations (Karsai, 2000, p. 234).

In the memoirs written in his Portuguese exile (where he died in 1957), Horthy would claim that he could do nothing to halt the deportations -- personally supervised by Adolf Eichmann - - and that he was not informed of what expected the Jews at the end of their destination. As Deak observes, Horthy "might have been right, at least initially, about his powerlessness, but as for the rest, he was lying." The regent "had been informed about Auschwitz very early in

the game, but preferred to ignore it." Deak ventures the plausible explanation that Horthy's indifference might have stemmed from his lack of "compassion for the Jews of the countryside, whom he considered unassimilated and of little value." Not so the largely assimilated community of Budapest Jews: "When their turn came, in June-July 1944, he took military measures to oppose the gendarmes who -- he feared -- were also planning a coup d'etat against him" (2000, p. 54).

Neither the anti-Jewish legislation passed during Horthy's long regency, nor the fact that approximately 64,000 Jews had lost their lives in Greater Hungary before the Germans invaded the country in March 1944 (Braham, 2001, p. 199) is, or can be, ignored by "Jewish memory." The loss of life of between 40,000 and 45,000 so-called "labor servicemen" drafted into the military and sent to the eastern front, the killing of "alien" Jews deported to Kamenets-Podolski in Galicia in 1941, and the massacres in and around Ujvidek (Novi Sad) in 1942 cannot be laid at the door of the Germans (Braham, 2001, pp. 213-14, 218n; Karsai, 2000, p. 234).

These developments triggered among some segments of postcommunist Hungarian Jewry what might be termed as a "Sartreian reaction," for it was Jean-Paul Sartre's famous -- if often contested -- thesis that Jewish identity-consciousness owes its existence to anti-Semites. According to Andras Kovacs:

There are many Jews in Hungary who consider themselves Jewish only when faced with antisemitism. They feel that the boundaries separating them from others are externally defined. This defines Jewish identity as a stigma that infiltrates their thinking and behavior. Stigmatized individuals -- even if they think that their stigmatization has no real foundations - - try to develop behavior patterns and communicational rules that make it easier to live with the stigma. As a result, they also draw, often involuntarily, boundaries between their own group and others. They are afraid -- and in this respect, it is unimportant whether with good reason or not -- of social conflicts, political phenomena and rhetoric that do not invoke fear in others at all. They use different behavior and communicational strategies and assign different meaning to certain gestures, words and behavior within the group and outside it. However, it is easy for both members of the group and outsiders to identify this behavior developed to help coping with the stigma (Kovacs, 1999, pp. 111-112).

This Sartrean reaction was not merely a matter of some mistaken de-codification of the real significance of Antall's message. The message had good reasons to be perceived as it was, for it took Antall far too long to disassociate himself from the populists in the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) and for the waters to be shed. The official split was repeatedly postponed and finalized only in June 1993, when the MDF's National Steering Committee voted to expel the populists' leader, Istvan Csurka, from the party. Antall had opted to close both eyes and ears to Csurka and his associates' mounting attacks on his -- for their taste -- far too moderate policies towards national minorities at home and in support of Hungarian ethnic minorities abroad. Not before the growing Hungarian extremism came to be debated in the U.S. Congress did the prime minister decide to act (Berend, 1993, p.132).

Unlike the Antall wing of the MDF, the Csurka-led Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIEP) is glued into the organic community-type of kinship. From the start it obviously sought historical association with the radical-right Movement of Hungarian Life (MEM) led by Bela Imredy, and its successor party, the Hungarian Party of Life (MEP) headed by Teleki (Janos, 1982, pp. 292-293). But these two figures do not exhaust Csurka's "models" from interwar Hungarian politics. The playwright-turned-politician became notorious in the West for an article published in August 1992 in the MDF weekly "Magyar Forum." As Jim F. Brown would comment, Csurka's terminology in that tract was, "if not vintage Ferenc Szalasi...at least vintage Gyula Gombos." Gombos had once been a member of the Party for the Protection of the Race, established in 1923 by Tibor Eckhardt and Endre Zsilinszky, and later headed a secret group called the Hungarian Scientific Race Protection Society (Brown, 1994, p. 88; Janos, 1982, p. 225). "Setting the Record Straight" -- the article's title -- combined anti-Semitic paranoia and conspiracy theories with the usage of the Hungarian equivalent of "living space" ("eletter") and with racist jargon geared at the Roma (Brown, 1992).

Two weeks later, "Magyar Forum" published an article authored by MDF presidium member Gyula Zacsék, under the telling title "Termites are Devouring the Nation." As Berend (1993, p. 132) shows, the article was but "a Nazi-type attack against the Jewish-cosmopolitan conspiracy led by George Soros, the Jewish Hungarian-born American multi-millionaire and philanthropist who helped the 'cosmopolitan' (meaning Jewish) communists to preserve their power by giving it over to the 'cosmopolitan' dissidents."

The target was not diffuse in the least. As early as 1990, Sandor Csoori, a poet and essayist belonging to the populist stream, sounded the trumpet of what would eventually become a rather commonplace reference among the adversaries of the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), a formation grouping many former anticommunist dissidents associated with the underground publication "Beszelo." The adversity was a classic revival of the populist-urbanist ideological division that cuts through modernizing Hungary's history. The SZDSZ would eventually be referred to as the "ZSDSZ," meaning "Jewish Free Democrats," for indeed many of these former dissidents were scions to families of disillusioned Jewish communists and now held prominent positions in the party's leadership. Writing in the MDF biweekly "Hitel" in September 1990, Csoori said that contemporary Hungary is witnessing a "reverse assimilationist trend" in that it is "no longer the Hungarian nation that wishes to assimilate Jews, but liberal Jewry who wishes to assimilate the Hungarian nation," a purpose for which it employs "a more powerful weapon than it has ever possessed, namely, the parliamentary system" (cited in Deak, 1994, pp. 114-115).

Csoori, Csurka, or Zacsek were not the only members of the Antall-led governing coalition to indulge in the exercise. Albeit long after Antall was dead, Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP) Chairman Jozsef Torgyan would address a March 1996 election rally warning against the "liberal-Bolshevik" danger that is "paralyzing" the "powers of the Hungarian nation." At which point he added: "We, however, cannot be paralyzed. We are Hungarian. In the spring, the Hungarian manually clears away the vermin. Let us also clear away the vermin" (cited in Tismaneanu, 1999, p. 43).

This begs the question of why Antall agreed for so long to march alongside the Csurkas and the Torgyans of postcommunist Hungarian politics. For brevity's sake, I propose to ignore the "politicking" aspects of the answer and to concentrate instead on its generic sides.

Memory, memorials, and commemorations are all about legitimation processes, be this the personal legitimation of politicians and the politics they are supposed to represent, or the collective legitimation of a society's perceptions of itself. Anthropologists, such as Katherine Verdery, may strive to "think of legitimation in less rationalistic and more suitable 'cosmic' terms, showing it as rich, complex and disputatious processes of political meaning-creation," indeed even to formulate theories on the space-time axis proceeding from introspecting what happens with the movement of anonymous reinterred dead bodies in the former Yugoslavia.

But there is nothing "cosmic" about legitimation processes. Politicians and historical figures can be legitimized (or de-legitimized, or re-legitimized) only for the purpose of the present. Legitimacy will not thereby descend on the past, nor is there any guarantee that it will survive as such in the future. But Verdery, I believe, is quite correct in appreciating legitimation as "a process that employs symbols" (Verdery, 1999, p. 52 and 98-127, respectively).

In an important article on the transformation of former communist parties in East-Central Europe, Michael Waller pointed out that right after the system's collapse such formations benefited from an advantage that might not always have come to use in the first (naturally anticommunist) free ballot, but which they later were amply capable of taking advantage of -- "organizational continuity," which included access to assets (Waller, 1995, pp. 481-482). Other parts of the political spectrum, ranging from the civic-liberal to conservatives, "historical parties" and populist-nationalists, do not benefit from such access at the start of their political road. Rejecting, as they do, continuity with communism, they must replace it with other resources, among which "historic continuity" figures more prominently than it does in the case of the "successor parties." At first sight, this has little to do with the treatment of the Holocaust. On closer scrutiny, however, it turns out that many -- which is not to say all -- "historic" conservatives and (it goes without saying populist-ultranationalists) and those intellectuals associated with them are often found to be part of the Holocaust-denying or Holocaust-trivializing landscape.

In an article analyzing what is termed as the "assault on historical memory" in postcommunist Hungary, Randolph L. Braham, the world's most important historian of the Holocaust in that country, describes the spectrum of Holocaust denial as following:

While the number of xenophobic champions of anti-Semitism -- like that of the Hungarian neo-Nazis actually denying the Holocaust -- is relatively small, the camp of those distorting and denigrating the catastrophe of the Jews is fairly large and -- judging by recent developments -- growing. With their political power and influence, members of this camp represent a potentially greater danger not only to the integrity of the historical record of the Holocaust but also and above all to the newly established democratic system (Braham, 2001, p. 198).

Unlike the Holocaust deniers, who are a fringe group of "historical charlatans," "the history cleansers who denigrate and distort the Holocaust are often 'respectable' public figures (e.g., intellectuals, members of parliament, influential governmental and party figures, and high-ranking army officers" (Braham, 2001, p. 198).

Hungary is far from being singular. The diagnosis applies across the board in East-Central Europe, though local variations play a role. One of the main reasons for the widespread presence of the "respectable public figures" indulging in casting doubt on the singularity of Holocaust rests precisely in the absence of "organizational continuity" and the resulting over-pronounced necessity of compensating that absence with appeals to the legitimizing "historic continuity."

Paradoxically, these politicians are the legatees of communism to a far larger extent than they will ever be aware of. For in Hungary and elsewhere in the former communist world, the legacy of the Holocaust was distorted to serve political purposes and to present the saga of World War II as that "era when 'communists and other progressive elements' had struggled against, or became the victims of, 'Hitlerite and Horthyate fascism.' Somehow there seemed to have been no Jews among these heroes and victims; instead, all were 'anti-fascist Hungarians'"(Deak, 1994, p. 111).

But as Tony Judt noted, the "mismemory of communism is...contributing in its turn to a mismemory of anticommunism" (Judt, 2000, p. 309). Judt made the comment in connection with Romania's Marshal Ion Antonescu being turned into a national hero, but the observation is equally valid for Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia, and other former Nazi-allied states. What is more, with Antonescu, Szalasi, Laszlo Bardossy, and Jozef Tiso having been executed as war criminals, or Codreanu having been assassinated at the orders of King Carol II in 1938, they may fit very well into the natural postcommunist search for replacing manipulated "state-organized" martyrdom on the altar of proletarian internationalism, with martyrdom on the altar of national, anticommunist values.

Enter Kovacs's concept of "creating an identity on a symbolic level." "Mainstream," allegedly democratic party leaders in search for alternatives to organizational resources face a double dilemma when coming to forge that identity. These parties, Kovacs writes, can either opt for placing themselves somewhere around the Western political spectrum or to "express a

relationship with certain emblematic periods, events or individuals in the country's own history" (Kovacs, forthcoming). In actual fact, however, one option does not necessarily rule out the other, I hasten to add. A political formation may rally itself to, say, the European People's Party, and still proceed to identity-forging on mainly autochthonous values. Among the parties that gained access to parliament in the first free postcommunist elections (March-April 1990), the Socialist Party (MSZP) was the only one that did not face that choice, since it had access to resources. The SZDSZ and (originally) FIDESZ opted for the Western-type of liberal stream. On the other hand, the MDF, the FKGP and the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) -- which would practically vanish from the political scene during the May 1994-May 1998 parliament term -- all made what can be called the "introvert option."

Formations whose option is mainly introvert fight among themselves the battle "for the appropriation of history" in which they attempt to "demonstrate historical tradition and continuity" (Kovacs, forthcoming). But a second dilemma emerges once the introvert option has been made, namely whether to distance themselves or not from the less seemly aspects of remote or immediate history -- and to what extent do so. Opting for distancing themselves from figures such as those mentioned above is in many cases tantamount to renouncing historic legitimacy as well. For what historic legitimacy can one claim if, as a Slovak or a Croatian politician, one casts aside any continuity with the only time when an independent Slovak or Croatian state has existed? And while claiming "anticommunist historic legitimacy" is possible in the case of Hungary's or Romania's "historic parties" or neoconservative formations, it is not easy to do so when Antonescu and Horthy are largely perceived as the embodiment of anticommunist postures.

I believe we can now close the circle. We have thus far demonstrated that "symbolic history" is closely interconnected with the search for a formula of political legitimation and that both are part and parcel of the postcommunist party-forging of political identities. The time has also come to address the question raised above: why did it take Antall so long to distance himself from the more extremist shades of the coalition he headed? By now it should have become clear that given Antall's value system, he had little other choice. This was the only coalition in which all parliament-represented introvert forces would come under a common umbrella. He was well aware of Csurka's machinations against his leadership of the MDF, and there was no love lost between him and Torgyan, who in 1992 departed from the ruling coalition. On top, Antall (the only person who at the time had access to communist secret-

police files) was also aware that both had a shady past of collaboration with the AVO (later called AVH).

Attempting to understand motivation is not tantamount to identifying with either the actors or with their performance, and even less so with the script. Holocaust denial, minimization, or trivialization by comparison may be common to all actors. Still, their motivations may be different, as might be the goals pursued. It would be just as unwise to overlook these differences as it would be to assume that they are reason enough for protesting here but deferring there. It is comforting to learn that Antall's political models as a national leaders were Ferenc Deak, Baron Jozsef Eotvos, and, above all, Count Istvan Bethlen (see Tokes, 1996, pp. 420, 425), or at least preferable to Orban's latter-date model of Teleki; and certainly less threatening than Csurka's hero-models. But at the end of the day, what counts are not models, but policies. One should never manipulate oneself in the inverse position of Karl Lueger, Vienna's anti-Semitic mayor between 1897-1910, who used to boast in his unmistakable local dialect, "Wer a Jud is, bestimm'i" (I decide who is a Jew and who is not) (Johnston, 2000, p. 78).

3. Viktor Orban's 'Transfiguration' or The Making Of A Radical Conservative

There is surprising consensus among analysts of Hungary's contemporary scene on the self-defeating impact overemphasis on "symbolic history" had for the defeat of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) at the 8 and 29 May 1994 polls. According to Andras Bozoki, "Disillusionment was fostered by the increasing identity politics of the Antall cabinet, which utilized an overdose of symbolic-ideological, history-based metaphorical politics. As a result, [in the 1994 elections] people tended to prefer parties with pragmatic political behavior" (Bozoki, 2002, p. 100). Similarly, George Schopflin is persuaded that Antall "had obviously picked the wrong myth" when he chose to depict himself as the premier "in spirit" of 15 million Hungarians. Initially, Schopflin writes, "there was a good deal of sympathy for Hungary's co-ethnics" in neighboring countries, but "gradually, as the Antall government emphasized the fate of the minorities as a central objective in its foreign policy strategy, Hungarian opinion began to tire of this rhetoric" (Schopflin, 2000, pp. 85 and 372, respectively). Last but by no means least, Rudolf Tokes comments that in order to "bridge the gap between budgetary resources and public expectations," the leadership of the MDF "opted

for the revival of nationalist ideologies and the resuscitation of prewar notions on the nation's cultural hegemony in the region." And when "these failed to impress either the public or the intellectuals...the party's ideologues resorted to the selective rehabilitation of the Horthy regime's political personalities and the values of its Christian national middle class." Tokes therefore concludes that the Socialist Party's (MSZP) 1994 "landslide electoral victory was in many ways a protest vote against Antall's widely perceived attempts to turn back the clock to the prewar era." The electorate, heavily influenced by what Tokes rather dismissively calls "holdover intellectuals" who were former Hungarian communist leader Janos "Kadar's children," perceived the "semiofficial reburial of Admiral Miklos Horthy in September 1993" as "an ominous sign" and "cast their ballots to replace Antall's 'quiet strength' with [Gyula] Horn's familiar hand at the helm" (Tokes, 1998, pp. 409, 428).

Why, then, would Viktor Orban repeat -- and outdo -- his predecessor's mistakes? As always, simple questions invite complex answers. This is partly due to the fact that, as one scholar put it: "Fidesz's history...offers an intriguing puzzle: it has been one of the most unusual political parties, starting out as a youth organization in 1988 and by 1998 emerging into governmental position. Its road to power, however, was neither smooth nor straightforward, but riddled with contradictions, inconsistencies, and 180-degree turns that require explanation" (Kiss, 2002, pp. 740-741)." Several points seem to me to be of cardinal (if perhaps not equal) importance in providing that elucidation insofar as the handling of the memory of the Holocaust (see below) is concerned.

First and foremost among these is anticommunism, which at the same time is perhaps the only trait that did not undergo change in the evolution of FIDESZ since its formation on 30 March 1988, as the former regime was agonizing. Its charismatic leader became known in Hungary and abroad due to the fiery speech he delivered on 16 June 1989, at the Heroes' Square ceremony that preceded the reburial of the earthly remains of Imre Nagy and his associates. That speech, in which he called on the Soviet Union to take out its occupation troops, was televised live and not only put his previously "invisible party on the political map" (Tokes, 1998, p. 330; Ash, 1999, p.51) but also established Orban's reputation as one who would never trust a communist. Not even a former one, as it later turned out.

Closely linked to anticommunism, yet distinct from it, is the generational aspect. The Alliance of Free Democrats' (SZDSZ) early leadership stemmed from intellectual dissidents with

ideological links to the "New Left"-oriented "Budapest School" (Szabo, 1994, p. 143). While the contribution of these intellectuals to the demise of the former regime had been essential, they were just as adverse to the revival of old-type nationalism and to the Populists within the MDF. The abundance of "symbolic history" in the MDF's record was for them repulsive; furthermore, it seemed to entail personal dangers, as the Populists were portraying the SZDSZ as the "party of Jews" and seeking (with Antall's blessing) to eliminate from the media Jews who do not "defend the national interests" and who are the harbingers of "destructive modernism" engaged in a dangerous global plot to destroy the "essence" of Hungary and the "Hungarian nation" (Murer, 1999, p. 194). The former "revisionist" Marxists had evolved towards a sort of "Social Liberalism" (Szabo, 1994, p. 143). When, after their victory at the polls in 1994 the former communists returned to power and extended an invitation to the SZDSZ to join the ruling coalition (although capable of forming a cabinet by themselves), the SZDSZ did so. It was a self-defensive reaction, prompted by the fact that the "majority of Hungarian Jews seem to follow the century-old political strategy of supporting political forces that they believe to be heirs to the universalistic ideas of Enlightenment and as such able to protect them from the real and imagined threats of antisemitism." It was for this reason, as Andras Kovacs (1999, p. 116) writes, that "a section of Jewish intelligentsia strongly supported the creation of the 'unnatural' government coalition of the former communists and their former liberal opposition in 1994."

At its inception, FIDESZ was also on the barricades of the struggle against nationalist revival. In 1990, the party's parliamentary group walked out of a session called to mark the Trianon Treaty's unjustness (Kiss, 2002, p. 745). As late as 1992, in a speech delivered at the FIDESZ congress that year, Orban was telling his colleagues that the MDF "by and large represented a rotten, decaying old world that would never again return to Hungary" (cited in Pataki, 1992, p. 9). It seems that at that time Orban never contemplated the possibility of becoming one of the main promoters of that return. His FIDESZ had joined the Liberal International, just as the SZDSZ did.

Still, there were obvious differences between the two liberal formations and FIDESZ could by no means be regarded as a sort of SZDSZ "youth wing." As Michael Waller (1996, p. 40) put it, at that point in time the party's "requirement that members be under the age of 35 was in itself sufficient to give the party a particular identity, involving a rejection of the communist past, carried further to an independence also of earlier Hungarian traditions." The "liberalism"

displayed by FIDESZ was substantially different from the SZDSZ's "social liberalism." It inclined toward a "liberal conservatism" with no, or only slight sensibility shown toward social problems. In short, early FIDESZ looked like a Thatcherite party and, "lacking any roots in Marxism was clear-cut anticommunist, more radical, in some issues, than SZDSZ" (Szabo, 1994, p. 143). This orientation was not shared by all FIDESZ leaders and was to cause a split in the party in 1993, when founding member Gabor Fodor left it, disagreeing with Orban's orthodox "free-marketteering." Eventually, Fodor ended up in the SZDSZ (Szabo, 1994, pp.143-144; Kiss, 2002, p. 743).

The age limit was abolished at the 1993 congress, which also did away with the last elements of the party's "grassroot movement" features, introducing hierarchical discipline and redefining FIDESZ as a "liberal-center" group with a "NATIONAL" commitment (Pataki, 1993, p. 26. Emphasis added). Relatively little attention was paid at that time to this -- as it turned out -- major signaling of FIDESZ's change of course. In part, this was due to the fact that FIDESZ still ran in alliance with the SZDSZ in the 1994 elections. But the alliance -- involving stepping down in favor of the best-placed candidate in runoffs for single-member constituencies -- as well as a pre-electoral agreement providing for obligatory consultations ahead of signing any agreement with a third party, was (insofar as FIDESZ was concerned) primarily aimed at preempting precisely what emerged in the wake of the elections -- a MSZP-SZDSZ coalition. Orban hoped the elections would engineer a MDF-FIDESZ-SZDSZ government (Pataki, 1993, p. 25). The election results were a debacle for FIDESZ (for the electoral outcome see Bugajski, 2002, p. 374), which made it into the legislature with great difficulty and found itself sharing the opposition benches with a greatly enfeebled MDF and other parties of the right.

It was during this 1994-98 opposition period that FIDESZ underwent its "transfiguration" from a liberal into a radical conservative formation. The evolution was crowned in the year 2000, when the party left the Liberal International and joined the conservative European People's Party (EPP). An important milestone on this road was the party's 1995 congress, at which its name was changed by adding to FIDESZ the additional denomination of Hungarian Civic Party ("Magyar Polgari Part"). Once more, not enough attention has been paid then to this idiomatic transformation. As it would eventually turn out, "civism" had an inclusive connotation for Orban and his friends, aimed at the gradual absorption, and eventual

monopolization, of the right wing side of Hungary's political spectrum. That process is still underway in contemporary Hungary.

The party's economic doctrine also underwent a radical shift at the 1995 congress, when FIDESZ left "Thatcherism" behind and adopted pro-welfare postures based on high-growth and redistributive policies targeting in particular the new provincial middle classes and small businesses (Kiss, 2002, p. 744). From the electoral point of view, the shift was an intelligent response to the highly unpopular "Bokros package" of austerity measures enforced by the MSZP-SZDSZ cabinet and named after Finance Minister Lajos Bokros. Together with rampant corruption, the package highly contributed to the ruling coalition's defeat in the 1998 elections (for the outcome, see Bugajski, 2002, p. 374) and the emergence of the cabinet headed by Orban (Bozoki, 2002, pp. 102-108).

Such populist economic policies "were accompanied by support for a strong state and a conservative Catholic line on social issues." Furthermore, in its electoral propaganda ahead of the 1998 elections and in pronouncements during its 1998-2002 rule of the country, there has been an obvious siding with provincial Hungary against the capital Budapest (Kiss, 2002, p.745), perceived as being dominated by foreign capital and non-Hungarian values -- which often meant Jewish influence -- even if it was left to the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIEP) and other extremists to employ an overtly, uncoded anti-Semitic discourse.

The siding with the countryside against "cosmopolitan Budapest" could perhaps be explained in terms of myth handling. As Schopflin puts it, "It is difficult to integrate a rural population when the integrating community has no strong myth of urban experience. When two such communities are engaged in a contest, the weaker one may find that some of its members shift their allegiance via assimilation" (Schopflin, 2000, p. 83). But what Orban did was not merely to assimilate his party into the traditions of the Populists but to literally turn "inclusion" into the key of his party's tactics. Two paradoxes emerge from this.

First, the anticommunist Orban resorted to communist-style tactics. As designed by Ken Jowitt, the concept of "inclusion" refers to a third-stage in the development of ruling Leninist parties, in which the communist party perceives "that the major condition for its continued development as an institutionalized charismatic organization is to integrate itself with, rather than insulate itself from, its host society" (Jowitt, 1992, p. 91). In Hungary itself, the famous

September 1987 Lakitelek conference was a good illustration of "inclusive" tactics operated by the regime and laid the basis for a long and fruitful collaboration between the Populists and the party reformists headed by Imre Pozsgay (see Tokes, 1998, pp. 196-200). Second, the anticommunist new premier would turn to those who collaborated with the communist regime against the Urbanites (now the SZDSZ) who by-and-large were targeted by that regime and viewed as its most dangerous challenge.

The evolution would also be reflected in the Populists-cum-MDF shift of vocal support of Hungarian ethnic minorities abroad, resulting in the famous and controversial "Act on Hungarians Living in Neighboring Countries" ("Status Law") passed by the Hungarian parliament on 19 June 2001 (Kingston, 2001). Inaugurating the Office for Hungarians Beyond Borders on 19 August 1999, Prime Minister Orbán said that "all citizens of Hungary and Hungarians beyond borders are members of a single and indivisible nation" (cited in Shafir, 1999), which sounded quite close to Antall's "spiritual" premiership of 15 million Magyars. At the opposite end of the political spectrum, Socialist Prime Minister Gyula Horn had explicitly called himself the prime minister of 10.4 million Hungarians (Schopflin, 2000, p. 373).

This brings us back to András Kovács's concept of "creating an identity on a symbolic level." It should have become quite clear by now that this is precisely what Orbán set out to do when he engaged in transforming FIDESZ from a liberal into a neoconservative formation. As I have put it elsewhere, FIDESZ's "transfiguration" can be explained in terms of sheer political opportunism, but also in terms of "awareness of the opportunity to fill in the niche left open by the practical political demise of the MDF after Antall's death in December 1993 and the disastrous MDF electoral performance in 1994" (Shafir, forthcoming). As Csilla Kiss would eventually formulate it, FIDESZ has been able to move "into the conservative space vacated by the fragmented" MDF -- a "move that was made possible by the coincidence of Fidesz's need to change and the vacuum on the right" (Kiss, 2002, p. 757). But as Schopflin (1998) had once asked, what could "conservative" mean in the postcommunist context, since the recent past in Hungary was a communist one? Questions might invite radically different answers and mine are miles apart from Schopflin's (see Schopflin, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c). In a nutshell--while the British-Hungarian political scientist believes that much of FIDESZ and Orbán's negative image is maliciously invented by Westerners who themselves are subjected to the powerful influence of the "pro-left" Budapest Jews, I regard that image as having been

generated by Orban et al's toying time and again with "symbolic history." The treatment of the Holocaust on one hand, and the related institutionalized insinuation that Jews equal communism embodied in the House of Terror museum are part and parcel of that game, both being also reflected in the politics of public space in the Orban era.

4. A Self-Defeating 'Inclusion'

Quite soon upon taking over as premier in 1998, Viktor Orban visited the Hungarian pavilion at the Auschwitz exhibit and immediately decided to reconstruct the exhibit, originally built by the communist regime. The plans for redesigning the exhibit, as Randolph Braham described them, were little else than a pro-Horthy apologia designed to sanitize the Nazi era in general and the Hungarian involvement in the Final Solution in particular. They envisaged portraying a "virtual symbiosis of Hungarian and Jewish life since the emancipation of Jews in 1867, downplaying the many anti-Jewish manifestations as mere aberrations in the otherwise enlightened history of Hungary." Attention was obviously focused on "the positive aspects of Jewish life in the country, emphasizing the flourishing of the Jewish community between 1867 and 1944, the rescue activities of those identified as Righteous Among the Nations, and Horthy's saving of the Jews of Budapest" (Braham, 2001, p. 207). More importantly, the same plans blamed almost exclusively the Germans for the destruction of the Jews. The exhibition was canceled after protests from MAZSIHISZ; reacting to the decision, a spokesman of the federation said the country's Jewish communities did not wish to see the project halted but rather "done right" ("RFE/RL Newslines," 9 and 10 September 1999). "Symbolic history" was in the saddle right from the start of the Orban reign.

A plaque commemorating Admiral Miklos Horthy's notorious gendarmes (who impressed even the SS advisers with the enthusiasm they displayed in the ghettoization and concentration of Hungarian Jews before deportation, and who occasionally also participated in the extermination) was unveiled in 1999 at Budapest's War History Museum in the presence of junior coalition Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP) member Zsolt Lanyi, chairman of the parliamentary Defense Committee, triggering strong protests from the Jewish community ("RFE/RL Newslines," 28 October 1999; Braham, 2001, pp. 212-213).

It was a high official of the same coalition, Orban adviser Maria Schmidt, who shortly thereafter triggered the Jewish community's protests when she stated -- in a manner arguably akin to French radical Jean-Marie Le Pen -- that the Holocaust had been but a "marginal issue" in the history of World War II. No less emblematic for the "trivializing" way in which the Holocaust would soon be presented as relatively benign when juxtaposed with the communist atrocities, was the manner in which Schmidt developed her argument. The word "holocaust," she said, should not be applied only to the extermination of the Jews during World War II, since the communists had also committed genocide. Viewed from this perspective, she said, "the Holocaust, the extermination or rescue of the Jews, represented but a secondary, marginal point of view [as it was not an objective] among the war aims of either belligerent." Yet the West, which was Stalin's ally during the war, refuses to be confronted with its own responsibility, as this would "endanger the legitimacy of the Western democracies" ("Magyar Hirlap," 12 November 1999 and "Napi Magyarorszag," 13 November 1999, both cited in Gero, Varga, Vince, 2001, pp. 213 and 153, respectively. See also Braham, 2001, pp. 210). In the face of protests, Orban issued a statement largely exonerating Schmidt and expressing his "full confidence" in her ("Magyar Hirlap" and Hungarian Radio, in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts-Eastern Europe, 16 November 1999; "RFE/RL Newline," 16 November 1999). Schmidt had a sort of "vested interest" when she made the statement; she had been a leading member of the commission that attempted to "cleanse" from the Auschwitz exhibit Horthy atrocities against Hungarian Jews (see Braham, 2001, p. 206).

It was Schmidt, again, who in 2002 became director of the House of Terror museum, located in central Budapest, in the house that served as the headquarters of Ferenc Szalasi's Arrow Cross in 1944-45 (when it was called the "House of Loyalty") and later became the headquarters of the communist-era secret police. It was not by chance that the museum was inaugurated on the eve of the 2002 elections, with Orban addressing the opening ceremony. The attempt was obviously being made to link the rival Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) with the age of terror on which the museum concentrated: the communist one. Although allegedly dedicated to both Nazi and communist-era terror, only two of some two-dozen rooms of the museum are dedicated to the former, as this author witnessed during a visit in the fall of 2002. The museum thus appeared to be suggesting that, on balance, communist terror had been by far worse than the Jewish Holocaust. More important, perhaps, was what was implied --though never clearly stated -- in the exhibit: Against a background in which both FIDESZ and Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIEP) commentators routinely

mentioned the Jewish origins of some of Hungary's most notorious communists (Gabor Peter, the first AVO chief had been Jewish himself), the implicit message received by the museum's visitors was that the Jews were responsible for the country's postwar ordeal (Jordan, 2002).

This author does not rule out comparisons between the Holocaust and the Gulag, but neither does he believe that the uniqueness of either can be rendered by playing the numerology game of "which produced more victims" or "who is guiltier." To play that game is to engage into what Vladimir Tismaneanu (2001) properly termed "competitive martyrdom." It is legitimate to ask questions about why communist ideology fascinated so many Jews and about the role played by Jews in communist systems (see, for example, Gerrits, 1995; Karadi, 1997; Krajewski, 1999). There is, however, a huge gap between asking those legitimate questions and comparing what is comparable in the two genocides, on the one hand, and denying, belittling, or obliterating that which is inherently unique to each of them, on the other. And the latter is precisely what the House of Terror is doing, thus fully fitting into an East-Central European pattern that has been dubbed the "symmetric" or the "double-genocide" approach to the Holocaust -- one of the several forms in which the "comparative trivialization" of the Shoah can dress up (see Shafir, 2002a, pp. 60-75 and 2002b, pp. 105-132).

Furthermore, the museum obviously reflects an attempt -- to which Braham drew attention long before the site's inauguration -- to turn Germany's last ally into its last victim (Braham, 2001, p. 208). For nowhere can the visitor learn anything about the Hungarian state's own responsibility for either the Nazi or the communist terror. On the contrary, the first leaflet one picks up as one steps into the museum (there are leaflets in every room) speaks of Horthy's Hungary as having been involved in "desperate attempts" to maintain "its fragile democracy." Until the Nazi occupation of 1944, one is told, Hungary "had a legitimately elected government and parliament, where opposition parties functioned normally." No word of the anti-Jewish legislation, no word of the 64,000 Jews who perished under Horthy's rule before the Nazis occupied the country.

As a matter of fact, the museum has nothing more suitable to offer for its second room (dedicated to the Szalasi period) than videotape showing the pro-Nazi dictator delivering a speech in which he calls for the patriotic defense of Budapest against Soviet forces. Why, then, should the Blood and Honor neo-Nazi organization not feel legitimized in organizing a ceremony every year in the memory of those heroic fighters (see above)? And why should

MIEP not feel legitimized in its attempts to bring about the judicial rehabilitation of Hungary's 1941-42 premier, Laszlo Bardossy, executed for war crimes in 1945, as Csurka indeed tried in 1999 and again in 2001 (interview with Csurka on Hungarian Television 2 in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts-Eastern Europe, 19 November 1999; "RFE/RL Newslines," 17 January 2001)?

Faced with the adversity of the center-left opposition, Orban often leaned in parliament on the support of Csurka's MIEP, which had for the first time made it into the legislature, winning 14 seats in the 1998 elections. Between the runoffs, when it became apparent that MIEP had made it into parliament, Csurka gave the fascist salute during a televised interview (Murer, 1999, p. 203n). Rather than becoming more restrained, the electoral success radicalized MIEP -- and even more so as the government became dependent on MIEP votes after losing its majority in parliament in September 2001 due to a split within the FKGP (see "RFE/RL Newslines," 21 September 2001). FIDESZ did nothing to distance itself from MIEP Deputy Chairman Lorant Hegedus, who on 16 August 2001 published in MIEP's Budapest 16th district local newspaper "Ebreszto" an article invoking crude and anti-Semitic language. In that tract, Hegedus wrote:

"The Christian Hungarian state would have warded off the [ill effects] of the Compromise of 1867 had not an army of Galician vagabonds arrived who had been gnawing away at the country which, despite everything, again and again, had always been able to resurrect from its ruins the bones of its heroes. If their Zion of the Old Testament was lost due to their sins and rebellions against God, let the most promising height of the New Testament's way of life, the Hungarian Zion, be lost as well.... Since it is impossible to smoke out every Palestinian from the banks of the Jordan using Fascist methods that often imitate the Nazis themselves, they are returning to the banks of the Danube, now in the shape of internationalists, now in jingoistic form, now as cosmopolitans, in order to give the Hungarians another kick just because they feel like doing so...

"So hear, Hungarians, the message of the 1,000th year of the Christian Hungarian state, based on 1,000 ancient rights and legal continuity, the only one leading you to life: EXCLUDE THEM! BECAUSE IF YOU DON'T, THEY WILL DO IT TO YOU." (Cited in Schweitzer, 2002:227-228. Emphasis in Hegedus's original).

As Hegedus is an ordained pastor in the Calvinist Church, the National Synod of that church condemned his having expressed views "contrary to the Christian gospel, inconsistent with the Calvinist faith, and unworthy of the Church" and decided to ban pastors from active membership in political parties. Hegedus was charged with incitement, after having voluntarily renounced his parliamentary immunity and received a suspended 18-month sentence in December 2002. On appeal, however, the conviction was quashed on the grounds that his article did not represent incitement ("Magyar Hirlap" and "Nepszabadsag," 29 and 30 November and 2001; 10 and 19 December 2001; 17 June 2002; 7 December 2002; and 7 November 2003; "RFE/RL Newslines," 29 and 30 November 2001; 10 and 19 December 2001; 17 June 2002; 9 December 2002; 9 November 2003).

Not only did FIDESZ refrain from criticizing its de facto political ally, but it exerted its influence and succeeded for some time in having the Council of Europe take MIEP off its list of extremist parties (Weaver, 2003). It was also due to this cooperation that MIEP was allotted its own radio station, Pannon Radio, which broadcast from a building in Budapest in which Pastor Hegedus and his father (also a Calvinist pastor of the same name) reside. Hegedus's controversial article was repeatedly aired by Pannon Radio ("Magyar Hirlap" and "Nepszabadsag," 29 November 2001 and 7 December 2002) and the station was warned several times and fined three times by the National Radio and Television Board for broadcasting MIEP propaganda in general (which is forbidden under the law) and infringing on legislation regulating radio and television broadcasts that prohibit "inciting to hatred against persons, sexes, peoples, nations, national, ethnic, linguistic or other minorities, or any church or religious group" ("Magyar Hirlap," 15 November 2001; "Nepszabadsag," 11 January 2002; 19 July 2002; "RFE/RL Newslines," 15 November 2001; 19 July 2002; Gero, Varga, Vince, 2002, p. 323). The "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" described Pannon Radio in July 2002 as "the most evil forum in Eastern Europe today" ("RFE/RL Newslines," 29 July 2002). The station was finally closed down by the new Hungarian government in December 2002, after Csurka had tried to circumvent the law by buying a dominant stake in Pannon Radio through a foundation. As the news came in the same week that Hegedus was given his suspended sentence, Csurka told a rally of his supporters, "This is no longer Hungary, but Palestine!" ("Magyar Hirlap" and "Magyar Nemzet," 7 December 2003; "RFE/RL Newslines," 9 December 2003).

Views similar to those of Pannon Radio were broadcast on state-run Kossuth Radio's Sunday talk show "Vasarnapi Ujsag" (Sunday News), which Orban described as his favorite program (Gero, Varga, Vince, 2001, p. 188n). When Jewish organizations protested the broadcasts, one of the participants, Istvan Lovas called the protest an attempt at "intimidation," adding that "a command to halt must be given to those in Hungary...who wish to provoke an intellectual intifada." It goes without saying that for the participants in this Sunday morning talk show, the Holocaust was just "Shoah-business." Tibor Franka, a reputed pro-FIDESZ "Magyar Forum" journalist, was telling listeners on 12 March 2000, that anti-Semitism is just an invention that "serves the interests of those who benefit from the Holocaust, who pocket the abandoned wealth of the victims of the Holocaust in one way or another." A few months earlier, it was explained on "Vasarnapi Ujsag" that these profiteers "want to do away with everybody who dares to express an opinion that is different from the views of MAZSIHISZ." Prominent among such people, according to the same radio station, were members of the SZDSZ who "keep mentioning Auschwitz and label people anti-Semites" whereas "99 percent of them had been members of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party." It was such people that "defame Hungary's current civic government...by causing tensions. But the government cannot post guards beside every grave." Journalist Zsolt Bayer, an ultranationalist working for the pro-FIDESZ "Magyar Nemzet," told listeners on 23 July 2000: "I abhor the fact that many people...dare say explicitly that of all the things that ever happened here, only the Holocaust was a crime, or that everything the communists did in the world and in Hungary was nothing compared to the Holocaust" (all citations from the station's broadcasts in Gero, Varga, Vince, 2001, pp. 169-172). The same person, incidentally, would write after the 2002 elections that they had been won by the MSZP with the "votes of white trash in Pest" ("Nepszabadsag," 15 May 2003). Orban apparently had nothing against this "competitive martyrdom" game, for he was a frequent guest on "Vasarnapi Ujsag," leading SZDSZ Chairman Gabor Kuncze to remark in January 2002 that the premier was courting the votes of the extreme right, since "Vasarnapi Ujsag" was considered to be a "mouthpiece for MIEP and...a stain on the public service media" ("RFE/RL Newslines," 30 January 2002).

And so he was. At the end of the day, this proved to be his greatest miscalculation. He repeatedly refused to rule out the possibility of a postelection coalition with MIEP, noting as early as April 2001 that it "would be unfortunate...if Hungarians were to decide about their fate according to what people abroad would say" ("RFE/RL Newslines," 11 April 2001). By November of the same year, in an interview with the German daily "Suddeutsche Zeitung,"

Orban said in reference to a possible FIDESZ-MIEP partnership that "in principle" he does not rule out anything. That was quickly noted by MIEP Deputy Chairman Zoltan Fenyvessy, who described Orban's answer as "extremely diplomatic" and as observing the golden political rule of "never say never" ("Nepszabadsag" and "RFE/RL Newsline," 6 November 2001). However, Orban told his German interviewer that he believed FIDESZ would garner an absolute majority in the 2002 elections and be able to form a government without right-wing extremists or former communists. Asked why he refused to distance himself more clearly from MIEP, Orban replied that French President Jacques Chirac did not begin his daily activity by distancing himself from National Front leader Le Pen either. It was, he added, in any case just part of the "Hungarian political folklore" for the left wing to describe anyone who did not belong to its own political spectrum as an anti-Semite. The interviewer nonetheless pressed: Why are Orban's pronouncements becoming more and more nationalistic, if this is the case? These, came the reply, are his tactics for preventing the radical right from gaining ground ahead of Hungary's accession to the EU, for membership of that organization stirs anxiety among the country's population ("Nepszabadsag," "Magyar Hirlap," "Magyar Nemzet" and "RFE/RL Newsline," 5 November 2001). Indeed, on the eve of the 2002 ballot, Orban had made MIEP jargon his own to such extent that he was warning that a Socialist victory would bring Hungary under the yoke of international finance capital (Haraszti, 2002). He thus managed to scare off parts of the moderate right that would have composed his "natural" electorate. For example, the Christian Democratic Party leadership recommended that its supporters back the MSZP in the second round.

Orban would have every reason to regret his choice of tactics -- come the 2002 ballot results. For by having "out-Csurkaed Csurka" and thereby preventing the MIEP's entry to parliament (the party garnered 4.36 percent, just under the 5 percent threshold) he was left with no one with whom to form a coalition. Furthermore, the MIEP's failure to pass the threshold was in good part due to the much higher turnout (over 70 percent) than in previous elections, particularly in (for Csurka) the decisive first round (56.26 on 10 May 1998 v. 70.3 percent on 7 April 2002) (see Bugajski, 2002, p. 374; "Nepszabadsag," "Magyar Hirlap," "Magyar Nemzet" 8 April 2002). The high voter participation was, in turn, much of Orban's own making, having been prompted by his polarization of Hungarian society (Haraszti, 2002). "Inclusion" had worked -- but to its promoter's detriment.

5. What Next? In Lieu Of Conclusions

On election night of 21 April 2002, as defeat was no longer in doubt, Orban told a forum of party faithful that "a slight majority of Hungarians decided to tilt the balance toward a Socialist world." But he added defiantly that the future of Hungarians resides in a nation of 15, not 10 million Magyars ("Magyar Nemzet," 22 April 2002). Antall was vindicated. On 7 June 2003, in a ceremony in Transylvania at which he was honored by a Hungarian government-financed private university, Orban told the audience that the Magyars would never give up the hope of regaining "our home, Hungaria Magna -- our lost paradise" (Mediafax, 7 June 2003). The statement was qualified; it was included in a remark on European unification, which, Orban said, would enable the old dream to be fulfilled. But not long after, FIDESZ Deputy Chairman Laszlo Kover was telling another Transylvanian audience that it was unfortunate that those European minorities who "have resorted to force" receive "more attention and benevolence from European public opinion" than minorities who do not. The statement was rejected by Foreign Minister Laszlo Kovacs, who said that anyone who believes it is expedient to resort to violence to achieve autonomy and publicly expresses such a position is acting irresponsibly and harming the cause of autonomy for Transylvania's ethnic Hungarians (see "RFE/RL Newswire," 29 December 2003).

FIDESZ, in short, does not seem to have drawn any significant lesson from its electoral defeat. Officially, its doctrine is now entrenched in what Orban describes as the "polgari" values of "family, country, nation, work, security, and unity" (Kossuth Radio, 30 November 2003). Those are reasonable conservative values, fitting into FIDESZ's definition of itself as of the year 2000. Yet if everyone knows what a family and job security mean, words such as "country," "nation," and "unity" are ambiguous enough to leave room for more than one interpretation. This brings us back to subjectivity. For if in the eyes of latter-day FIDESZ supporter and candidate to the European Parliament George Schopflin, the MSZP-SZDSZ alliance is captive to an internationalist tradition in which "the West" and "Europe" replaced socialist internationalism (Schopflin, 2002b), in this author's eyes FIDESZ is -- to paraphrase an earlier Schopflin -- a political formation whose ideology is "democratic in form and nationalist in content" (Schopflin, 1974).

The Orban-led drive to unify (read: include) the right under FIDESZ's banner has thus far met with limited success. Only some relatively insignificant formations responded to his appeal

and ran jointly in the June 2004 European Parliament elections. In fact, his attempt to have his cake and eat it too has had the opposite of its intended effect: Parliamentary party allies such as the MDF have become wary of Orbán and occasionally distance themselves from his positions. On the other hand, on the overtly extreme-right end of the political spectrum, the effort has prompted the setting up of at least one new political formation that perceives Orbán as being a Janus-faced politician. This is the "Jobbik Magyarországot Mozgalom" (Movement for Hungarian Right) -- a construction evoking both senses of "right" in the Hungarian language. Its chairman, David Kovács, said the party shares with FIDESZ the goal of unseating the current government but added that Orbán's nationalist rhetoric has not been accompanied by deeds. What is more, according to Kovács, the movement's ideology calls for the unification of all nationalist Christian forces rather than being *polgári*, as FIDESZ's is ("Nepszabadság," "Magyar Hírlap," and "Magyar Nemzet," 27 October 2003).

The new movement immediately set out to capture public attention. In November 2003, it staged a demonstration outside Hungarian Television (MTV) to protest a recent cancellation of the "Ejjeli menedék" (Night Shelter) program. That program had been pulled off the air after broadcasting British Holocaust-denier David Irving's long-known version of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising. As he has done in a book written on Hungary's 1956 experience, Irving claimed that the insurrection began as an anti-Jewish uprising. "Ejjeli menedék," which was known for the rightist sympathies of its editors, also broadcast a speech on the same theme that Irving had delivered previously at an MIEP rally in Budapest ("Nepszabadság" and "Magyar Hírlap," 30 October 2003). At that rally, Tamas Molnár, deputy chairman of "Jobbik Magyarországot Mozgalom," called on participants to oust the media liberals, who "represent foreign interests, lisp, and are alien-hearted people." Addressing the same crowd, the movement's deputy chairman, Ervin Nagy, lamented that nationalists in Hungary had only one program -- the "Ejjeli menedék" ("RFE/RL Newslines," 10 November 2003).

The Movement for Hungarian Right was not alone in protesting the elimination of "Ejjeli menedék." Upon learning of the move, FIDESZ issued a statement saying that the MSZP-SZDSZ coalition was ruthlessly attempting to stifle any opinion that differed from its own ("Magyar Nemzet," 30 October 2003). The next day, Orbán called on *polgári* groups to come to the defense of the program's editor, and on 2 November he stated that it was worrisome that programs representing *polgári* or Christian values were under continual harassment ("Magyar Nemzet," 30 October and "Nepszabadság," 3 November 2003). Irving, for one, remained

unimpressed, declaring that he was by now accustomed to being attacked for his ideas, particularly by Jewish intellectuals such as Hungarian-born Arthur Kostler. His statement was made, perhaps unsurprisingly, on "Vasarnapi Ujsag" ("Nepszava," 3 November 2003).

The new Hungarian government had shown determination to end such manifestations as early as April 2003. An exhibition titled "Soldiers of Miklos Horthy -- Arrow Cross People of Ferenc Szalasi" was opened at the Juriscic chateau in the western Hungarian town of Koszeg on 19 March. Glorifying the deeds of the two regimes, the exhibition made no mention of their crimes or victims. Its director, Kornel Bakay, had been an MIEP candidate in the last elections. It was closed down in April, following MAZSIHISZ protests and considerable pressure applied by Budapest on the local authorities (see "RFE/RL Newline," 10, 16, 17, and 18 April 2003).

A text among the exhibits had explained to visitors: "The Hungarianist Movement is not identical with Italian Fascism or with German National Socialism. The Hungarian Arrow Cross advertised neither a totalitarian state nor racial superiority. On the contrary, they were the determined enemies of Bolshevism and international capitalists" ("Nepszabadsag," 2 April 2003). This quote brings us right back where we started -- namely, at "symbolic history" and the "clash of memories." There is no reason to believe that people like Bakay could ever be convinced they are wrong. This begs a "Leninist question": What is to be done? There is no way a dialogue might be established with the likes of Csurka. That would be a waste of time and energy. Mutual anathematizing is likely to continue between "them" and "us."

But there is no reason for a war to be waged endlessly between "memories" when it comes to the clash between Jewish and Hungarian memory writ large. Residual mutual perceptions are not necessarily eternal mutual perceptions. In the likely scenario of a return to power of the FIDESZ conservatives (after all, that is the rule of the democratic game), it might take a serious effort at both ends to mend the damage. On FIDESZ's side, this would entail ridding the party of the deeply rooted suspicion of an international Jewish conspiracy directed against the Hungarian nation. It would also entail a considerably larger dose of sensitivity toward the affairs of public space. But above all, it would entail renouncing inclusionist policies, which also means renouncing the neo-Zhdanovist division of the world into two irreconcilable camps. In domestic politics, FIDESZ must somehow be able to return to the politics of compromise, and this has little to do with handling the Holocaust. In foreign policy, it might

have to be less supportive of Hungarian extremists in neighboring countries. And that has even less in common with handling the memory of the Holocaust.

But some of this applies to Hungarian Jews as well. They must understand that the other side also has a right to memory and that the two memories might not always coincide. They must, above all, understand that the Gulag has a right to its own, separate memory. And it might be wise to publicly acknowledge that right and partake in its observation. Somehow, Hungary's Jewish community must also understand that its association with, or support for, the MSZP will be resented by many within Hungarian society for as long as people like Gyula Horn -- a former member of the post-1956 communist "pufajkas" (fur-coats) vigilante squads (see Tokes, 1998, p. 419) -- are in power. This might take no more than one generation; perhaps much less. The same goes for communist-era secret police informers assuming the role of independent, postcommunist premiers.

Reconciliation will not be easy. There is nothing new about that on the Jewish side. But let us face it: It's not easy to be Hungarian either!

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