

JEW, ISRAELITES, ZIONISTS  
THE HUNGARIAN STATE'S POLICIES ON JEWISH ISSUES IN A  
COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE (1956-1968)

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## Abstract

The dissertation investigates early Kádárism in Hungary, from the point of view of policies regarding Jewish issues, using a comparative framework of other Eastern European socialist countries. It follows state policies between 1956 and 1968, two dates that mark large Jewish emigration waves from communist Eastern Europe in the wake of national crises in Hungary (1956), Poland (1956, 1968) and Czechoslovakia (1968). The complex topic of policies relating to the Hungarian Jewish community, individuals of Jewish origin and the state of Israel facilitates the multidimensional examination of the post-Stalinist Party state at work. It also facilitates the testing of political models of communism, which aim to describe “real socialist” regimes by way of totalitarian or authoritarian characteristics.

The dissertation focuses on the main loci of political decision-making in the Party state and explains why and in what context the ‘Jewish Question’ emerged. The main topical areas that are discussed are policies relating to the Hungarian Jewish community, various forms and manifestations of antisemitism, and relations with the state of Israel.

The dissertation argues that Jewish policies did not follow the general direction of the Kádár regime’s first decade, which has been described in academic literature as a clear trajectory from orthodoxy to liberalization. Kádárism, while officially relegating Jewish affairs in the realm of religious matters, facilitated the manipulation of the understanding of Jewishness through an institutional power structure that yielded to the personal and group interests of the political elite that operated it. As a consequence, various tensions that had existed between Jewish and non-Jewish Hungarians before the establishment of a communist regime in 1948 repeatedly filtered through the political framework set by the Party state. At the same time, this situation resulted in the repeated, but not systematic discrimination of those who were considered, at one time or another, Jewish. In the long run, this situation led to the survival of antisemitism, but also a distinct Hungarian Jewish identity, both of which powerfully resurfaced after the systemic change in 1989.

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## 1. Introduction

In 1984, the oppositional (and thus illegal) ‘SHALOM’ peace organization issued a public appeal in a *samizdat* to the National Representation of Hungarian Israelites (*Magyar Izraeliták Országos Képvisellete*), the official mouthpiece of Jewish interests in socialist Hungary strictly supervised by the regime. The group’s message demanded a firm stance on Hungarian Jewry’s relationship

with the totalitarian state and its Soviet patron; with Hungarian people and [the country’s] progress; with the last hundred-hundred and fifty years of Hungarian history; with Jewish traditions; with the problem of the survival of the Jewish people; with the strategy of fighting antisemitism; with Jews living outside Hungary and with the State of Israel.<sup>1</sup>

The message touched upon every area in which the communist regime related to Jewish issues and signified that these fundamental problems remained unsolved for Jews living under communist control in Eastern Europe<sup>2</sup> after the Holocaust.

The dissertation explores why and how the above issues remained during ‘real socialism’.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of the research is to explore the determinants of state policies towards Jews and antisemitism in communist Hungary during the long 1960s. The study also includes an asymmetrical comparative aspect with other countries of the bloc which helps to accentuate national peculiarities and common policy patterns alike.

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<sup>1</sup> *Beszélő összkiadás* [Beszélő unabridged] (Budapest: AB-Beszélő Kiadó, 1992), Vol. 1, 571 (Beszélő No. 9).

<sup>2</sup> In the dissertation, I use the term “Eastern Europe” not in a strictly geographical but political sense, referring to European countries with a communist type of government and political system during the Cold War.

<sup>3</sup> The term ‘real socialism’ originated in twentieth-century socialist societies and popularized during the Brezhnev era in order to differentiate them from the abstract, theoretical concept of socialism. Later, academic language expropriated the term to describe the nature, tendencies and contradictions of socialist societies. I use the term as well to highlight the differences existing between theoretical socialist regimes and societies, and implemented versions of socialist theory.



### 1.1. Research Questions

There exists a wide range of literature in the disciplines of political science and history both about communist theory and the socialisms of Eastern Europe. Similarly, the field of Jewish Studies has produced a considerable body of work on antisemitism in post-Holocaust Eastern Europe. However, research that makes use of the vast array of Party state documents to dissect all the determining structural, political, ideological and social factors that influenced the Party state's decision-making process with regards to Jewish issues is still incomplete. My dissertation attends to this particular research gap. The examination of this specific problem reveals that historic socio-economic categories, political allegiances and ideas, including ones incompatible with Communism's basic principles, influenced the communist institutional framework and policies alike. The dissertation traces how ideas about nation and ethnicity survived, and were shaped by Communism. This knowledge is relevant today to understand contemporary ethnic and socio-economic tensions in Hungary and Eastern Europe.

'Real existing socialisms' in Eastern Europe existed and evolved under the ever-present influence of Moscow. The Soviet Union determined the formation and implementation of policies on both ideological and practical levels. Nonetheless, a variety of policies towards a specific area could be applied simultaneously in various socialist countries, and any one country might vary its policies substantially over time. This diversity poses problems for any study using the 'one (Soviet) model fits all' approach. How complete was Moscow's influence over Eastern European communist policies towards Jewish issues?

The differences between the policies of Eastern European regimes towards Jews and antisemitism, their dramatic changes and turns over time, as well as the great variety of manifestations of popular and political antisemitism all suggest that either

Moscow's instructions were applied selectively, or that Soviet influence did not extend to all areas. This dissertation argues that while Soviet hegemony was always a factor influencing policies towards Jews and antisemitism, throughout the period under investigation, Soviet policies and principles were neither all-encompassing, nor binding for the Hungarian leadership. More precisely, I show how even systemic influences and constraints were mediated through the perceptions, beliefs and interests of the Hungarian policy-forming elites. Consequently, Moscow's influence was much more indirect than previous studies have suggested.

Approximately 70 percent of Eastern European Jewry was killed during the Holocaust, and their numbers have decreased ever since as a result of low birth-rates and mass emigration. Today, the global centres of Jewish life and culture are the United States and Israel. So why should we deal with a handful of Jews that were left in Eastern Europe after the Shoah? First, their case provides historians of Communism with insight into the issues of Soviet hegemony within Eastern Europe. This helps address the fundamental question of how political spheres of influence function, and how much sovereignty satellite states are able to retain. Second, the study of Jewish policies under Communism helps shed light on how non-democratic systems relate to discrimination and prejudice towards cultural, religious and ethnic minorities, and how state policies affect the elimination or survival of these beliefs and practices.

Despite certain predictions, Jews did not completely assimilate and Jewish culture did not dissolve into the majority cultures of the area. This research helps show how Jews survived and maintained a distinct identity despite a ruling ideology that imagined Jewish identity (whether religious or national) would wither away. Moreover, communist policies towards Jews frequently affected even those who did not identify as such, therefore they had much broader implications than the official

number of Jewish citizens would suggest. Third, antisemitism in Hungary did not disappear any more than the country's Jewish population did. On the contrary, it can still be experienced there on a daily basis.

## 1.2. Overview of literature and methodology of the dissertation

Maybe frightened by Francis Fukuyama's pronouncement about the end of history<sup>4</sup> following the collapse of Communism, historians seriously started to reclaim the territory of Eastern Europe, and the topic of Communism from political scientists and sociologists after 1989. As the archives of former socialist countries gradually opened, so the focus of analysis shifted from the theoretical examination of the ways in which communist power was imposed to the actual documentation of the period. Even more recently, the historical focus has increasingly narrowed and histories of different areas, social classes and experiences under socialism, concentrating on issues such as the peasantry, gender roles, infrastructure, rituals and the like, were born.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the earlier normative (prescriptive) approach was replaced by a descriptive (explanatory) one.

The following paragraphs introduce the general trends in the social scientific and historical study of 'real socialism', then narrow the presentation of historiography to accounts of the socialist states' relationship to local Jewish populations.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History?' in: *The National Interest*, No. 16 (Summer 1989), 3-18.

<sup>5</sup> A few examples of this trend are: Sheila Fitzpatrick and Yuri Slezkine (eds.), *In the Shadow of Revolution: Life Stories of Russian Women from 1917 to the Second World War*. (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2000); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Konrad Jarausch (ed.), *Dictatorship as Experience. Toward a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1999).

### 1.2.1 Interpretations of Soviet communism

There has been a wide array of academic discussions with regards to the communist system, understood here as a type of government, in social sciences.<sup>6</sup> A major debate evolved around the scientific methodological description of Communism's functioning. This area of inquiry became very lively following WWII, when the comparison between the national socialism of Hitler's Germany and the Communism of Stalin's Soviet Union raised the interest of many social scientists.<sup>7</sup> Hannah Arendt's ground-breaking study<sup>8</sup> defined both regimes as *totalitarianism*: a new form of government which had evolved as an answer to modern industrialism. Totalitarian states, according to Arendt, seek to dominate and control every aspect of one's life through propaganda and terror.

The developing discipline that came to be called Sovietology drew extensively from theories of totalitarianism and originally applied it to the Stalinist period of Soviet Communism. Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski held that the Soviet system under Stalin was totalitarian by pointing at the following features: a comprehensive official ideology aiming at world conquest, a single mass Party led by a dictator, institutional terror (i.e. terroristic police control), a monopoly of information, a monopoly of all means of armed combat, and a centrally controlled economy.<sup>9</sup> In a later edition of this book, the authors added two further characteristics:

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<sup>6</sup> I consciously omitted a few other debate positions from this analysis, largely because their arguments are not relevant for my thesis, or because they have been more or less discarded. Hence, I am not discussing the 'degenerate workers' state' argument which was originally elaborated by Leon Trotsky, or Marxist 'state capitalism' theorists such as Tony Cliff and Bruno Rizzi. I do not discuss approaches that place economic factors in the centre of their analysis because I am most concerned with political, and not economic development. Thus, the 'modernization approach', as advanced by John Kautsky or the 'industrial society' approaches are also omitted.

<sup>7</sup> I am not going to discuss in detail the concepts of totalitarianism developed and applied in relation to Fascism, as described in fictional literature or by liberal thinkers. For a thorough presentation of these see: Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1951).

<sup>9</sup> Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1956).

expansionism and the administrative control of justice.<sup>10</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski placed special emphasis on the first aspect, pointing at the chiliastic nature of ideology which thus meant an all-encompassing subordination to a positively formulated goal to be reached in the future.<sup>11</sup> As opposed to Arendt's normative political philosophy, Friedrich and Brzezinski represented the approach of empirical comparative politics.<sup>12</sup>

Even after Nikita Khrushchev came to power and introduced policies that were at odds with Stalinist measures, some theorists insisted upon the continuing (and fundamentally unchangeable) totalitarian nature of the Soviet regime. Merle Fainsod and Adam Ulam argued that despite Khrushchev's deregimentation, the political structure remained essentially Stalinist, thus totalitarian.<sup>13</sup> Other authors, though still using the term 'totalitarianism', did not accept the unchangeability paradigm. Pointing at systemic modifications occurring in 'real socialism', they called for a less static interpretation of the totalitarian model which would take social realities into account. Allen Kassof for instance preferred to speak of an 'administered society' in which, though the state remained totalitarian with control of information being expropriated by an all-powerful ruling elite in the name of ideology, terror was not applied anymore.<sup>14</sup>

In the face of political changes in the Soviet Union, some social scientists (especially on the political Left) suggested that new paradigms were needed to adequately conceptualize and capture the political reality of the Soviet regime during the post-Stalin period. Many argued that because Sovietology was mostly professed in

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<sup>10</sup> Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1965).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 9-10.

<sup>12</sup> Klaus von Beyme, 'The Concept of Totalitarianism – A Reassessment after the End of Communist Rule' in: Achim Siegel (ed.), *The Totalitarian Paradigm after the End of Communism. Towards a Theoretical Reassessment* (Amsterdam, Atlanta, GA.: Rodopi Press, 1998), 39-54.

<sup>13</sup> Merle Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1963) and Adam Ulam, 'The New Face of Soviet Totalitarianism' in: *World Politics*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (April, 1960), 400.

<sup>14</sup> Allen Kassof, 'The Administered Society: Totalitarianism without Terror' in: *World Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 4. (July, 1964), 558-575.

the United States, the debate was heavily influenced by the hegemonic narrative of anti-Soviet struggle and served political purposes.<sup>15</sup> Others considered the totalitarian model too static and institutionally oriented to capture the reality of communist politics.<sup>16</sup> Even Hannah Arendt stated, in the preface to a new edition of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that the Soviet Union in the 1960s “could no longer be called totalitarian in the strict sense of the term.”<sup>17</sup> The so-called revisionist school in American Sovietology was born which sought to limit the usage of ‘totalitarianism’ to Stalin’s reign.

Some critics considered the Soviet regime after Stalin’s death *authoritarian*. In fact, Andrew C. Janos put all Soviet leaderships from Lenin to Khrushchev under this category. In authoritarian political constructs, office holders are “leaders” or “agents” who should be obeyed; the political process entails arbitration exercised in the name of a higher purpose; leaders are only subjects to natural and normative but not institutional restraints; politics involves mainly the manipulation of organizational positions; and while the autonomy of social units may be tolerated, such autonomies do not represent an integral element of political arrangements.<sup>18</sup> According to Richard Löwenthal, the Soviet Union after Stalin moved beyond totalitarianism towards what he called ‘post-totalitarian authoritarianism’ characterized by a still omnipotent state in theory, but a lower level of repression in practice, including the tolerance of some limited pluralism in public life.<sup>19</sup> George Breslauer’s expression, ‘welfare-state

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<sup>15</sup> See for example: Stephen F. Cohen, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History Since 1917* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), esp. 8-14.

<sup>16</sup> Jeremy R. Azrael, ‘Varieties of De-Stalinization’ in: Chalmers Johnson (ed.), *Change in Communist Systems* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1970), 138.

<sup>17</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973). Preface to Part 3 (June, 1966), xxxvii.

<sup>18</sup> Andrew C. Janos, ‘Systemic Models and the Theory of Change in the Comparative Study of Communist Politics’ in: *Authoritarian Politics in Communist Europe. Uniformity and Diversity in One-Party States*. (Berkeley, CA.: Institute of International Studies University of California, 1976), 6-7.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Löwenthal, ‘Beyond Totalitarianism’ in: Irwing Howe (ed.), *1984 Revisited: Totalitarianism in our Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983) and ‘The Ruling Party in a Mature Society’ in:

authoritarianism' pointed at the implicit "social contract" between rulers and ruled. The former promised rising consumption in exchange for the latter's conformity with the system.<sup>20</sup> Ralph Dahrendorf's comparison between Stalinism and Brezhnevism distinguished the latter as authoritarian from the former's totalitarianism, arguing that authoritarian rule does not require a regime of terror or permanent mobilization. People living in authoritarian regimes, according to Dahrendorf, can "withdraw to their niches of privacy" and while they might be harassed by the agents or representatives of the power-centre, "they will not be persecuted with the systematic arbitrariness of total rule."<sup>21</sup>

Other theories used concepts other than totalitarianism or authoritarianism to emphasize the distinctiveness of the post-Stalinist Soviet regime from both of these ideal types. Alfred Meyer developed what can be called the 'bureaucratic politics' model when he likened the USSR's political structure and functioning to that of a giant bureaucracy. Meyer suggested that communist rule was in essence an endeavour to enforce rational management over social life through intricate organisations.<sup>22</sup> Others focused on the ideological aspect. Michael Walzer preferred to speak of 'failed totalitarianism' where ideological zeal is a sign of conformism, not conviction.<sup>23</sup> Juan J. Linz argued that the Soviet Union after Khrushchev's 1956 secret speech moved into the phase of 'post-totalitarianism' because it experienced "a crisis in the ideological way of thinking" when even common people realized that they had been

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Mark G. Field (ed.), *The Social Consequences of Modernization in Communist Societies* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 81-120.

<sup>20</sup> George W. Breslauer, 'On the Adaptability of the Soviet Welfare-State Authoritarianism' in: Karl W. Ryavec (ed.), *Soviet Society and the Communist Party* (Amherst, MASS.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1978), 3-25.

<sup>21</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1990), 16-17.

<sup>22</sup> Alfred G. Meyer, *The Soviet Political system: An Interpretation* (New York: Random House, 1965), 206-225.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Walzer, 'On Failed Totalitarianism' in: Irving Howe (ed.), *1984 Revisited: Totalitarianism in our Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983), 103-121.

“living a lie”<sup>24</sup>. In another publication, Linz and Stepan identified ‘post-totalitarianism’ as a dynamic regime type with different degrees of institutional pluralism within the state, varying degrees of social pluralism, and often a “second culture” or “parallel culture”.<sup>25</sup> They differentiated post-totalitarianism both from authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, but described the type as fluid and possibly occupying any position on a multi-dimensional continuum defined by the above factors. Jeffrey Goldfarb, who saw cultural control as the main element of totalitarianism, emphasized cultural resistance and the formation of subcultures as the main distinguishing feature of post-totalitarianism.<sup>26</sup> However, none of these authors devoted much attention to the mode in which policies were formulated and implemented in communist political systems.

*Limited pluralism theories*, as advanced for example by Jerry F. Hough<sup>27</sup> and H. Gordon Skilling<sup>28</sup>, attempted to fill that gap and emphasized the relative autonomy of major interest groups in the Soviet system, the reasonable rationality of specialists who took political decisions, the frequent discussion of policy alternatives in the press, and the spread of bargaining mentality among the various actors of the administration. Pluralism, in this sense, referred to institutional multiplicity, and the ability of organized groups to influence political decisions through institutional channels created

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<sup>24</sup> Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000). Introduction to the new, revised edition of the book, 21.

<sup>25</sup> Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe*. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 42-51.

<sup>26</sup> Jeffrey Goldfarb, *Beyond Glasnost. The Post-Totalitarian Mind* (Chicago, IL.: University Of Chicago Press, 1989), 107.

<sup>27</sup> Jerry F. Hough, *The Soviet Union and Social Science Theory* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1977).

<sup>28</sup> H. Gordon Skilling, ‘Interest Groups and Soviet Politics: An Introduction’ in: H. Gordon Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths (eds.), *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971) and ‘Interest Groups and Communist Politics’ in: *World Politics*, Vol. 18, No.3 (April, 1961), 435-445.



by the state and not to any kind of free access of autonomous organizations.<sup>29</sup> Francis Fukuyama pointed at the existence of a “proto-civil society” during the Brezhnev period, where lower levels of the Party had significant bargaining power against the power-centre, and ideological indoctrination failed.<sup>30</sup>

After the regime changes between 1989 and 1991, as Eastern European archives gradually opened, historians increasingly joined the discussions. In this field too, there exists a totalitarian school which was appropriated partly by opposition forces in liberalizing Eastern Europe as early as the late 1960s,<sup>31</sup> but it has also been endorsed by neo-conservative historians in the West from the early 1990s. These latter authors argued that Stalin’s communism and Hitler’s Nazism had striking similarities in their hatred of the bourgeoisie, their systematic deprivation of citizens of political ties (thus atomizing society), and subjecting individuals to the total power of an ideological Party and state.<sup>32</sup> Advocates of the totalitarian argument brought examples of communism’s uncompromising social engineering through criminal practices; and unparalleled efforts to liquidate real or imagined enemies, civil society and human creativity.<sup>33</sup> Walter Laqueur defended the usage of the term for the entire communist period, arguing that totalitarianism should not be understood literally, but meaning that all important decisions belonged to the individual or small group on top of the structural hierarchy of politics.<sup>34</sup> With the benefit of hindsight, Laqueur argued in

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<sup>29</sup> Archie Brown, ‘Pluralism, Power and the Soviet Political System: A Comparative Perspective’ in: Susan Gross Solomon (ed.), *Pluralism in the Soviet Union* (New York, NY: St. Martins Press, 1983), 61-107.

<sup>30</sup> Francis Fukuyama, ‘The Modernizing Imperative’ in: Nikolas K. Gvosdev (ed.), *The Strange Death of Soviet Communism. A Postscript* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2008), 9-20.

<sup>31</sup> On the usage of the theory of totalitarianism in Eastern Europe after 1968 see: Jacques Rupnik ‘Le Totalitarisme vu de l’Est’ [The Totalitarianism view of the East] in: Guy Hermet et al. (eds.), *Totalitarismes* (Paris: Economica, 1984), 43-71.

<sup>32</sup> See: François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 180-181.

<sup>33</sup> See for example: Richard Pipes: *Communism: a History* (New York, Modern Library, 2001).

<sup>34</sup> Walter Laqueur, *The Dream that Failed: Reflections on the Soviet Union* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

1994 that the difficulty with which the transition to democracy took place suggested that “social and political changes that had taken place had been deeper and more radical”<sup>35</sup> than they would have been from an authoritarian system. Martin Malia saw the “totalitarian intention” of revolutionary socialism not so much in the domination of society and open terror, but in the “institutional subordination of politics, economy and culture under a party-state.”<sup>36</sup> According to Malia, no reform attempt could override the restricted logic and functioning of the “iron-cage” institutional structure. Adam Westoby, in his analysis of Communism as a world movement, found the essence of totalitarianism in the lack of civil society as a result of state domination over the population.<sup>37</sup>

In contrast, those historians who adhered to more pluralistic views of Soviet Communism emphasized the need to go beneath the ‘icy surface’ of uniform dictatorship and uncover the peculiar nature of the regimes by examining the political, social and cultural aspects simultaneously.<sup>38</sup> Some depicted the long nineteen-sixties as the emergence of “Communism with a human face”<sup>39</sup>; while others argued that though the Stalinist structure did not fundamentally change, partial reforms were implemented in order to maintain the functionality of the Soviet regime.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Walter Laqueur, *The Dream that Failed: Reflections on the Soviet Union* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 88.

<sup>36</sup> Martin Malia (under the pseudonym “Z”), ‘To the Stalin Mausoleum’ in: *Deadalus*, Vol. 119, No.1 (1990), 300-301. Paraphrased in: Klaus Müller, *East European Studies, Neo-Totalitarianism and Social Science Theory*. Trent University International Political Economy Centre Working Paper 03/7, 28.

<sup>37</sup> Adam Westoby, *The Evolution of Communism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), esp. 2, 7-8.

<sup>38</sup> Patrick Major and Jonathan Osmond (eds.), *The Workers’ and Peasants’ State. Communism and Society in East Germany under Ulbricht 1945-1971* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 289.

<sup>39</sup> It is very common to depict developments in Czechoslovakia this way but some historians applied it to the Soviet Union as well. See: Mihail Heller and Alekszandr Nyekrics, *Orosz történelem. A Szovjetunió története* [Russian History. The History of the Soviet Union], Vol. II. (Budapest: Osiris, 2003).

<sup>40</sup> Peter Kenz, *The History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

The debate on totalitarianism, as the above presented literature suggests, became in essence a debate about the Cold War. Therefore, no study examining that period can avoid addressing the concept. But whichever approach to the history of Soviet communism we accept, in the great variety of opinions, there are certain recurrent themes. Stalin's and later periods are to be distinguished, and that both institutional and ideological elements should be considered when describing the regime. The next question that arises is whether these theoretical considerations can be used to characterize other communist regimes, most importantly those of Eastern Europe.

### 1.2.2. Interpretations of Eastern European Communism

The above debates primarily applied their theories to the Soviet Union. If other countries under communist rule made an appearance in the analyses at all, they were by and large considered local applications of the Soviet model with little variations.<sup>41</sup> This is particularly true with regards to pre-1989 literature which, as Linz and Stepan noted, "began with such an exclusive focus on the region's shared status as 'satellites' that the significant heterogeneity of the pre-Communist and Communist state-society relations of each country was played down."<sup>42</sup>

The totalitarian paradigm has been applied to Eastern European countries by native academics, intellectuals and dissenters, as well as Western historians. In his detailed study of the history of the totalitarian concept, Abbott Gleason declared that

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<sup>41</sup> See for example: Leslie Holmes, *Politics in the Communist World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Andrew C. Janos, 'Systemic Models and the Theory of Change in the Comparative Study of Communist Politics' in: *Authoritarian Politics in Communist Europe. Uniformity and Diversity in One-Party States*. (Berkeley, CA.: Institute of International Studies University of California, 1976), 23-25; Chalmers Johnson, 'Comparing Communist Nations' in: Chalmers Johnson (ed.), *Change in Communist Systems* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1970), 8-9; Robert C. Tucker, *The Soviet Political Mind. Stalinism and Post-Stalin Change* (New York, NY.: W.W. Norton & Company inc, 1971), 186.

<sup>42</sup> Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe*. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 236.

though the totalitarian model had flaws, it was still more suggestive than any other term to describe the reality that Eastern Europeans experienced with regards to the relationship between Party and state, state and society. He argued that communist regimes should be considered totalitarian because they attempted to establish an “alternative totalitarian reality” through ideology, even if many people did not believe in the truth of that reality, especially during the mature period of Communism.<sup>43</sup> Geoffrey and Nigel Swain characterized Eastern Europe in the 1960s as ‘neo-Stalinism’. They argued that despite appearances, there were not various ‘national roads to socialism’ however, they did acknowledge that the countries of the Warsaw Pact “capitalised on less ideological forms of control, on the absence of the unchallenged personal authority of Stalin, and on the uncertainties which developed with the Sino-Soviet split to win a degree of autonomy for themselves”<sup>44</sup> in domestic, and less so in foreign affairs. In a similar vein, Gale Stokes opined that “East European history after 1945 can be understood as one spasmodic moment of Stalinist appropriation, followed ever since by various forms of de-Stalinization and re-Stalinization.”<sup>45</sup> Matt Killingsworth’s first major publication argued that Czechoslovakia, Poland and the German Democratic Republic were all totalitarian regimes. Killingsworth pointed at the “maintenance of terroristic policies” and the lack of a genuine, autonomous civil society, understood as “groups or organisations that are free to operate without state intrusion.”<sup>46</sup> Andrzej Walicki asserted that the totalitarian model was absolutely applicable to Poland during Stalinism inasmuch as those years were a “militantly ideological phase in the development of communism.”

<sup>43</sup> Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 8.

<sup>44</sup> Geoffrey Swain and Nigel Swain, *Eastern Europe since 1945* (New York, NY.: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 118.

<sup>45</sup> Gale Stokes (ed.), *From Stalinism to Pluralism. A Documentary History of Eastern Europe Since 1945* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3.

<sup>46</sup> Matt Killingsworth, *Civil Society on Communist Eastern Europe. Opposition and Dissent in Totalitarian Regimes* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2012), esp. 5, 7-30.

He termed the post-Stalinist period that followed “detotalitarization” or a disintegrating process which projected the eventual downfall of Communism in Poland. Nevertheless, Walicki still did not think that the totalitarian model should be discarded because of its usefulness to describe different political regimes’ relationship to liberty.<sup>47</sup>

Just as changes in political practice in the Soviet Union after Stalin’s death did not go unnoticed, differences between the various Eastern European regimes also became apparent. Addressing this phenomenon, J.F. Brown claimed that Eastern European history after 1948 can be considered in terms of “recurring ‘domesticism’” or spontaneity. He considered upheavals as well as “quiet changes...that have affected various aspects of political, economic, social, cultural and legal development” as examples of these. As a result, Brown added, “these developments... inexorably modified, or East Europeanized, the Soviet model and mores first imposed.”<sup>48</sup> John H. Kautsky went as far as to suggest that so considerable were the differences between one communist state and the other that the very notion of a communist political system was of little analytical or practical value. Kautsky argued that communist states did not have any particular distinguishing features, apart from the symbolism they used. Kautsky preferred to distinguish between ‘mobilised’ and ‘adaptation’ regimes, where communist states would belong to the first category, albeit with a number of other, non-communist countries.<sup>49</sup>

The more difficult task was nevertheless to find explanations for why and how differences between various countries under Communism appeared. The plethora of

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<sup>47</sup> Andrzej Walicki, ‘Totalitarianism and Detotalitarization: The case of Poland’ in: *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (Summer, 1996), 505-529.

<sup>48</sup> J.F. Brown, *Eastern Europe and Communist Rule* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1988), 6.

<sup>49</sup> John H. Kautsky, ‘Comparative communism versus comparative politics’ in: *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Vol. 6, No. 1-2 (Spring/Summer, 1973), 135-170.

literature that dealt with Eastern Europe as a region frequently described each country separately, thus not applying a real comparative perspective to account for differences.<sup>50</sup> Chalmers Johnson is a notable exception. He argued that though there were ‘communist universals’, i.e. ways of doing politics that were common to all ruling communist Parties, other country-specific ‘operative variables’ resulted in diversity among communist regimes. ‘Communist universals’ included reorienting the Party after coming to power, organization building, agricultural nationalization and collectivization, the structuring of political life, target-setting and purges. The ‘operative variables’ identified by Johnson were the level of economic development, type of political culture (“a combination of ethnic and religious characteristics and political style”), and the mode of coming to power.<sup>51</sup> Thus, Johnson identified similarities to be of systemic origin, and attributed differences to local (national) circumstantial factors. Iván T. Berend on the other hand saw the reason for differentiation within the bloc in the various ways each regime reacted to the loosening of Soviet control after the death of Stalin. As opposed to Johnson, he saw systemic reasons behind the changes. Some countries turned to “independent national roads” and “resisted Soviet de-Stalinization” by preserving their orthodox Stalinism (Romania, Albania). This process however, argued Berend, “contributed to the erosion of a united Soviet bloc and indirectly helped foster the spread of liberal reforms in some other countries of the region”<sup>52</sup> (Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland).

Other authors attributed the increasingly prevalent differences to imperfections in the inherent working logic of ‘real socialism’ but applied their theories on single case

<sup>50</sup> For example see: Archie Brown and Jack Gray (eds.), *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States* (New York: Holmes and Meyer Publishers, 1979); Martin McCauley and Stephen Carter (eds.), *Leadership and Succession in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China* (London: Macmillan, 1986).

<sup>51</sup> Chalmers Johnson, ‘Comparing Communist Nations’ in: Chalmers Johnson (ed.), *Change in Communist Systems* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1970), 27-28.

<sup>52</sup> Iván T. Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe, 1944-1993: detour from the periphery to the periphery* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 95.

studies only. Jürgen Kocka's innovative social history of the German Democratic Republic is a case in point. Kocka claimed that there were certain limits to dictatorship because "in everyday practice contradicting aims and unintended consequences of political measures counteracted a clear-cut domination from above." Moreover, the author pointed out, informal relations and modes of action, though products of dictatorial politics, "developed a logic of their own that limited the dictatorial steering and control of society."<sup>53</sup> Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan argued that Poland was closer to the authoritarian regime type during its communist period than to totalitarianism or post-totalitarianism. They identified certain systemic developments unique to Polish Communism and the pattern of "policy alternation and changing leadership styles" to underline their claim.<sup>54</sup> However, they also pointed at historic developments to account for Poland's uniqueness: the constitution of the country's population which, after WWII was overwhelmingly Polish, Roman-Catholic and fervently supporting the nation. Polish "stateness", Linz and Stepan concluded, "was a source of nationalist antagonism against the Soviet hegemon and provided a deep reservoir of sources of resistance."<sup>55</sup> Archie Brown and Gordon Wightman claimed with regards to Czechoslovakia that it was the survival of the Czech pluralist tradition's values in the minds and hearts of the people that prevented the successful implementation of a totalitarian communist political culture.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Jürgen Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship in Modern German History* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2010), 53.

<sup>54</sup> Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, 'Authoritarian Communism, Ethical Civil Society, and Ambivalent Political Society: Poland' in: *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe*. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 255-292.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 259.

<sup>56</sup> Archie Brown and Gordon Wightman, 'Czechoslovakia: Revival and Retreat' in: Archie Brown and Jack Gray (eds.), *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States* (London: MacMillan, 1977), 172-173. A similar argument was put forward by Zdeněk Mlynář, who claimed that the Communist regime was unable to destroy the values of Masaryk and the First Czechoslovak Republic.

### 1.2.3. Interpretations of the Kádár regime

There exist two distinct approaches to post-1947 (or, in some cases, post-1945) Hungarian history. There are some who view the communist period as an unnecessarily dictatorial, yet integral part of Hungarian history on the road to modernization, while others, mainly among those who adhere to a more national-conservative political worldview, consider it as an alien, mismatching element.<sup>57</sup> This latter approach can be considered as the parallel of Western concepts which treated Soviet communism as a historical aberration.<sup>58</sup>

Both Western and Hungarian mainstream literature tends to describe the country's experience of 'real socialism' in a few distinct periods. According to this conventional periodization, Hungary underwent a totalitarian Stalinist period (1948-1953), a few years of reform that led to a popular uprising (1953-1956), a communist counter-revolution (1956-1960/1962), and a prolonged detotalitarization or reform with some setbacks afterwards (1961/1963-1989).<sup>59</sup>

Many authors, just like in the case of other Eastern European communist establishments, defined the Kádár regime as a variation of the Soviet model. Perhaps the most extreme version of this position maintains that after having regained control following the 1956 revolution, Kádár began to "liberalize Hungary... [and] quietly

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See: Zdeněk Mlynář, *Night-frost in Prague. The End of Humane Socialism* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1980).

<sup>57</sup> Balázs Trencsényi and Péter Apor, 'Fine-Tuning the Polyphonic Past: Hungarian Historical Writing in the 1990s' in: Sorin Antohi, Balázs Trencsényi and Péter Apor (eds.), *Narratives Unbound. Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2007), 50-55.

<sup>58</sup> See for example: Robert Conquest, 'Academe and the Soviet Myth' in: *The National Interest*, Spring 1993, 93 for the presentation of Soviet modernization as an extreme "deviation" from "normal history".

<sup>59</sup> Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, 'Varieties of Post-Totalitarian Regimes: Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria' in: *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe*. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 296-301. Rudolf L. Tokes identified the periods of Kádár's rule similarly, but with rather graphic labels as "the reluctant hostage" (1956-1962), the "risk-taking reformer" (1963-1971), the "good king" (1972-1980), and the "enfeebled autarch" (1981-1988). See: Rudolf L. Tokes, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution: Economic Reform, Social Change, and Political Succession, 1957-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).



moved Hungary further and further away from the Soviet model.”<sup>60</sup> With respect to policy formation and the evaluation of the degree of dependence from Moscow, a number of authors who made early contributions to the field of study of Hungarian communism such as Benneth Kovrig, Ferenc Fejtő and Charles Gáti, stated that to assure reformist domestic policies, Kádár followed the Soviet Union in foreign policies in every respect.<sup>61</sup> In a similar vein, Barbara J. Falk stated that “Kádár legitimized his rule... by removing politics and the obtrusive nature of the party from people’s daily lives” and thus “the perception of liberal and open society could be cultivated.” The price of this withdrawal was “adherence to the Moscow line in foreign affairs.”<sup>62</sup> Csaba Békés on the other hand argued that certain independent aspirations in Hungarian foreign policies can be detected as early as the mid-1950s.<sup>63</sup>

However, even advocates of Soviet determinism pointed out that the Hungarian revolution of 1956 affected the Kremlin’s policies inasmuch as the Soviet leadership drew conclusions from the revolt and treated Hungary with a certain amount of tolerance afterwards.<sup>64</sup> László Kontler maintained that the essence of Kádár’s leadership was that he “retained some freedom of movement at the expense of refraining from meddling with fundamental dogmas.”<sup>65</sup> William Shawcross however, opined that Hungary’s more liberal policies had little to do with Kádár himself or his political principles. Shawcross stated that “[a]ll improvements that Kadar [sic!] has

<sup>60</sup> Leslie Holmes, *Politics in the Communist World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 296.

<sup>61</sup> Bennet Kovrig, *Communism in Hungary. From Kun to Kádár*. (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1979); Ferenc Fejtő, *A History of the People's Democracies: Eastern Europe Since Stalin* (New York: Praeger, 1971); Charles Gati, *Hungary and the Soviet bloc* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 1986).

<sup>62</sup> Barbara J. Falk, *Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe* (New York, N.Y.: CEU Press, 2003), 113.

<sup>63</sup> Csaba Békés (ed.), *Evolúció és Revolúció. Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika 1956-ban* [Evolution and Revolution. Hungary and International Politics in 1956] (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet-Gondolat, 2007), 7-30.

<sup>64</sup> János Rainer M., *Bevezetés a Kádárizmusba* [Introduction to Kádárism] (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet-L'Harmattan, 2011), 17-18.

<sup>65</sup> László Kontler, *Millenium in Central Europe. A History of Hungary* (Budapest: Atlantis Publishing House, 1999), 430.

made in Hungary, he has made slowly, cautiously, each time with Soviet approval, never despite his comrades in the Kremlin.”<sup>66</sup>

That the period of János Kádár’s reign is a distinct phase of Hungarian history is a mostly settled fact in historiography, though the exact starting and end points of the Kádár era (*Kádár-korszak*) are debated. The period covered by the dissertation, from the establishment of the Kádár regime in 1956 until the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and its immediate aftermath, has been described in historiography largely as a clear trajectory from a dictatorial establishment to a (at least economically) reformed authoritarian system.<sup>67</sup>

The first few years following the revolution were dominated by counterrevolutionary terror whose “atrocities and judicial murders were no less brutal and vicious than those in Rákosi’s time.”<sup>68</sup> In general, they were defined by the re-nationalization of Hungarian economy and society, cultural orthodoxy, the re-establishment of the hierarchy of power and the rebuilding of the Party with mostly members of the old Rákosi-elite. András Bozóki and Eszter Simon argued that there was no difference between the totalitarianism of Rákosi and Kádár between 1948 and

<sup>66</sup> William Shawcross, *Crime and Compromise. Janos Kadar and the Politics of Hungary Since Revolution* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc, 1974), 274.

<sup>67</sup> See for example: Mihály Bihari, *Magyar politika 1944-2004. Politikai és hatalmi viszonyok*. [Hungarian politics 1944-2004. Political and Power structures] (Budapest: Osiris, 2005), 237-244. Tibor Huszár, ‘A hatalmi gépezet újjáépítése, a represszió túlsúlya, a kiigazítás esélye; 1956-1960’ [The rebuilding of the power structure, the domination of repression, the chance of correction; 1956-1960] in: Tibor Huszár and János Szabó (eds.), *Restauráció vagy kiigazítás. A kádári represszió intézményesülése 1956-1962*. (Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 1999), 67-146. Miklós Molnár, *De Béla Kun a János Kádár. Soixante-dix ans de Communisme Hongrois*. [From Béla Kun to János Kádár. Seventy Years of Hungarian Communism.] (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques Institut Universitaire de Hautes Études Internationales, 1987); János M. Rainer, *Magyarország története. A Kádár-korszak 1956-1989*. [The History of Hungary. The Kádár era 1956-1989.] (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 2010).

<sup>68</sup> Péter Hanák and Joseph Held, ‘Hungary on a Fixed Course: An Outline of Hungarian History’ in: Joseph Held (ed.), *The Columbia History of Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 222. János Rainer distinguishes the period 1956-1959 from the following years, considering the end of the post-revolutionary executions as the most important turning point. See: János M. Rainer, ‘”Helyezkedés” a csúcson. Kádár János néhány boldog éve.’ [“Jockeying” on the top. The few happy years of János Kádár.] In: János M. Rainer, *Ötvenhat után* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2003), 73-91.

1962. This totalitarianism was characterized by totalitarian propaganda, the arbitrary powers of the secret police and terror.<sup>69</sup>

The next sub-period of the Kádár regime in historiography is usually placed between 1962 and 1974.<sup>70</sup> As Árpád Tyekvicska put it, “Kádárist policies have come to the end of consolidation, they have finished ‘laying the foundations of socialism’, and have finally given up the campaigns to change society, considering the class-structures formed by collectivization permanent.”<sup>71</sup> Rudolf L. Tőkés described these years as the era of perceived political stability, characterized by “the absence of overt conflicts between the people and the regime”.<sup>72</sup>

Economic historian Iván T. Berend identified a main historical turning point at the end of the 1960s. He argued that the economic basis for this transformation was the technical regime-change which finally emerged as a structural crisis in the 1970s. A new technology, new economic structure and new employment patterns characterized the next period.<sup>73</sup> Joseph Held argued that the regime grew desperate for legitimacy by 1968, thus it introduced economic reforms which brought about a much needed economic prosperity and easing of state control. Some criticism of lower party officials was permitted for the press. It was then that the “happiest barrack in the socialist camp” was born, and “Kádár was gradually accepted as the architect of a

<sup>69</sup> András Bozóki and Eszter Simon, ‘Hungary Since 1989’ in: Sabrina P. Ramet (ed.) *Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 207.

<sup>70</sup> See for example: Bennet Kovrig, *Communism in Hungary. From Kun to Kádár*. (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1979.), 350-357. Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary’s negotiated revolution. Economic reform, social change and political succession*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 25.

<sup>71</sup> Árpád Tyekvicska, ‘Évesszé (1962)’ [Essay of the Year (1962).] in: Sándor Révész (ed.), *Beszélő évek 1957-1968. A Kádár-korszak története*. (Budapest: A Beszélő politikai és kulturális folyóirat Kiadása, 2000.)

<sup>72</sup> Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary’s Negotiated Revolution. Economic Reform, Social Change and Political Succession*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11.

<sup>73</sup> Iván T. Berend, ‘Problémák és megközelítések felszabadulás utáni történelmünkben’ [Problems and approaches in our post-liberation history] in: *Társadalmi Szemle*, Vol. XLIV, No. 8-9 (August-September, 1989), 5-12. Also: Mihály Bihari, *Magyar politika 1944-2004. Politikai és hatalmi viszonyok*. [Hungarian politics 1944-2004. Political and Power relations] (Budapest: Osiris, 2005), 300.

better life.”<sup>74</sup> The reform years continued until 1972. György Földes on the other hand identified a very different turning point in 1968 claiming that, with Hungarian participation in the military invasion of Czechoslovakia, all the hopes for democratization were crushed.<sup>75</sup> Though the country continued to be perceived on an upward trajectory from an economic point of view, the impossibility to reform of ‘real socialism’ became indisputable.

The dissertation approaches the above concepts critically. The problem with such periodizations is that they consider Kádárist policies in isolation, and reflect too little on developments in other countries of the bloc (and sometimes even in the Soviet Union). But such factors cannot be underestimated given the frequency and intensity of bloc consultations on internal and external issues alike. On the other hand, theories that describe Eastern European communist regimes as completely dependent on the Soviet model and decision-making neglect significant local historic, ideological and socio-economic peculiarities. Furthermore, it is highly questionable whether any political or historical model describing a superpower would fit countries much smaller in size, population and influence. Therefore, the dissertation treats both the ‘upward’ trajectory interpretation of the 1960s, as well as the Soviet parallel critically.

An adequate social scientific model to describe policy formation should be one that recognizes and conceptualizes the coexistence of competing organizing and operational principles of sociopolitical reality. Though the complex ideological-political structure was originally imposed on Hungarian and other Eastern European societies in a totalizing way, its adaptability to local socio-economic circumstances, as

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<sup>74</sup> Péter Hanák and Joseph Held, ‘Hungary on a Fixed Course: An Outline of Hungarian History’ in: Joseph Held (ed.), *The Columbia History of Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 223.

<sup>75</sup> György Földes, ‘A Kádár-korszak jellegzetességei’ [Characteristics of the Kádár-era] in: Levente Püski and Tibor Valuch (eds.), *Mérlegen a XX. századi magyar történelem – értelmezések és értékelések*. (Debrecen: 1956-os Intézet – Debreceni Egyetem Történelmi Intézet Új- és Legújabbkori Magyar Történelmi Tanszéke, 2002), 229-244.

well as domestic and international political developments, was limited. In the short term, these fallacies and contradictions could be overcome by coercive methods. In the long run, however, the undercurrents of nation-specific social, political and economic trends were bound to erode the system. I therefore argue that the differences between Eastern European communist regimes occurred as a result of the different effects of these various country-specific attributes, which the leaderships always tried to balance with systemic features dictated (or perceived to be dictated) from Moscow. Therefore, political decisions and bureaucratic, ideological or structural changes that occurred in the Soviet Union in any given period cannot be statically and deterministically applied to other countries of the bloc. Similarly, changes in any one given country should not be examined in isolation, but on a comparative basis with other countries of the Soviet influence zone to determine national peculiarities. The dissertation examines the specific area of policies related to Jewish issues, applying this approach.

#### **1.2.4. The State of the Art: Jews under Communism**

When scholars examine the relationship between Communism and the Jews, the often-cited starting point is Karl Marx's early essay entitled 'On the Jewish Question'. This piece has frequently served as an example to argue for the existence of antisemitism inherent in Marxist thought.<sup>76</sup> However, most students of the subject viewed the problem as something more complex than a flaw in ideology.

A lot of research that examined the relationship between communist regimes and the Jewish population focused on antisemitism. William Korey stressed the

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<sup>76</sup> See for example: Emil Ludwig Fackenheim, *God's Presence in History* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 57; D.D. Runes, *A World Without Jews* (New York: Philosophic Library, 1959); Edmund Silberner: 'Was Marx an anti-Semite?' in: Ezra Mendelsohn (ed.), *Essential Papers on Jews and the Left* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 361-401.

persistence of popular antisemitic prejudices that defined Soviet policies towards Jews.<sup>77</sup> Authors such as Robert Wistrich and Alfred D. Low argued that antisemitism was a direct continuation of 19th century nationalisms that Communism was unable to repress.<sup>78</sup> Peter Kenez suggested that it was the antisemitic identification of Communism with Jews that “forced” communist politicians to prove that their measures did not favour Jews, or serve the interests of the Jewish population.<sup>79</sup>

Stephen J. Roth on the other hand found the explanation precisely in the anti-Zionist predisposition of Leninist doctrine that was later expanded and used as a political tool.<sup>80</sup> Other authors thought of antisemitism as a means of totalitarian control. Robert C. Tucker argued that official antisemitism in the USSR after 1946 was “the regime’s way of endeavoring to divert the popular resentment of a life lived in a maze of controls.”<sup>81</sup> Yet others opined that official antisemitism was precisely the sign of the limits of totalitarian control. The regimes had to “defer to preexisting social commitments” such as ethnic or religious cleavages (including antisemitism) within the population in order to ensure political control.<sup>82</sup>

Works focusing on antisemitism during the communist period in Hungary stressed the pragmatic aspects of anti-Jewish discrimination. Éva Ständeisky, writing about the political antisemitism of the Rákosi period, argued that “[t]he relationship of the communist party’s leaders to antisemitism was formed by everyday political

<sup>77</sup> William Korey, *The Soviet Cage. Anti-semitism in Russia* (New York: The Viking Press, 1973).

<sup>78</sup> Robert S. Wistrich, *Antisemitism: the longest hatred* (London: Thames Methuen, 1991); Alfred D. Low, *Soviet Jewry and Soviet Policy* (New York: East European Monographs, 1990); Walter Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Antisemitism: from Ancient Times to the Present Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Robert Chazan, *Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Antisemitism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1997).

<sup>79</sup> Peter Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 157.

<sup>80</sup> Stephen J. Roth, ‘Anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism in the USSR’ in: Jacob M. Kelman (ed.), *Anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. Its Roots and Consequences*. (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1980), 30-39.

<sup>81</sup> Robert C. Tucker, *The Soviet Political Mind. Stalinism and Post-Stalin Change* (New York, NY.: W.W. Norton & Company inc, 1971), 188.

<sup>82</sup> Chalmers Johnson, ‘Comparing Communist Nations’ in: Chalmers Johnson (ed.), *Change in Communist Systems* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1970), 30.

interests.”<sup>83</sup> Viktor Karády identified various influences behind anti-Jewish discrimination of the Rákosi era, including the need to follow Moscow’s “anti-Zionist” line, “anti-bourgeois” agitation which hit the predominantly urban upper-middle class Jewry disproportionately, anti-religious measures, and the intention to counter the stereotype of Jewish Communism.<sup>84</sup>

Opinions on political antisemitism during the Kádár era are less straightforward. In one of the earlier publications, Paul Lendvai contrasted the Hungarian regime’s attitude to that of other countries of the bloc (especially Poland) and claimed that “both foreign observers and Jewish residents agree that in this respect Communist Hungary’s record between 1956 and 1969 is unblemished.”<sup>85</sup> Róbert Győri Szabó also acquitted Kádárism in the 1960s from the accusation of political antisemitism in the strict sense (and compared to Poland and the Soviet Union), arguing that anti-Zionism in Hungary really only meant an opposition to Zionist ideas and did not encompass antisemitic instigation.<sup>86</sup> Ferenc Fehér on the other hand offered a less flattering account. In the manner of Khrushchevist pragmatism, Fehér argued, the Kádár regime’s position regarding Jewish issues meant parallel yet contradictory tendencies. The support for Leninist philosemitism was accompanied by the implicit employment of an unwritten *numerus clausus* in politics and the opposition to debate about the whole complex of the so-called ‘Jewish Question’.<sup>87</sup> Thus, he pointed at both ideological and pragmatic political factors. Robert Wistrich presented a similar

<sup>83</sup> Éva Ständeisky, ‘A kommunisták politikai antiszemitizmusa (1945-1957)’ [The political antisemitism of communists (1945-1957)] in: *Századvég*, Vol. 44, No.2 (2007), 3.

<sup>84</sup> Viktor Karády, ‘A magyarországi antiszemitizmus. Kísérlet egy történeti kérdéskör megközelítésére’ [Antisemitism in Hungary. An attempt to approach a historic problem] in: *Régió*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1991)

<sup>85</sup> Paul Lendvai, *Anti-semitism without Jews* (New York: Doubleday and Company Inc, 1971), 302.

<sup>86</sup> Róbert Győri Szabó, ‘Zsidóság és kommunizmus a Kádár korszakban’ [Jews and communism in the Kádár era] in: *Valóság*, Vol. 51, no. 12 (December, 2008). Available at:

<http://www.valosagonline.hu/index.php?oldal=cikk&cazon=1044&lap=0>

[Retrieved: December 2, 2012.]

<sup>87</sup> Ferenc Fehér, ‘Bibó István és a zsidókérdés Magyarországon’ [István Bibó and the Jewish question in Hungary] in: *Holmi*, June 1991, 719–741.

position as Fehér's, though instead of the term 'Khrushchevist', he argued that Kádárist policies were "balanced"<sup>88</sup>. András Kovács conquered with Wistrich by also arguing that the apparent lack of Jewish matters on the surface did not mean that antisemitism was non-existent. Kovács saw the reason for these policies in the Kádárist leadership's fear of any conflict which could have caused social disturbance, and upset the unity of the Party."<sup>89</sup>

The examination of the wide array of state policies towards Jewish issues based on official Party and state documents of the communist period is a recent trend and has produced an uneven amount of studies about Eastern European regimes. Perhaps the most well documented countries are the Soviet Union, Poland and East Germany. Yaacov Ro'i and his research team have processed and published documents relating to Soviet-Israeli foreign relations<sup>90</sup> and the Six-Day War.<sup>91</sup> In their studies of the Polish antisemitic campaigns of 1968, Anat Plocker and Dariusz Stola respectively emphasized the role that real (though completely distorted) ideological fear of Zionism played in the worldview of Polish authorities,<sup>92</sup> and the versatility of antisemitism (thinly disguised as anti-Zionism) as a policy device.<sup>93</sup> With regards to the German Democratic Republic, the late Lothar Mertens wrote the first comprehensive, archive-based history of the party state's policies towards Jewish

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<sup>88</sup> Robert S. Wistrich, *Antisemitism*, 152.

<sup>89</sup> András Kovács, 'Hungarian Jewish Politics from the End of the Second World War until the Collapse of Communism' in: Ezra Mendelsohn (ed.), *Jews and the State: Dangerous Alliances and the Perils of Privilege* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 124-154.

<sup>90</sup> Yaacov Ro'i, *From Encroachment to Involvement. A documentary study of Soviet policy in the Middle East, 1945-1973*. (New York, Toronto: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), Gabriel Gorodetsky et al. (eds.), *Documents on Israeli Soviet Relations 1941-1953* (London: Frank Cass, 2000).

<sup>91</sup> Yaacov Ro'i and Boris Morozov (eds.). *The Soviet Union and the June 1967 Six Day War*. (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

<sup>92</sup> Anat Plocker, *Zionists to Dayan. The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland 1967-1968* (Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest, 2009).

<sup>93</sup> Dariusz Stola, 'Anti-Zionism as a Multipurpose Policy Instrument: The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland, 1967-1968' in: *The Journal of Israeli History*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (March, 2006), 175-201.



religious communities<sup>94</sup> and later, Angelika Timm has published on anti-Zionism.<sup>95</sup> A few publications are available in English about Czechoslovak<sup>96</sup> and Bulgarian<sup>97</sup> policy-making regarding Jewish issues.

András Kovács, in the *Jewish Studies at the Central European University* series, has published and interpreted a number of archival documents that provide insight into certain Jewish issues (such as emigration), and episodes (such as the Eichmann trial and the Six-Day War) that illustrate the complexity of policy formation during the Kádár era. Éva Ständeisky, making good use of documents from the security archives, has mostly focused on antisemitism among the intelligentsia during the 1960s,<sup>98</sup> though she has touched upon ways the regime's policies connected to these<sup>99</sup> as well. Krisztián Ungváry's<sup>100</sup> and Tamás Szőnyi's<sup>101</sup> documentary histories of the Hungarian security services also offer some insight into the handling of Jewish issues within the power-structure.

This dissertation continues this recent trend in historiography. I base my findings on the critical reading and analysis of Party debates, documents and propaganda

<sup>94</sup> Lothar Mertens, *Davidstern unter Hammer und Zirkel. Die jüdischen Gemeinden in der SBZ/DDR und ihre Behandlung durch Partei und Staat 1945–1990*. [The Star of David under Hammer and Sickle. The Jewish Communities in the GDR and their Handling by Party and State. 1945-1990] (Olms: Hildesheim, 1997).

<sup>95</sup> Angelika Timm, 'Ideology and Realpolitik: East German Attitudes towards Zionism and Israel' in: *Journal of Israeli History*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (March, 2006), 203-222.

<sup>96</sup> Marie Crhová, 'Israel in the foreign and internal politics of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in the 1960s and beyond' in: András Kovács and Michael Miller (eds.), *Jewish Studies at the CEU IV*. (2004-2005) (Budapest: CEU, 2005).

<sup>97</sup> Jordan Baev, 'Eastern Europe and the Six Day War: The Case of Bulgaria' in: Yaacov Ro'i and Boris Morozov (eds.), *The Soviet Union and the June 1967 Six Day War*. (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

<sup>98</sup> Éva Ständeisky, *Az írók és a hatalom 1956-1963* [The Writers and the Regime 1956-1963]. (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1996); 'Értelmiségi antiszemitizmus a Kádár korszakban' [The antisemitism of intellectuals during the Kádár era] in: Zsuzsanna Körösi, Éva Ständeisky, János Rainer M. (eds.): *Évkönyv VIII-2000* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2000), 26-39; *Gúzsba kötve. A kulturális elit és a hatalom* [Tied down. The cultural elite and the power centre] (Budapest: 1956os Intézet, 2005).

<sup>99</sup> Éva Ständeisky, *Antiszemitizmusok* [Antisemitisms] (Budapest: Argumentum, 2007),

<sup>100</sup> Krisztián Ungváry and Gábor Tabajdi, *Elhallgatott múlt. A pártállam és a belügy. A politikai rendőrség működése Magyarországon 1956–1990* [The silenced past. The party state and the Ministry of the Interior. The operation of the political police in Hungary 1956-1990] (Budapest: Corvina, 2008).

<sup>101</sup> Tamás Szőnyi, *Titkos írás. Állambiztonsági szolgálat és irodalmi élet 1956-1990 Vol. I-II*. [Secret script. State security services and literary life 1956-1990] (Budapest: Noran, 2012).

materials. However, the study also goes further than previous research in that it also substantiates its findings by applying a comparative perspective, however asymmetrical. I do not confine the examination of state policies towards Jewish issues to manifestations of antisemitism, though that topic indeed makes frequent appearance in the text. Rather, I concentrate on the formation of the Kádár regime's attitude to Jewish issues understood in the broadest possible sense, by examining the main forums of decision-making and the group dynamics and individual contributions that constituted them.

To achieve a multidimensional depiction of the topic, I use several groups of primary sources. My main bases for the investigation are archival records from various Hungarian and Israeli archives. The former include the Hungarian National Archives, the Open Society Archives, the Historical Archives of the State Security Services, and the Institute of Political History. The latter include the Israel State Archives and the Central Zionist Archives. The archival records I consult are mainly official records of the meetings of the governing state bodies such the Politburo and the Central Committee. Furthermore, I use the analyses, reports and correspondence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Agitation and Propaganda, the Scientific and Cultural Department, and the Office of Church Affairs (which was responsible for policies towards the Jewish religious community in Hungary). To get further insight into the inner working logic of the apparatus, I draw on various agent reports from the Ministry of the Interior. Among the Israeli sources, I consult the collections of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the Israel State Archives, and the materials of the World Jewish Congress at the Central Zionist Archives. Besides archival records, I use publications and media materials such as newspaper articles, and radio and television program transcripts to assess propaganda techniques. These

official records are substituted with personal recollections, memoirs, correspondence and even literary works, all of which help enrich our understanding of the direct human effect of state policies. Records of Radio Free Europe proved to be useful tools to assess the effects of state policies both on Western observers and local populations.

### **1.3. Structure of the dissertation, limitations**

The first chapter of this dissertation reviews the establishment of Hungary's Kádár regime between 1956 and 1960. It demonstrates that Kádár's leadership manipulated Jewish issues in order to establish its "counterrevolutionary" narrative to explain the events of 1956, and reinstate party control over the country.

The second chapter examines the reception and press coverage of the 1961-62 Adolf Eichmann trial by the Eastern Bloc. Communist states tried to use the trial for their own propaganda reasons both as a bloc and on the level of individual states. It will be shown that, while communist propaganda attempted to relativize the importance of Jewish victimhood during WWII, this goal was not realized with much success in Hungary.

Chapter three describes the Kádár regime's consolidation period (1960-1967) when the state loosened its grip over both the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party and the population in general. This relaxation of control created space within the party for ingrained antisemitism to resurface. The chapter demonstrates the ways this antisemitism was manipulated by Kádár to reinforce his position as Party leader. Furthermore, increased openness to the West, combined with the Soviet Union's pro-Arab policies in the Middle East, had the effect of raising Hungarian concerns about internal and external enemies, including the (rather arbitrarily applied) category of Zionists.

In Chapter four, the 1967 Six Day War is used to investigate intra-bloc relations and Moscow's influence on communist foreign policy formation. Despite appearances, the bloc countries were far from unified about which steps to take during and after the Middle-East crisis with regards to relations with Arab countries and Israel. On the surface, Hungary closely adhered to Moscow's foreign policy line, but as will be shown, the Kádár regime prioritized its own best interest whenever possible. The chapter also explains why the Hungarian state opted not to launch an anti-Zionist campaign following the war like Poland and the Soviet Union did.

Chapter five illustrates how the spring 1968 student protests in Poland and the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia later that year impacted Hungarian state policies regarding Jewish issues. The chapter explains not only why the Kádár regime decided against launching an antisemitic campaign similar to the ones in Poland, East Germany and the Soviet Union, but also why the Hungarian state actively tried to prevent this trend from reaching Hungary.

The final chapter brings together the events covered throughout the dissertation in order to draw broader conclusions from the work, and to highlight possible contemporary implications of Kádárist policies on Jewish issues and Hungarian antisemitism.

There are limitations of the dissertation that should be addressed here. The research concentrated on the decision-making process in the highest levels of the Party and bureaucratic apparatus. I did not examine, in a comprehensive way, the mechanisms of the execution of policies on local levels, nor did I thoroughly investigate the personal perceptions of the policies among those affected. While these are certainly worthy subjects of research, to do so would have gone further than what the scope of the present study would permit. Last but not least, I did not always

authoritatively determine who among the actors presented self-identified as Jewish. Throughout the paper, I strictly followed the definitions and indications of the regime about Jewish identities because (as mentioned) the research was primarily concerned with the content of these notions, rather than the personal experience of those affected. Therefore, I did not pass judgements on whether these definitions were correct or warranted.

## 2. The establishment of the Kádár regime and policies towards Jewish issues (1956-1960)

1956 turned out to be a turbulent year in the Soviet bloc. On February 25, First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) Nikita Khrushchev delivered his report on the cult of personality during Stalin's reign at the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress. The revelations about the nature of the Stalin years and the slow modifications introduced in the Soviet system, known as de-Stalinization, triggered changes in other countries of the bloc as well.

The sudden death of Bolesław Bierut, Polish Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP), while he was at the above Congress only accelerated the political fermentation that had been going on in Poland since Stalin's death.<sup>1</sup> A large-scale amnesty in April was followed by a thorough purge of the security apparatus. However, the violent riots of industrial workers in Poznań in June expressed the public's continued frustration and "exposed the need for radical change."<sup>2</sup> Internal divisions paralysed the PUWP and eventually, a change in the leadership was carried out in October to save the Polish regime from disintegration, or Soviet military intervention. Hungary experienced a similar process of political ferment, but with a dramatically different outcome.

Events that started in Budapest on October 23, 1956 as a peaceful demonstration to express sympathy towards the Polish workers who had risen in Poznań ended in a popular uprising and bloodshed. The revolution became increasingly anti-communist, and the Soviet leadership eventually decided to use military force to prevent Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and the possible dissolution of the

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<sup>1</sup> Jaff Schatz, *The Generation. The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Communists of Poland* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), 266-267.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 267.

Eastern bloc. On November 4, 1956 Red Army troops marched into Budapest, the reform communist government that had stood on the side of the revolution found temporary refuge at the Yugoslav Embassy but later some of its members including Prime Minister Imre Nagy were arrested and executed. János Kádár, himself a former member of the Nagy government, was instated into power while the units of the Red Army stayed in Hungary until 1991.

At the outset, the Kádár government was both domestically and internationally isolated, and order was only maintained by the Soviet troops stationed in the country. Though the communist political structure was restored with brutal force, the popular upheaval proved that the way the regime had operated between 1948 and 1953, was untenable. The Kádár administration was compelled to introduce some necessary changes in political practice, even though the Stalinist power-structure remained fundamentally intact. Considering this background, the chapter investigates how Jewish issues became connected to the regime's ambiguous attempts to gain firm political control while appeasing a hostile population.

## **2.1. Interpretation of the October events and antisemitism**

One of the first tasks of the Kádár regime was to establish at least some resemblance of legitimacy both in the eyes of international audiences and its Hungarian subjects. The new administration's version of the October events sought to serve this purpose. With respect to antisemitism, there are two noteworthy elements in the narrative of 1956 that appeared during the initial period of Kádár's tenure. First, official propaganda did not adopt the use of antisemitism to discredit the Hungarian Stalinist leadership. Second, it also refused to resolutely condemn and prosecute

incidents of popular anti-communist antisemitism that had occurred during the revolution.

The first policy is most obvious when contrasted with the Polish case. In Poland, intra-Party tensions led to a resurgence of antisemitic attacks against the Stalinist leadership. There, just like in Hungary, the previous administration was dominated by communists of Jewish origin who had spent the war years in Moscow. When it became clear that Moscow was permanently altering the Stalinist line, there emerged two concepts to reform Communism. The so-called *Puławy* faction sought to introduce a program of far-reaching liberalization<sup>3</sup> while the members of the *Natolin* group identified as ‘fighters’ and ‘patriots,’ and “were reputed to be... more practical-minded, more willing to discover a “Polish road to socialism.”<sup>4</sup> As home-bred communists were in overwhelming majority among the *Natolinians*, they repeatedly used the argument that the rival *Puławy* faction, because of the prominence of Jews and Muscovites among its lines, was not fit to represent the Polish people. A Polish Jewish refugee, Meier Melman described in a short memoir that the home-bred Communists

argued that while they fought underground, others sat in Moscow under Stalin’s wing and played politics, and later returned and liberated Poland and took over complete power. The ‘others,’ however, were always associated with Communists of Jewish origin.<sup>5</sup>

The appointment of Władisław Gomułka as First Secretary meant the triumph of home-bred Communists and the *Natolin* faction remained in the Party as a powerful segment, legitimizing antisemitic slogans.

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<sup>3</sup> Schatz, *The Generation*, 268.

<sup>4</sup> Michael C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead. Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 65.

<sup>5</sup> Meier Melman, ‘Why We Left Poland’ in: Itche Goldberg and Yuri Suhl (eds.), *The End of a Thousand Years. The Recent Exodus of the Jews from Poland* (New York: Committee for Jews of Poland, 1971), 7.



In Hungary, however, the representatives of a Hungarian national road to Communism were suppressed by the Kádár regime, which did not define itself along the Polish-style ‘national’ and ‘cosmopolitan’ divisions, but carved its place between ‘reformers’ and ‘dogmatists’ (both of whom were presented as being at fault for the popular upheaval). While publicly condemning Rákosi and his entourage, Kádár refused to attribute their mistakes to their Jewish origins. In fact, the new regime made no references to the overrepresentation of Jews among the Stalinist leadership in Hungary. The thought association which connected the Rákosi leadership’s mistakes to the leading communist functionaries’ Jewish origins was closer to the national Communism advocated by Imre Nagy. His reformist political line used elements of the language of Hungarian nationalism as the basis for their more liberal policy ideas both prior to and during the events in October. Nagy himself, in his notes written in Romanian captivity in 1957, harshly condemned Mátyás Rákosi and József Révai, arguing that they could not represent Hungarian national interests, much less become true Hungarian leaders because of their Jewish origins.<sup>6</sup> Had Kádár’s propaganda made similar arguments, it could have inadvertently bolstered the prestige of Nagy and his version of reformed Communism.

Although specific incidents of popular antisemitism during the events in October were not wholly ignored, the Kádár regime tried to minimize the connections between antisemitism and anti-Communism for fear that the reiteration of this link would reinforce the association of Communism with Jews. The White Book (*Fehér Könyv*), published by the Information Bureau of the Council of Ministers of the Hungarian People’s Republic (*Magyar Népköztársaság Minisztertanácsának Tájékoztatási Hivatala*) was the synthesis of the Party’s 1956 narrative. It contained a chapter on

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<sup>6</sup> István Vida (ed.) *Nagy Imre: Snagovi jegyzetek - Gondolatok, emlékezések 1956-1957* [Imre Nagy: Notes from Snagov. Thoughts, memories 1956-1957]. (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 2006), 93-94.

‘Antisemitic incidents and anti-Jewish atrocities in the course of the Hungarian counterrevolution’, which listed twenty-four such occurrences.<sup>7</sup> Among these were attacks against religious Jews, but also examples of popular antisemitism which equated Jews with communists. However, when describing the latter incidents, the link between popular antisemitism and anti-Communism was not explicitly named. One Jewish teacher from Hajdúnánás was quoted saying, “[m]y wife was also brutally beaten up so that we were both taken to the county hospital in Debrecen. I would like to point out that we are both religious Jews, we have never been members of any political party.”<sup>8</sup> The statement makes little sense unless the reader understands that the victim believed that his Jewishness made him suspect of communist party membership in the eyes of his attackers. The text, however, does not address this connection explicitly, suggesting a conscious decision to minimize attention to this link. The publication also quoted a “counterrevolutionary” speaker in Tarcál, who called on his audience to “get rid of these bloodsuckers who are feeding off your blood. Hang every Jew!”<sup>9</sup> Such a demand during an anti-communist uprising displays a mental connection between communist leaders and Jews. The reference was made arguably to the Hungarian Stalinist leadership, in which the four most powerful politicians (Mátyás Rákosi, Ernő Gerő, Mihály Farkas and József Révai) were of Jewish origin. Yet, the text of the ‘White Book’ does not provide this important context for the exclamation made in Tarcál.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ellenforradalmi erők a magyar októberi eseményekben* [Counter-revolutionary Forces in the Events of October in Hungary], (Budapest: Magyar Népköztársaság Tájékoztatói Hivatala, 1957), Vol. IV., 70-78.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

According to the narrative of official publications that appeared in Hungary between 1957 and 1959<sup>10</sup>, the outbreak of the “counterrevolution” was linked to the infiltration of fascist elements from the West and the re-emergence of domestic Hungarian fascists from the Horthy-era and the Arrow Cross movement.<sup>11</sup> The masses were tricked by the “nationalist, chauvinist, and anti-Soviet” catchwords the clandestine fascists used in order to gain support. Antisemitism was enlisted as the device of the “counterrevolution”. The February 1957 ‘Resolution of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party with regards to Current Questions and Tasks’ referred to the October events as “counterrevolution” but attributed the actions of the population to a smaller group of provocateurs.<sup>12</sup> This minority of inimical elements

using the dissatisfaction of the masses caused by the previous party leadership’s mistakes, aimed at confusing the working masses’ class consciousness with chauvinist, nationalist, revisionist, antisemitic and other bourgeois counterrevolutionary ideas.<sup>13</sup>

The narrative about the ‘confused masses’ suggested that the regime was willing to forgive popular nationalism and antisemitism. The choice of words evoked the way Arrow Cross ‘small-fry’ were considered by the Hungarian Communist Party’s

<sup>10</sup> Based on the bibliography of the 1956 Hungarian revolution as compiled in András B. Hegedűs (ed.), *1956 Kézikönyve Vol.II. Bibliográfia* [The Handbook of 1956.], (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1996), the following analytical works appeared during the first three years of the Kádár era in Hungary. Betlen Oszkár (ed.), *Ellenforradalom Magyarországon, 1956*. [Counter-revolution in Hungary, 1956.] (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 1958); *Fontosabb adatok az 1956. október-decemberi időszakról* [Some Important Data about the Period between 1956 October – December] (Budapest: KSH, 1957); Nemes Dezső, ‘Népi demokráciánk fejlődése és az októberi ellenforradalom’ [The development of our people’s democracy and the October counter-revolution] in: *Párttörténeti Közlemények*, Vol. 3, No.1 (1957/1), 3-31; Henrik Vass, *A magyarországi 1956 októberi ellenforradalom történetének néhány kérdése* [A Few Questions of the History of the Hungarian Counter-revolution of 1956 October] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1957); Sándor Kokas, *Akik a nép mögé bújtak* [Those who Hid behind the People] (Budapest: Zrínyi Honvéd Kiadó, 1957); József Sólyom, *Széna téri banditák* [The Bandits of Széna Square] (Budapest : Kossuth Kiadó, 1958); József Sólyom – Ferenc Zele, *Harcban az ellenforradalommal* [Battling the counter-revolution] (Budapest : Móra Kiadó, 1957); Imre Szenes, *Az utolsó napjuk* [Their Final Day] (Budapest : Kossuth Kiadó, 1957).

<sup>11</sup> Heino Nyysönen, *The Presence of the Past in Politics. '1956' after 1956 in Hungary* (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä Printing House, 1999), 92-95.

<sup>12</sup> Kalmár Melinda, *Ennivaló és hozomány. A kora kádárizmus ideológiája* [Food and dowry. The ideology of early Kádárism] (Budapest: Magvető, 1998), 29.

<sup>13</sup> Hungarian National Archives (Henceforth: MOL) MOL, M-KS 288.5/4 Minutes of the meeting of the Temporary Executive Committee, November 23, 1956.

propaganda during the immediate post-war years, which advocated “generous forgiveness” to the “deceived masses.” And just as communist propaganda blamed “fascist provocation” for a pogrom in 1946,<sup>14</sup> so did the Kádárist narrative point at the same enemy in 1957 when explaining the eruption of the “counterrevolution”. To chastise the public for antisemitism would not have helped gain Kádár much public support and might have risked reinforcing the connection between Jews and Communism. By emphasizing the presence and threat of inimical agents, the Kádárist narrative justified the continued struggle against them and the need for the anti-fascist communist hold on power without criticizing the broader Hungarian population.

Kádár’s propaganda about the “counterrevolution” thus exhibited an ambiguous position towards antisemitic incidents during the popular upheaval. While official publications explicitly condemned expressions of antisemitism, they limited the group of perpetrators to “secret fascists” and “criminals.” Furthermore, while the Kádár regime’s propaganda did not use antisemitism to attack the previous (Stalinist) leadership—as was done in Poland—it nevertheless downplayed the link between antisemitism and anti-Communism during “counterrevolutionary” incidents. Behind these conflicting positions one can identify the regime’s ambition to not antagonize the Hungarian public, even though that included those who harboured antisemitic views conflicting with communist ideology. Furthermore, Kádár’s goal to differentiate himself from the reformist national Communism of Imre Nagy prevented his propaganda machine from using antisemitism to differentiate himself from Mátyás Rákosi.

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<sup>14</sup> On August 1, 1946, the steel workers of Miskolc, a rural industrial town in Northeast Hungary, set out to protest and free the prisoners who had been locked up for murder of two mill-owners of Jewish origin. During the attempt to free the prisoners, a Jewish police officer was captured and killed. The communists claimed that the incident was a “fascist provocation”. See: George Garai, *The Policy towards the Jews, Zionism, and Israel of the Hungarian Communist Party, 1945-1953* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, London School of Economics, 1979), 101.

The Kádár regime's ambiguous relationship to antisemitism can be demonstrated not only through the narrative of 1956, but also through Kádár's attempts to regain political control of the opinion-forming elites in the area of culture.

## 2.2. Selective retributions against the intelligentsia

After securing its power back in 1948, the party-state set out to restructure Hungarian cultural institutions according to the Soviet example. The nationalization included publishing houses, journals and also the formal organization of the writers, the Writers' Union (*Írószövetség*).<sup>15</sup> The Party could rely on those intellectuals who came from among the peasantry or the workers, because they owed their elevated social status to communist policies. But there were also many intellectuals from the urban upper-middle classes, among them many Jews, who supported the communist state out of conviction, or because they owed their lives to the Soviet troops that had arrived in 1945. However, many of these communist intellectuals who had, in the beginning, actively supported and served the Rákosi regime became disillusioned by the beginning of the 1950s.

This was so much so that before October 1956, many writers, poets and journalists played a pivotal role in bringing about the political ferment. During these months, Hungarian intelligentsia slowly emerged as a united front against the common enemy: Stalinist dictatorship. Even after Kádár took power, the Writers' Union displayed a remarkable unity in holding their ground in support of the revolution. Their manifesto

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<sup>15</sup> For a detailed description of the process see: Éva Ständeisky, 'Lánc-reakció: A magyar irodalmi élet szovjetizálása 1949 és 1951 között' [Chain-reaction: the Sovietization of Hungarian Literary Life between 1949 and 1951] in: *Gúzsba kötve: A kulturális elit és a hatalom* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet és Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára, 2005), 126-144.

issued in November 1956 protested Soviet military intervention.<sup>16</sup> Their December proclamation, ‘Trouble and Creed’ (*Gond és hitvallás*), embraced the goals and ideas of the revolution.<sup>17</sup>

The resolution of Kádár’s Politburo from July 1957 with regards to the ‘fight against internal reaction’ recognized the central role of intellectuals in 1956 when it claimed that the “coordinating centers of the counterrevolution” were the Writers’ and the Journalists’ Associations.<sup>18</sup> Thus, it became a priority for the new leadership to prevent similar processes in the future.<sup>19</sup> To this effect, the Kádár regime sought to revive historic divisions within Hungarian intelligentsia that dated back to the 1920s and evolved around questions of modernization and social inequalities. The polemic is known in Hungarian intellectual history as the “populist-urbanist debate”.

The former group consisted of writers, poets and other artists who were mostly concerned with, and took their inspiration from the everyday life of the poorer rural agrarian population of the country. By exposing the life of the peasantry, ‘populists’ also hoped to draw attention to the socio-political problems that this biggest social stratum of Hungarian society was facing. As ‘populist’ writers tended to equate the fate of the Hungarian nation with Hungarian peasantry, they consequently sought the replacement of the reigning political and cultural elite. In the socioeconomic context of interwar Hungary, this propagated rise of the poor peasantry and the redistribution of wealth (most importantly: land) logically connected to the stripping of Jews from the equal rights they had gained through emancipation. Though the ‘populist’ camp

<sup>16</sup> Tamás G. Korányi (ed.), *Egy népfelkelés dokumentumaiból, 1956* [From the documents of a popular revolt, 1956] (Budapest: Tudósítások, 1989), 147-148.

<sup>17</sup> Áron Tamási, ‘Gond és hitvallás’ [Trouble and Creed] in: *Literatura*, No. 16 (1989), 292–294.

<sup>18</sup> Ibolya Horváth, dr. et al (eds.), *Iratok az igazságszolgáltatás történetéhez* [Documents for the history of jurisdiction] Vol. 1. (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1992), 588.

<sup>19</sup> Kalmár, *Ennivaló és Hozomány*.

encompassed a wide array of political beliefs, many (or all<sup>20</sup>) of its adherents sympathised with antisemitism, to different degrees. The Kádár regime, in its attempt to regain control of the cultural field, actively manipulated the latent antisemitism and divisions within Hungarian intelligentsia.

### 2.2.1. Incarcerating reform-communists

A resolution of the Temporary Executive Committee (*Ideiglenes Intézőbizottság*) in December 1956 identified four causes of the October events, among them both the mistakes of the “Rákosi-Gerő faction” and the activities of the “Imre Nagy circle”.<sup>21</sup> This position signalled a shift towards the centre, and a two-front ideological struggle. However, it soon became clear that left and right-wing “deviation” did not weigh in equally. János Kádár expressed this in no uncertain terms during several meetings of the temporary Executive Committee.

What was the biggest danger [right after October 1956]? Clearly, the counterrevolution. When the Party will be strong, it will start getting rid of the bad old methods which are starting to revive today. But we now have to fight against the counterrevolution and its manifestations. The fight against the two dangers cannot be equal.<sup>22</sup>

He declared on one occasion.

In the name of this fight against the counterrevolution, retributions among the intelligentsia hit reform-communists and Imre Nagy’s supporters first. However, the imposed penalties did not necessarily correspond to one’s activities in the reform movement. In 1957, the so called ‘Small’ and ‘Big’ trials of writers were concluded.

<sup>20</sup> Pál Závada suggests that none of the populists who propagated a Hungarian ‘third road’ were tainted by antisemitism. See his novel, *A fényképész utókora* (Budapest: Magvető, 2004).

<sup>21</sup> See: Resolution of the Temporary Central Committee of the HSWP, December 5, 1956. In: *A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt Határozatai és Dokumentumai 1956-1962*. [Resolutions and Documents of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party 1956-1962.] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1964), 13-17.

<sup>22</sup> MOL M-KS, 288.5/12. Minutes of the meeting of the Temporary Executive Committee, January 25, 1957.

All the defendants of the latter – Tibor Déry, Gyula Háy, Zoltán Zelk and Tibor Tardos – were members of the reform communist group but incidentally all were of Jewish origin. Déry was sentenced to nine years of imprisonment; Háy received six years, Zelk three, and Tardos one year and six months.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, certain non-Jews from among the former ‘populists’ who were similarly active in their ‘counterrevolutionary’ activities such as Áron Tamási<sup>24</sup>, Péter Kuczka<sup>25</sup> or Ferenc Erdei<sup>26</sup>, were not touched. Journalist Miklós Gimes was executed together with members of the Imre Nagy government. Gimes’ inclusion into this group is peculiar, given that he had not held any positions in the Nagy government. He founded a journal during the revolution (*Magyar Szabadság*) and edited an illegal paper (*Október Huszonharmadika*) after 4 November. Kádár’s biography writer Roger Gough suggested that there was more to the decision to include Gimes among those executed than his revolutionary activities. Gough thought that “Gimes may have been doomed by Kádár’s personal animus towards the man who played a leading role in the opposition after the Soviet intervention, and by the useful message sent out by

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<sup>23</sup> Éva Ständeisky, *Az írók és a hatalom 1956-1963* [The Writers and the Regime] (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1996), 352.

<sup>24</sup> Tamási was a deputy president of the Writers’ Union from September 1956 and thus a leading figure of the intelligentsia’s revolutionary activities. He was the first one among the ‘populist’ writers to embrace the revolution when he read out his piece ‘Hungarian Prayer’ (*Magyar Fohász*) on the radio. He drafted the proclamation ‘Trouble and Creed’.

<sup>25</sup> Kuczka took part in various revolutionary political formations and the organization of numerous protests. He was a member of the National Patriotic Committee (*Országos Nemzeti Bizottság*) and the Revolutionary Committee of Hungarian Intelligentsia (*Magyar Értelmiség Forradalmi Tanácsa*).

<sup>26</sup> Erdei was a sociologist specializing in agrarian affairs, and a leading figure for the ‘populist’ movement since the 1930s. He became Deputy Prime Minister in Imre Nagy’s government and was a member of the delegation that met with the Soviets on November 3, 1956. He was arrested by the KGB together with Pál Maléter however, did not share his faith, allegedly as a result of János Kádár’s intervention on his behalf.



including a Jewish writer among those hanged.”<sup>27</sup> The retaliations of the state thus seemed to hit intellectuals of Jewish origin harder than others.<sup>28</sup>

On the first page of the Party daily *Népszabadság* on August 4, 1957 the newly appointed Minister of Culture Gyula Kállai wrote a lengthy article entitled ‘On intellectuals and our cultural policies.’ In that piece, Kállai explicitly confirmed that not everybody was equally guilty among Hungarian intelligentsia. He condemned prominent intellectuals for “fabricating the weapons of the counterrevolution” and mentioned Tibor Déry, Gyula Háty, Zoltán Zelk, Tamás Aczél and Tibor Méray by name. All these writers and journalists were of Jewish origin. Kállai further claimed that

within Hungarian intelligentsia, we must clearly and categorically differentiate between the small but dangerous group of the old, reactionary haute-bourgeoisie, which was purposefully counterrevolutionary and aimed at bourgeois restoration.<sup>29</sup>

By singling out individuals of Jewish origin by name and equating them with a certain social stratum (the “reactionary haute-bourgeoisie”), Kállai implicitly exploited old antisemitic stereotypes. The implied equation between Jews and the bourgeois classes had been a favourite theme of communist propaganda during the Rákosi period. The Party state tried to make good use of popular antisemitism for its revolutionary fight against “class enemies”<sup>30</sup>. The equation of Jews with the

<sup>27</sup> Roger Gough, *A Good Comrade. János Kádár, Communism and Hungary*. (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006.), 115. However, in his documentary *Mutter – Anya* (T & C Film AG, Schweizer Fernsehen DRS, 95 min.), director Miklós Gimes (son of the executed journalist) does not hint at such a correlation at all.

<sup>28</sup> See also: Éva Ständeisky, ‘Tükrök. Népi írók, parasztpárti politikusok s a hatalom, 1960-1973’ [Mirrors. Populist writers, politicians of the Peasant Party and the regime, 1960-1973], in: János M. Rainer (ed.), *Múlt századi hétköznapiak. Tanulmányok a Kádár-rendszer kialakulásának időszakáról*. (Budapest: 1956-os intézet, 2003), 299.

<sup>29</sup> Gyula Kállai, ‘Az értelmiségről és kulturális politikánkról’ [On the intelligentsia and our cultural policies] in: *Népszabadság*, August 4, 1957. Retrieved from: Open Society Archives (Henceforth: OSA) HU OSA 300-40-1, Box 301.

<sup>30</sup> Éva Ständeisky, ‘A kommunista polgárellenesség’ [Communist adversity to the bourgeoisie] in: *Budapesti Negyed*, Vol. 8 (Budapest Főváros Levéltára) Available at: [http://bfl.archivportal.hu/id-127-standeisky\\_eva\\_kommunista.html](http://bfl.archivportal.hu/id-127-standeisky_eva_kommunista.html) [Retrieved: September 1, 2013.]

bourgeoisie was a favourite theme of economically motivated interwar antisemitism but after 1945, it was a cynical exploitation of the uneven destruction of the Hungarian Holocaust. With the disappearance of most of provincial Jewry, the remaining Jewish population was to be found in the capital, and many of them occupied small entrepreneurial posts.<sup>31</sup> As such, the artificially raised suspicion connected to one's social origins by the communist state assigned a common group character to Jews. At this point, Communist ideology and propaganda which assigned common characters to members of classes; and old political and economic antisemitism that tended to consider Jews rich, exploitative and inimical to the rest of society intersected and resulted in the survival of anti-Jewish stereotypes and language.

With the discrimination of Jewish reform communists, the Kádár regime signalled that it would not treat Jews with any less rigour than others. The trials implied that as opposed to the "Jewish" Rákosi regime, under the new leadership there would be no situational advantage connected to Jewish origins or informal ties. Implicitly though, the attacks against Jewish reform communists in particular signalled that despite the claims of communist dogma to the opposite, Jewish origin still mattered.

### **2.2.2. Verbal attacks against the 'populists'**

One of the main demands of the 1956 revolution was national sovereignty, despite the fact that communist historiography and propaganda claimed that this goal had

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<sup>31</sup> Viktor Karády, 'Szociológiai kísérlet a magyar zsidóság 1945 és 1956 közötti helyzetének elemzésére' [Sociological experiment for the analysis of the situation of Hungarian Jewry between 1945 and 1956] in: Péter Kende (ed.) *Zsidóság az 1945 utáni Magyarországon*. (Párizs: Magyar Füzetek, 1984), 133.

been achieved when the Red Army liberated Hungary in 1945.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the October events suggested that Rákosi's endeavours to amalgamate some elements of Hungarian nationalism with communist dogma were unsuccessful. In that critical situation, nationalism turned against the system. Therefore, when Kádár and his team later formulated cultural policies, they were caught up between two problems. On one hand nationalism, as an element of Imre Nagy's policies and one of the revolutionary demands, had to be condemned. On the other hand, the mobilizing force and popularity of (anti-Soviet) nationalism among Hungarians could not be ignored. The debates within the HSWP on this topic reflect on this dilemma. However, because of the close association of Hungarian ethnocentric nationalism with antisemitism, whatever position the Party took would have implications to Jewish issues. Allegations of antisemitism could potentially be used both as an indicator of nationalist tendencies and as a tool to associate critics of the state both with the "counterrevolutionaries" of 1956 and with the Horthy establishment. Yet, the regime was hesitant to create unnecessary friction with the 'populists', who had significant public support, or to reify the negative public image of a communist Party led by urban Jews.

Gyula Kállai, the Minister of Culture set the initial tone of the new Party line in a course organized for local Party secretaries in February 1958. He accused the 'populist' writers of supporting nationalization of industry and agriculture after WWII not because they agreed with its "socialist substance, but [because] they approved the measure on a nationalist and antisemitic basis."<sup>33</sup> A position paper created by the

<sup>32</sup> For this narrative see: Aladár Mód, *400 év küzdelem a független Magyarországért* [400 years of struggle for independent Hungary] (Budapest: Bartsch, 1943), republished later by Budapest: Szikra, 1945, 1947, 1948, 1949, 1951, 1954.

<sup>33</sup> MOL, 288.21/1958/3. Gyula Kállai, 'Tudományos és kulturális életünk főbb kérdései. A párt kultúrpolitikája.' [The main questions of our scientific and cultural life. The cultural policies of the party.]

cultural theoretical workshop (*kulturális elméleti munkaközösség*) appeared in the June 1958 issue of *Társadalmi Szemle*. The article entitled ‘On “populist” writers’ (A „népi” írókról) claimed that “it is undeniable that antisemitism typically accompanies nationalism in our country, and it indeed played an important role in the thoughts among the majority of the Hungarian ‘populists.’”<sup>34</sup> Predictably, the position paper was not received by the ‘populists’ with great joy. Writer Áron Tamási sent a letter to Gyula Kállai and for his part, rejected accusations of chauvinist nationalism.<sup>35</sup> Others simply considered the evaluation unbalanced. According to a contemporary secret agent report, one of the more right-wing ‘populists’ observed that “those passages [of the position paper] that would have condemned the old bourgeois-urban-Jewish faction were all omitted. It seems that group still has a decisive influence on our cultural policies.”<sup>36</sup>

While Kállai’s tone was seemingly uncompromising, the Party membership was not united on the issue. During the departmental session that discussed a draft of the future cultural program of the Party, the focus of attention was the definition of inimical ideological currents. The dilemma was whether nationalism, and thus the ‘populist’ group, deserved to be the primary ideological enemy of the regime. One Party member called for stricter measures against ‘populists’ in general and László Németh<sup>37</sup> in particular, on the grounds that “during the advancement of German fascism, Dezső Szabó withdrew from antisemitism a little, László Németh on the other

<sup>34</sup> ‘A „népi” írókról. Az MSZMP Központi Bizottsága mellett működő kulturális elméleti munkaközösség állásfoglalása.’ [On “populist” writers. The position paper of the cultural theoretical workshop operating next to the Central Committee of the HSWP] In: *Társadalmi Szemle*, Vol. XIII, No. 6. (June 1958), 58.

<sup>35</sup> Áron Tamási’s letter to Gyula Kállai, June 17, 1958. In: Endre Medvigy (ed.), *Válasz Évkönyv* [Válasz yearbook] (Budapest: Veres Péter Társaság – Püski Kiadó, 1989), 253-256.

<sup>36</sup> Report from August 27, 1958. Quoted by Éva Ständeisky ‘Értelmiségi antiszemitizmus a korai Kádár korszakban’ [Antisemitism among the intelligentsia in the early Kádár period]. In: Zsuzsanna Körösi et al. (eds.), *Évkönyv VIII.* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2000), 35.

<sup>37</sup> Writer and essayist who was one of the leading representatives of the ‘populists’.

hand, voiced his antisemitism louder than Dezső Szabó.”<sup>38</sup> But another participant did not agree with “placing racial theory in the center [of attention – K.B.] with regards to populists.” A third participant opined that “racial theory and antisemitism belong to police cases [as individual criminal acts]”, rather than a threat to the state. He was contradicted by another Party member who claimed that the previous suggestion would underestimate the problem given that “Hungarian chauvinism sent many people to the grave.”<sup>39</sup> The Party debate shows that the membership of the HSWP was not unified about whether Hungarian nationalism should be condemned for its connection to “Horthy Fascism” or whether its antisemitic elements were not inherent to its nature. The final text of the program was a toned down version devoid of references to any individuals, and was very cautious in its assessments of the interwar intellectual debate, especially the ‘populists’. This group, the final version claimed, was

strongly divided on the question of fighting against fascism, [and] the racial and social demagoguery of fascism did not leave some of their groups unaffected. Nevertheless, their great majority was protected from fascist contamination by their animosity towards Germans.<sup>40</sup>

This assessment ran parallel with the silent “truce” that has by then occurred in the relationship between the Party and certain ‘populists’. László Németh, together with the poet Lőrinc Szabó received the Kossuth prize, one of the highest state-sponsored awards in Hungary. As opposed to many reform communist writers silenced in this period, ‘populists’ were allowed to publish to a certain extent<sup>41</sup> and Németh even embarked on a journey to the Soviet Union (with Party approval). The Party document

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<sup>38</sup> What the speaker referred to here was most probably the notorious Shylock metaphor that László Németh used during a conference in 1943. In his speech, László Németh envisioned the revenge of Hungarian Jews after the war for the discrimination they suffered because of the anti-Jewish Laws instituted from 1938. He advocated a “separate Hungarian way” (*külön magyar út*) to reform society resulting in a loosely connected association of small commodity producers without class distinctions.

<sup>39</sup> MOL, 288.33/1958/1. Debate on the “cultural program” – proposal at the Scientific and Cultural Department, May 16, 1958.

<sup>40</sup> MOL, 288.33/1958/1. “Cultural program” - proposal of the Scientific and Cultural Department by László Orbán and Valéria Benke, February 27, 1958.

<sup>41</sup> Éva Ständeisky, *Az írók és a hatalom, 1956–1963* [The writers and the power-centre, 1956-1963]. (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1996), esp. 275-287.

entitled the ‘Principles of the Cultural Policies of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party’ (*A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt művelődési politikájának irányelvei*) confirmed the softening Party position with regards to ‘populists’. In that statement, the HSWP acknowledged the existence of ‘democratic aspirations’ during the Horthy-regime but pointed out that the weakness of the ‘urbanist’ writers’ “humanist protest... [was that] they could not transgress their class burdens and did not recognize the historic role of the workers’ class.” The document described ‘urbanists’ as artists who were interested in the questions of “urban existence and [the life of the] petty bourgeoisie”, which was a gross oversimplification of ‘urbanist’ ideas and validated antisemitic positions that considered ‘urbanists’ the representatives of a class that they equated with Jews, and at the same time, omitted that many ‘urbanists’ in fact adhered to socialdemocratic ideas. What the document had to say about ‘populists’ was that they had seen the underdevelopment of the peasantry correctly but had “articulated the false idea of a ‘third way’ between capitalism and socialism; did not recognize... the leading role of the workers’ class and its revolutionary communist party.”<sup>42</sup> The text did not refer to the antisemitism of the populists and failed to condemn their ideology for its flirtation with chauvinist/racist forms of Hungarian nationalism. This implied that the regime was willing to compromise on the issue of antisemitism.

## **2.3. Re-building control: Party and bureaucracy**

### **2.3.1. Cadres**

As the ideological narrative of the 1956 events was formulated and general policy principles slowly articulated, the leadership needed reliable cadres to implement them.

<sup>42</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.4/18 Minutes of the meeting of the Central Committee, July 25, 1958.

Several historians have already argued that a cadre's Jewish origin did play a part in the bid for offices. Historian Benneth Kovrig claimed that

[after the Party Congress in June 1957, a] change that did not pass unnoticed among a population... was the small number of Jews in Kádár's entourage. Initially this was the incidental consequence of the demotion of much of the Muscovite old guard but subsequently Kádár would, apparently by design, maintain a certain 'de-Judaization' of the Party's leading bodies.<sup>43</sup>

Sándor Révész opined that the main consideration of the new regime was that

the less aspects in which the Kádárist leadership could distinguish itself from the Rákosi regime; and the less positive features with which it could differentiate itself from the Imre Nagy period, the more important it became that they should at least keep the number of Jewish leaders low.<sup>44</sup>

However, this "de-Judaization" was not necessarily a policy conceived by the top leadership only.

Allusions to a cadre's Jewish origin can be found in a letter by István Antos, Minister of Finance with regards to the appointment of Mátyás Tímár as Deputy Minister of Finance. The report mentioned that another deputy had not agreed to Tímár's candidacy because "the denominational composition of the Ministry of Finance would worsen."<sup>45</sup> Tímár had never been a member of the religious Jewish community,<sup>46</sup> therefore the allusion to the cadre's religious affiliation was used instead of mentioning his Jewish origin. There also existed a more vulgar, popular expression of anti-Jewish feeling within the Party echelons. A letter from the Secretary of the Party cell at the Hungarian Embassy in Cairo, Egypt sheds light on this phenomenon. Péter Várkonyi described in August 1957 the personal conflicts that had appeared within the walls of the legation as follows:

<sup>43</sup> Bennett Kovrig, *Communism in Hungary – From Kun to Kádár* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1979), 333.

<sup>44</sup> Sándor Révész, *Aczél és korunk* [Aczél and our Era] (Budapest: Sík Kiadó, 1997), 74.

<sup>45</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.5/27. Minutes of the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo, May 28, 1957.

<sup>46</sup> Éva Ständeisky, *Antisemitizmusok* [Antisemitisms] (Budapest: Argumentum, 2007), 214.

Comrade Lévai said at our membership meeting [of the local Party cell], that when he had gone home [to Hungary], comrade Pável told him that ‘Zágor should come home’ and that ‘the Jews are packing up already’, furthermore that ‘we are cleansing the party [of Jews].’<sup>47</sup>

These examples illustrate that though it is possible that János Kádár himself preferred to maintain the low number of Jews in the top Party leadership, this tendency was also encouraged from below, by the lower-level of the apparatus. The Party took on tens of thousands of former Arrow Cross elements to enlarge its membership during 1945-1946.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, during the modifications inflicted upon the institutional structure during 1949-1950, the bureaucratic apparatus of Party and state was expanded with cadres of working class and peasant origins, to the detriment of communists of Jewish origin.<sup>49</sup> Thus, not only did many who had supported antisemitism during WWII end up in the Party but selective cadre changes during the end of the 1940s reinforced feelings about conflicts of interests between Jewish and non-Jewish Party members. After 1956, though membership of the Party drastically fell and its composition changed, the great majority of the previous membership requested re-admission.<sup>50</sup> The survival of previously held antisemitic beliefs, or at least the sense of Jewish and non-Jewish rivalry within the Party, was bound to survive. The previous members were joined in 1957 by many communists who were dogmatic Marxist-Leninists but had turned against the Rákosi-regime.<sup>51</sup> Some in the latter group attributed the mistakes of the previous leadership to their Jewish origins. The rise in the rate of rural

<sup>47</sup> MOL M-KS, 288.32/1957/5. Péter Várkonyi's letter on behalf of the Party cell of the Hungarian Legation in Cairo, August 21, 1957.

<sup>48</sup> Éva Ständeisky, 'Erkölcsök 1945-ben' [Morals in 1945] in: *Mozgó Világ*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (2006), 15-31.

<sup>49</sup> Éva Ständeisky, 'A kommunisták politikai antiszemitizmusa (1945-1957) [The political antisemitism of communists (1945-1957)] in: *Századvég*, Vol. 12, No. 44. (2007), 3.

<sup>50</sup> In June 1957, only fifteen percent of the HSWP's membership was new, i.e. had not been members of the HWP. See: Levente Sipos, 'Az MSZMP, 1957' [The HSWP, 1957] in: *História*, 1995/9-10, 37.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.



membership<sup>52</sup> on the other hand increased the numbers of those who were traditionally more open to popular versions of antisemitism.

Therefore, there was pressure on the leadership from below as well to keep the number of cadres of Jewish origin low. The undoubtedly weakened Jewish position in the Party was thus the result of both top-to-bottom and bottom-to-top tendencies, and the interplay between several levels of the bureaucratic apparatus.

### 2.3.2. The National Representation of Hungarian Israelites (NRHI)

Hungarian Jews were officially defined as a religious denomination, so the Party state dealt with Jewish matters as part of religious affairs. The Kádár administration introduced certain modifications in this area, though with regards to the Churches, 1956 did not mark decisive changes.<sup>53</sup> Before and during the revolution, religious institutions did not play important roles,<sup>54</sup> perhaps with the exception of the Catholic Cardinal József Mindszenty.<sup>55</sup>

In order to ensure state control over religious matters, the new 1957:22 legislative decree ruled that all appointments, reassignments and depositions in leading Church positions should be previously approved by the Presidential Council (*Elnöki Tanács*);

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 37-40.

<sup>53</sup> Margit Balogh, 'Egyház és egyházpolitika a Kádár-korszakban' [Church and church-policies in the Kádár-era] in: *Eszmélet*, Vol. 34 (Summer, 1997). Accessible at: <http://eszmelet.freeweb.hu/34/baloghm34.html> (Retrieved: May 26, 2011.); Zoltán Völgyesi, 'A kommunista egyházpolitika szakaszai Magyarországon 1948-tól 1964-ig' [The periods of Communist Church policies in Hungary from 1948 to 1964] in: *Mediárium: Kommunikáció-Egyház-Társadalom*, Vol.5, No.4 (2011), 28.

<sup>54</sup> On the activities of the different Churches during the 1956 revolution see: István Bán, 'A Magyar Református Egyház és 1956 eseményei' [The Hungarian Calvinist Church and the Events of 1956] in: *Református Egyház*, No.4/1992, 89-91; Sándor Ladányi (ed.), *Adalékok a Magyarországi Református Egyházban az 1956-1957-es esztendőben történetekhez* [Additions to the events of 1956-1957 in the Hungarian Calvinist Church] (Budapest: Kálvin Kiadó, 2006); Pál Rosdy (ed.), *A katolikus egyház 1956-ban* [The Catholic Church in 1956] (Budapest: Új Ember, 1996).

<sup>55</sup> Cardinal Mindszenty was imprisoned in 1949 by the Rákosi regime for his open anti-Communism. He was liberated from prison on October 31, 1956 by a panzer unit. He immediately spoke out in favour of the insurgents. When Soviet troops invaded Hungary on November 4, 1956, Mindszenty sought refuge at the American Embassy. He remained there in internal exile for 15 years, which was a constant irritation for the Kádár regime.

while in the case of intermediate-level positions, the endorsement of the Minister of Culture became necessary.<sup>56</sup> In the case of the NRHI, this meant that the election of the Jewish community's leadership would be dependent on the consent of the Presidential Council. Furthermore, now the appointment and dismissal of the director of the Rabbinical Institute, as well as the only Jewish secondary school in Budapest depended on the approval of the department of Church Affairs at the Ministry of Culture.<sup>57</sup>

The legislative decree allowed the state to place “reliable” persons in leading positions, which was the explicit goal of the Kádár regime in the early period of its establishment.<sup>58</sup> As a result, by 1958 both the Calvinist and Lutheran Churches were under control,<sup>59</sup> while the regulation of the Catholic Church took much longer because of the Midszenty problem, and was only satisfactorily resolved from the state's point of view in the 1970s.<sup>60</sup> Corresponding to these developments in other religious institutions, in April 1957 the previous head of the Hungarian Jewish community, Lajos Heves resigned<sup>61</sup> and his place was taken two months later by Endre Sós who,

<sup>56</sup> ‘1957. évi 22. számú törvényerejű rendelet az egyes egyházi állások betöltéséhez szükséges állami hozzájárulásról’ in: Margit Balogh – Jenő Gergely (eds.), *Állam, egyházak, vallásgyakorlás Magyarországon 1790-2005*, Vol. 2. (Budapest: História-MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 2005), 959, 981-982.

<sup>57</sup> László Csorba, ‘Izraelita felekezeti élet Magyarországon a vészkorszaktól a nyolcvanas évekig’ [Jewish religious life in Hungary from the *Shoah* until the eighties]. In: Ferenc Lendvai et al. (eds.) *Hét évtized a hazai zsidóság életében*, Vol. 2. (Budapest: MTA Filozófiai Intézet, 1990), 141.

<sup>58</sup> According to a proposal of the Temporary Executive Committee (Politburo) on March 5, 1957, one of the tasks of the government with regards to the Churches was “[t]o fill up with reliable personnel both the central and the less important religious positions.” MOL M-KS, 288.5/17. Minutes of the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo, March 5, 1957. ‘Proposal for the solution of a few questions of Church policy’.

<sup>59</sup> Zoltán Völgyesi, ‘A kommunista egyházpolitika szakaszai Magyarországon 1948-tól 1964-ig’ [The periods of Communist Church policies in Hungary from 1948 to 1964] in: *Mediárium: Kommunikáció-Egyház-Társadalom*, Vol.5, No.4 (2011), 28. About the dismissal of the emblematic Lajos Ordass from the leadership of the Hungarian Lutheran Church see: Jenő Szigeti, ‘Országos evangélikus esperesi értekezlet 1958-ban’ [National Lutheran Conference of Deans in 1958] in: *Egyháztörténeti Szemle*, Vol.1, No. 2 (2000), 135-142.

<sup>60</sup> Margit Balogh, ‘Egyházak a szovjet rendszerben (1945-1989)’ [Churches in the Soviet system] in: Kollega Tarsoly István (ed.), *Magyarország a XX. században*, Vol.2 (Székszárd: Babits Kiadó, 1997), 386-439.

<sup>61</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 50636., M170/1957. Letter from Lajos Heves to János Horváth about his resignation, April 19, 1957.

from the regime's point of view, suited the task. Sós had not had any office in the Jewish community before that appointment. He was a journalist known as a communist, had previously worked for the official journal of the community *Új Élet*, where he predominantly wrote articles supporting the Rákosi regime's official policies toward Jews in general and Zionism in particular. According to Sós' own account, the reason for his appointment in 1956 was that he demonstrated loyalty to the regime by writing anti-revolutionary memoranda for the Ministry of the Interior during the revolution.<sup>62</sup> Siegfried J. Roth of the WJC characterized Sós' leadership as "a Hungarian nationalist assimilationist course in the pre-war spirit of Hungarian Jewry."<sup>63</sup>

Despite the above structural framework which equally applied to all religious organizations, there were certain areas where official policies towards the Jewish community differed from those concerning Christian Churches. In this initial period of the Kádár administration, the international relations of the Catholic and Protestant Churches were only encouraged within Eastern Europe and at the same time, the regime tried to reduce the influence of organizations that had their centres in the West.<sup>64</sup> The official representation of the Hungarian Jewish community, however, joined the World Jewish Congress (WJC) in the summer of 1957. This affiliation was peculiar for two reasons. First, the WJC was a political organization, while the NRHI was officially limited to concerning itself with religious matters. Second, the WJC acted as an international Jewish representative body, which contradicted the

<sup>62</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.22/1967/20. Endre Sós' letter to János Kádár, July 26, 1967.

<sup>63</sup> Central Zionist Archives (Henceforth CZA) Z6/1757. Letter from Siegfried J. Roth to Nahum Goldmann, 5 April, 1960.

<sup>64</sup> Zoltán Rajki, 'Az állam és az egyház kapcsolatának jellemző vonásai a Kádár-korszakban' [The characteristics of the relationship between the state and the Church during the Kádár era] in: *Egyháztörténeti Szemle*, Vol. 3, No.2 (2002), 74-86.

Hungarian state's claim that it alone represented the interests of its citizens belonging to the Jewish religion.

However, there were well defined financial interests behind the decision to allow the Hungarian Jewish community to join the WJC. The Claims Conference, which decided about the distribution of West-German restitutions to Jews, was operating under the auspices of the WJC. The Hungarian leadership, as well as the heads of the Hungarian Jewish administration hoped that they would get a chance to share in these payments by establishing contact with the WJC. Moreover, the international isolation of the Kádár regime probably also played a role in the decision. Gerhard Riegner, Director of the Geneva Office of the WJC was convinced that it was the then apparent deterioration of Hungarian relations with Israel which have "stimulated a desire on the part of the Hungarian Government to compensate this attitude by allowing contacts with World Jewry."<sup>65</sup> The WJC's wide international membership, especially from the West, made it an ideal arena to establish such relations.

When the Hungarian Jewish organization signed the agreement with the WJC of joining the organization, the document stated that

though there might occur issues on which the opinion of Hungarian Jewry might be different than that of the World Jewish Congress, this could not hinder cooperation with the organization, because Hungarian Jewry agrees with its theoretical program and because its Constitution makes it possible for members to voice their differences in opinion.<sup>66</sup>

This paragraph was ignored when the representatives of Hungarian Jewry quit the WJC not too long afterwards.

In the face of growing evidence of antisemitism in the USSR, both the Israeli government and the WJC decided to abandon the policy of "silent diplomacy" and

<sup>65</sup> CZA, Z6/1280. Dr. Gerhart Riegner's report on his visit to Hungary, September 1957.

<sup>66</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 50637, document no. M170-19/1957. Agreement between the World Jewish Congress and the Representation of Hungarian Israelites, August 25, 1957.

speak up for Soviet Jewry. The Conference of Jewish Organizations (COJO), an umbrella organization which had been established in Rome in 1958 under the chairmanship of Nahum Goldmann, passed a resolution protesting against the cultural and religious discrimination of Soviet Jewry.<sup>67</sup> The WJC World Executive meeting in Geneva in July 1958 addressed the USSR in a resolution to provide Soviet Jews with the institutional framework necessary for maintaining the continuity of Jewish life in that country.<sup>68</sup> The Fourth Plenary Assembly, held in Stockholm in 1959, adopted a resolution which called for the Soviet Union to provide its Jews with “the necessary means, such as are available to other nationalities and ethnic groups... to maintain and develop their spiritual heritage.”<sup>69</sup> The Congress also expressed regret that Soviet Jewry was denied the right to cooperate with other Jewish communities.

The Hungarian Jewish community resigned its membership in the World Jewish Congress in July 1960. The official communiqué objected to the WJC’s support of “reactionary” and “fascist groups”, and its defamation of the Soviet Union.<sup>70</sup> The allusion to the support of “fascist groups” referred to the WJC’s refusal to condemn Israeli-West German arms deals. The Hungarians objected to this and interpreted it as the WJC’s endorsement of “aggressive Zionist” policies. The resignation was preceded by lengthy correspondence between the National Office of Church Affairs and Endre Sós. It seems that from 1959 onwards, state authorities were not viewing the WJC favourably because of the stepped-up activities against the discrimination of

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<sup>67</sup> Yaacov Ro'i, *The Struggle for Soviet Jewish Emigration 1948-1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 131.

<sup>68</sup> CZA, Z6/154. World Jewish Congress, Minutes of World Executive Committee 23<sup>rd</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> July, 1958.

<sup>69</sup> University of Florida, George A Smathers Libraries, Judaica Collections. World Jewish Congress Fourth Plenary Assembly, Stockholm, 2nd-12th August, 1959. Booklet no. 1. Review, decisions and resolutions, 15.

<sup>70</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 50643, document no. M-11-7/1960. Proposal for the quitting of the World Jewish Congress by the Hungarian Israelites and the reaction of foreign press. June 13, 1960.

Soviet Jewry.<sup>71</sup> Documentary evidence points at the direction that Hungarian partaking in the WJC was originally planned to be suspended only.<sup>72</sup> However by June 1960, the representative of the State Office of Church Affairs suggested that the Hungarian Jewish Community quit the WJC<sup>73</sup> because of a conference which convened in Paris to discuss the situation of Soviet Jewry.

Since the spring of 1960, the organization of this large international conference had taken shape within the WJC “to appeal to the Soviet leadership about the ominous situation of Jews in the Soviet Union.”<sup>74</sup> Soviet officials did everything to prevent Nahum Goldmann from bringing about the conference,<sup>75</sup> including threatening with halting Jewish emigration from Romania completely, should the gathering take place.<sup>76</sup> It is possible that Hungarian authorities knew about the brewing scandal, and took a pre-emptive step by disaffiliating from the WJC before the conference was convened. According to the information of the WJC however, the decision to disaffiliate was not an instruction from the Hungarian government, but a step initiated from below, by the leadership of the Jewish Community and personally by Endre Sós. Gerhard Riegner received information from inside Hungary that “the disaffiliation was not done at the demand of the Government but was due to Sós’ overzealousness.”<sup>77</sup>

<sup>71</sup> In September 1960, the first international conference was convened in Paris that dealt exclusively with the situation of Soviet Jewry. It was the result of the close but clandestine cooperation between Shaul Avigur’s office and the World Jewish Congress.

<sup>72</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 50639, document no. M-11-11/1959. Report from the National Office of Hungarian Israelites about the formation of the relationship between the World Jewish Congress and Hungarian Jewry, 1958.

<sup>73</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 50643, document no. M-11-7/1960. Pál Veres, National Office of Church Affairs; proposal for the ‘Resignation of the Hungarian Israelite Church from the World Jewish Congress’, June 13, 1960.

<sup>74</sup> CZA, Z6/1337. Letter from Nahum Goldmann to Jayaprakash Narayan, 15 March, 1960.

<sup>75</sup> Nahum Goldmann remembered in his memoirs that „[a]bout fifteen years ago I called the first international gathering on this subject [i.e. the situation of Soviet Jewry] in Paris, and the Russians tried in vain to prevent it.” In: Nahum Goldmann, *The Jewish Paradox* (New York: Fred Jordan Books, 1978), 179.

<sup>76</sup> Suzanne D. Rutland, ‘Leadership of Accommodation or Protest?: Nahum Goldmann and the Struggle for Soviet Jewry’ in: Mark A. Raider (ed.), *Nahum Goldmann. Statesman Without a State* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2009), 273-298, 280.

<sup>77</sup> CZA, Z6/1757. Letter from Siegfried J. Roth to Nahum Goldmann, 11 October, 1960.

This version is quite plausible as well. Sós' position within the community was deteriorating. He was attacked because of the selling of synagogues, especially the one in an outer district of Budapest (Lágymányos).<sup>78</sup> He had personal antagonisms with other members of the community's lay leadership which culminated in the resignation of Pál Weinstein as President of the Central Board of Hungarian Jews for the World Jewish Congress in March 1959.<sup>79</sup> Some members of the religious community disapproved of Sós' unconditional loyalty to the communist regime<sup>80</sup> and his assimilationist course. Moreover, there were changes in the top leadership of the State Office of Church Affairs (SOCA) that affected Sós' position negatively. In 1959, Károly Olt was appointed President with whom Sós did not have good relations, partly because Olt was known for his antisemitism.<sup>81</sup> Whether the decision to disaffiliate from the WJC came from above or was Sós' doing cannot be clearly decided. However, it is quite plausible that the authorities' growing worries about the WJC's role in the international efforts to speak up for Soviet Jewry, paired with Sós' aspiration to keep his seat as lay President of the National Office of Hungarian Israelites mutually reinforced each other.

The brief membership of the NRHI in the WJC reveals the particular situation of the Hungarian Jewish community as compared to other religious groups in the country. The official representation took a stand with regards Israel's foreign relations and the Soviet Union's domestic policies, issues that linked Jews by ethnicity rather

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<sup>78</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 50640, document no. 6-39/1959. Letter of Pál Veres, Head of Department at the State Office of Church Affairs József Eskulits at the Budapest Committee of the HSWP on November 19, 1959.

<sup>79</sup> MOL, XIX-A21-a, microfilm no. 50641, document no. M-11-11/1959. Letter from Dr. Pál Weinstein to the President of the State Office of Church Affairs, April 27, 1959.

<sup>80</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 50639, document no. 11-18/1958. Endre Sós' report about the situation within the Jewish religious community, 1958.

<sup>81</sup> OSA, HU OSA 300-40-4, box no 24, Item no. 840.5. EERA/ Hungarian Unit Report, "A zsidóság helyzete Magyarországon" [The situation of Jews in Hungary], Munich, February 3, 1972. The report stated that "Undoubtedly, there have always been antisemitic currents in the Hungarian Communist movement. For example, Károly Olt and his circle were famous for such feelings back in the day."

than just religion. Whether or not the Hungarian state directed the NRHI's disaffiliation, the decision suggests that in the practical policies of the state, the Jewish community was not always strictly defined on religious terms but could include elements of ethnicity. Though the representatives of Christian Churches occasionally also had to express opinions regarding issues that were not strictly religious, they were of a more general nature (supporting world peace, etc.).<sup>82</sup>

## **2.4. Jewish issues in foreign policies: relations with Israel**

The previous subchapter has already hinted at the connection between policies concerning the Hungarian Jewish community and the Kádár regime's relations with Israel. However, there was more to this interconnectedness than the NRHI's occasional deliberations on Israel's foreign policies.

### **2.4.1. Alliance**

In late 1956, the Israeli Foreign Ministry's address to that country's Eastern-European embassies claimed that "it is clear that in [Hungary's] new top leadership, there are not going to be any Jews and this is the hope of the future."<sup>83</sup> Ever since the establishment of communist power in 1948, that many Hungarian leaders were of Jewish descent had not meant any advantages for the country's Jews and for Israel's aspirations to build good diplomatic relations with Hungary. Jewish religious institutions were crippled to the same extent as Christian ones. The Zionist

<sup>82</sup> Issues that Christian Churches had to take stands included for example speaking up against "international imperialism" and for demilitarization and "socialist humanism". See: Zoltán Rajki, 'Az állam és az egyház kapcsolatának jellemző vonásai a Kádár-korszakban' [The characteristics of the relationship between the state and the Church during the Kádár era] in: *Egyháztörténeti Szemle*, Vol. 3, No.2 (2002), 74-86.

<sup>83</sup> Cvi Erez, 'A budapesti Gorkij fasor jelenti Jeruzsálemnek. Az izraeli külügyminisztérium dokumentumaiból.' [Budapest Gorky alley reports to Jerusalem. From the documents of the Israeli Foreign Ministry]. In: *Világosság*, Vol. 33, No. 10. (1992), 796.



organization was dissolved<sup>84</sup> along with other political groups not supported by the state and its ideology. Israeli diplomats, like all other representatives of non-Communist countries, were denied access to the most influential political circles.

Israelis anticipated that with the establishment of the Kádár government, a new policy towards Jews and the Jewish state would be formed. In the immediate aftermath of the oppression of the 1956 revolution, most Western countries refused to recognize Kádár's government and there appeared to be doubters even within the bloc, most importantly Poland's Gomulka.<sup>85</sup> It was therefore an important diplomatic step on the part of Israel to recognize the new leadership. Naturally, this was based on the clear interests of the Jewish State: Israeli diplomats hoped that this would provide them with the possibility to ensure the right of Hungarian Jews for *aliyah*, the emigration to Israel. Commenting on the first moves of the Kádár leadership, Israel's new envoy to Hungary, Meir Touval appeared hopeful that the previous government's promise of *aliyah* was going to be kept by the new administration as well. He wrote to the Israeli Foreign Ministry in November 1956 that in his opinion,

the present government tries to implement certain achievements of the revolution and wants to continue the process of liberalization. Thus, it is possible that it would keep the promise of *aliyah* or at least will not overrule it, though it will certainly not keep it in the form and content as it was originally intended.<sup>86</sup>

The new administration's initial moves proved the Israeli logic right. The first tactical instructions following the revolutionary events sent to the Hungarian Embassy in Tel Aviv in December 1956 stated that "emigration is going to play a more significant role in the relations between Hungary and Israel in the near future than it

<sup>84</sup> Attila Novák, *Átmenetben. A cionista mozgalom négy éve Magyarországon* [In Transition. The four years of the Zionist movement in Hungary], (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2000), 172.

<sup>85</sup> The delegation of Poland did not participate in the Budapest summit of Communist countries in January, 1957 and the Polish leadership even refused to label the Hungarian events 'counter-revolutionary'.

<sup>86</sup> Erez, 'A budapesti Gorkij fasor jelenti', 799.

had before. There is a draft under construction which is aiming at easing emigration”<sup>87</sup> from Hungary to Israel. A report prepared by the Fourth Political Department (*IV. Politikai Osztály*) of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry on May 20, 1957 also proves that Israeli hopes regarding the possibility of *aliyah* were not unfounded. According to this data, while the number of legal dissidents from Hungary to Israel amounted to 441 people during the year 1956; their number rose above 3,000 during the first three months of 1957.<sup>88</sup> In early January 1957 Hungary recalled its chargé d'affaires from Israel and sent a diplomatic deputy of ministerial level instead, which is always a sign of improved diplomatic relations between two states.

The strengthening of relations with Israel and the rather lenient position toward emigration did not follow the foreign policy line established by Moscow. The Soviet Union had been drawing closer to the neutral Arab states quite noticeably ever since Stalin's death, and unquestionably since the conclusion of the Egyptian-Czechoslovak arms deal in 1955.<sup>89</sup> The Kremlin hoped for the strengthening of the USSR's positions in the Middle-East by exploiting “the new, dynamic Arab nationalism and its distrust of the West.”<sup>90</sup> The low-key Jewish emigration that had been permitted from the Soviet Union since 1954 was abruptly halted when the Suez Crisis broke out at the

<sup>87</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Israel), box no.1, 1/a, document no. 008055/1956. Letter from Lajos Nagy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) to the Hungarian legation in Tel Aviv about the restructuring of diplomatic activities, December 30, 1956.

<sup>88</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-k (Israel), box no.1, 1/c, document no. 001632/3/1957. Report of János Rigó (4<sup>th</sup> Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) about the numerical data of emigration to Israel, May 20, 1957. The data refers to persons who received exit visas from the Hungarian authorities to Israel and not to the number of people who actually went to the Middle-Eastern country.

<sup>89</sup> The deal was a huge business operation involving one hundred fighter planes, fifty bombers, about two hundred and thirty tanks, one hundred tank destroyers, hundred and forty artillery pieces, nearly three hundred anti-tank cannons, two naval destroyers, twelve torpedo boats and six submarines; altogether for a price of two hundred million dollars. The Israelis also made an explicit request for arms after the publication of the Egyptian-Czech agreement, all in all, they had also received weapons from the Czechoslovaks earlier, but Moscow refused. Israel later secured weapons from France. See: Uri Bialer, 'Top Hat, Tuxedo and Cannons: Israeli Foreign Policy from 1948 to 1956 as a Field of Study' in: *Israel Studies*, Vol. 7. No. 1. (Spring 2002), 1-80, 59 and 25, respectively.

<sup>90</sup> John C. Campbell, 'The Soviet Union and the United States in the Middle East' in: *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 401, America and the Middle East (May, 1972), 126-135, 127.

end of October 1956.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, diplomatic relations between the superpower and Israel became extremely strained, partly as a result of the crisis, partly because of the Israeli support of the Eisenhower-doctrine.<sup>92</sup>

So it seems that the Hungarian leadership managed to strengthen relations with Israel in an undoubtedly pro-Arab Soviet influence area, and allow Jewish emigration when the Soviet Union did exactly the opposite. One reason for this was the tactical ambition of the Hungarian leadership to lessen the country's international isolation. The leadership counted on the positive international reaction that allowing Jewish emigration would invoke.<sup>93</sup> The other reason was closely connected to this and was concerned with trying to persuade as many member states in the United Nations as possible to vote favourably for the Kádár government with regards to the 'Hungarian Question'. Hungarian diplomacy used the question of Jewish *aliyah* to gain support, or at least force a neutral position from Israel in the United Nations.<sup>94</sup> The behavior of the Jewish State during the voting confirms this correlation: Israel repeatedly abstained when it came to voting on resolutions on the 'Hungarian Question'.<sup>95</sup>

However, Hungary was not the only country in the Communist bloc to allow Jewish emigration at this time. In this issue, the Soviet Union did not openly interfere with the policies of its Eastern European satellites. On March 25, 1957, the Soviet Union concluded a repatriation agreement with Poland. The contract permitted

<sup>91</sup> See: Yaakov Ro'i, *The Struggle for Soviet Jewish Emigration 1948-1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 81.

<sup>92</sup> Dwight Eisenhower, President of the United States declared in January 1957 with relation to the situation in the Middle East that a country could request American economic assistance and/or aid from U.S. military forces if it was being threatened by armed aggression from another state. The Doctrine was intended as an answer to the Soviet Union's aspirations to control the area after the Suez Crisis.

<sup>93</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Israel), box no. 1, 1/a, document no. 008055/1956. Letter from Lajos Nagy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) to the Hungarian legation in Tel Aviv about the restructuring of diplomatic activities, December 30, 1956.

<sup>94</sup> János Radványi, *Hungary and the Superpowers. The 1956 Revolution and Realpolitik*. (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1972.), 55-57.

<sup>95</sup> OSA, HU OSA 300-40-1, box 293. RFE Research Institute Hungarian Unit UN Files. 'Breakdown of UN vote on Hungarian Resolution deploring the continuing disregard by the Soviet Union and the present Hungarian regime of assembly resolutions concerning the situation in Hungary' (no date)

repatriation to Poland those of Jewish and Polish nationality, who had been Polish citizens before September 1, 1939. Nikita Khrushchev acknowledged in an interview that the repatriation process would include a lot of Jews, many of whom would go on to Israel from Poland.<sup>96</sup> However, the Soviet leadership did not put any obstacles to it at that time because it was “interested in the consolidation of the Polish leadership and probably took into consideration that the renewal of repatriation would be one of the means to achieve it.”<sup>97</sup> The agreement was viewed by many as “one of the first concessions won by Gomułka during his first talks with Khrushchev”<sup>98</sup> and as a result, between 1956 and 1960, more than forty thousand Jews emigrated from Poland to Israel.<sup>99</sup> Jewish emigration was permitted from Bulgaria after the end of the Second World War. According to Hungarian archival sources, “those who wanted to emigrate to Israel to join their relatives and acquaintances were let go”<sup>100</sup> in the name of family reunification, understood in a rather broad sense. As a result of this large-scale emigration, there were only a few thousand Jews left in Bulgaria by the end of the 1950s.<sup>101</sup> Czechoslovakia and Romania did not permit significant Jewish emigration at this time, though Romanian policies would soon change in this respect.<sup>102</sup> In his recent monograph, Radu Ioanid told the story of the extraordinary business dealing between

<sup>96</sup> Nora Levin, *Paradox of Survival. The Jews in the Soviet Union since 1917*, Vol. II. (New York and London: New York University Press, 1990), 585. A Memorandum written to President of the World Jewish Congress Nahum Goldmann also claimed that “Khrushchev told various visitors from this country he knew that the Jews allowed to go to Poland would proceed to Israel.” In: CZA, Z6/1704, Nahum Goldmann Personal Papers, Jewish Congress, New York, 1958. No author.

<sup>97</sup> Yosef Govrin, *Israeli-Soviet Relations 1953-1967. From Confrontation to Disruption* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 142.

<sup>98</sup> Michael Checinski, *Poland. Communism, Nationalism, Anti-semitism*. (New York: Karz-Cohl Publishing, 1982), 129.

<sup>99</sup> Michael Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead. Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 67.

<sup>100</sup> MOL, M-KS 288. 32/1962/15. Report of Gyula Nyerki (Hungarian legation in Tel Aviv) about the submission of the catalogue about new trade and customs tariffs, January 8, 1962.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> By 1965, as a result of mass emigration, about 100,000 Jews remained in Romania of the 430,000 after the war. See: Leon Volovici, ‘Romanian Jewry under Rabbi Moses Rosen during the Ceausescu Regime’ in: Ezra Mendelsohn (ed.), *Studies in Contemporary Jewry, Vol. XIX: Jews and the State: Dangerous Alliances and the Perils of Privilege* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 181-194, 183.

Romania and Israel, which facilitated the mass emigration of the country's Jewry in the 1950s and 1960s. Israel paid for every single Romanian immigrant in capital investments and later, cash.<sup>103</sup> Though the Israelis tried a similar scheme in Hungary, it did not work out quite that well.

#### 2.4.2. Bargaining

"It is time to renew the pressure on the [Hungarian] Foreign Ministry... it is time to find the way and form in which we can mention a cheque to the Foreign Minister (for approval of the revision of [exit visa] refusals and the possibility of further liberalization of *aliyah* possibilities) and ask for the implementation," urged the chargé d'affaires of the Israeli legation in Budapest, Menachem Daniv his Ministry in early 1960.<sup>104</sup> The letter suggests that the Israelis had tried similar transactions to facilitate *aliyah* as in the case of Romania but encountered some problems.

The good relationship between Israel and Hungary after the revolution only lasted a few months. Jewish emigration was abruptly halted in the spring of 1957. The official reason given for the relapse in Hungarian-Israeli diplomatic relations was the illegal action of the Israeli legation in Budapest. Hungarian authorities claimed that the commercial attaché "took a significant amount of currency, jewellery and other valuable objects from Hungarian citizens who then got back the valuables, or their financial equivalent, in Israel."<sup>105</sup> The result became a compensation issue of 3.5

<sup>103</sup> Radu Ioanid, *The Ransom of the Jews. The Story of the Extraordinary Secret Bargain Between Romania and Israel* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2005).

<sup>104</sup> Israel State Archives (Henceforth:ISA), 93.10/1.29. (2154/9- ). Letter from Menachem Daniv to the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Director of Eastern European Division, January 27, 1960.

<sup>105</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Izrael), box no. 1, 1/c, document no. 001632/3/1957. Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with regards to the illegal activity of the Israeli legation in Budapest, May 15, 1957.

million dollars. This was the amount Hungary demanded from Israel as restitution for the economic damage.<sup>106</sup>

The timing of the “smuggling scandal” was nevertheless not coincidental. In fact, the Israeli practice to facilitate the transfer of personal assets of emigrants was not new. As early as 1949, there were arrangements between the Hungarian and the Israeli governments to that effect, though the amount was limited to 15-20,000 Forints per family.<sup>107</sup> Thus, it is doubtful that the Hungarian government was ignorant of these activities in the 1950s. What compelled the Hungarian authorities to bring them to light was that in the summer of 1956, a Hungarian financial expert conducting negotiations in Paris informed the government that Israel would be willing to spend on emigration from Hungary. The information was that

[t]he Israelis would be very pleased if the Hungarian government would authorize, within a certain period of time (roughly 12 months), the emigration of 10-12,000 Jews... if they were to receive a verbal promise from the Hungarian government that we would look favourably on such a request, the financial group with close links to the Israelis would be prepared – even without the two matters being visibly connected – to offer certain economic benefits.<sup>108</sup>

The 1957 “smuggling scandal” was thus a good possibility to give a boost to the Hungarian state budget.

The Israeli government, though not officially acknowledging responsibility, agreed to pay restitution in the hope of being able to ensure the continuation of *aliyah*. The amount agreed upon was 1.5 million dollars in four instalments.<sup>109</sup> However, the Hungarians did not keep their part of the deal, as Jewish emigration from Hungary did not return to the earlier level: from then on, only a few hundred Jews left Hungary

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> George Garai, *The Policy towards the Jews, Zionism, and Israel of the Hungarian Communist Party, 1945-1953* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, London School of Economics, 1979), 178.

<sup>108</sup> András Kovács, ‘A Matter of Embarrassment. Documents on Secret Negotiations between Hungary and Israel, 1957-1961’ in: András Kovács and Michael Miller (eds.), *Jewish Studies at the Central European University, Vol. VII (2008-2009)* (Budapest: CEU, 2013), 175-204.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

each year.<sup>110</sup> The balance between payments and permitted emigration numbers became the main bargaining issue between Hungarian and Israeli authorities, though the former never acknowledged the correlation between the number of issued exit visas and Israeli money-transfers to the Hungarian National Bank. When Israel was dissatisfied with the low numbers of emigration, payments were suspended in April 1959.<sup>111</sup> The intervention of Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Golda Meir was necessary whose secret negotiations with her Hungarian counterpart, Endre Sík, during UN meetings ensured the continuation of Israeli payments and Jewish emigration from Hungary,<sup>112</sup> in slightly higher numbers than before.<sup>113</sup> However, there was no considerable population movement from Hungary to Israel during the period under investigation. It was this realization that prompted Menachem Daniv's urging message quoted above.

There were several reasons why the exit visa for money exchange was not successful in Hungary. One factor blocking the deal was the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior, which was issuing the exit visas. This body's interests dictated asserting its own importance and authority by rejecting a good proportion of visa claims. Even though Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Károly Szarka was in the beginning personally involved in the operations, when he submitted a list of rejected Jewish visa applicants for reconsideration,<sup>114</sup> the official at the Ministry of the Interior flatly rebuked his request. "We think it is inappropriate that a foreign legation is dealing

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<sup>110</sup> 'Information on current issues of Hungarian-Israeli relations by Gábor Bebök, 6<sup>th</sup> Regional Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 14, 1966' in: Kovács and Miller (eds.), *Jewish Studies at the Central European University*.

<sup>111</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Israel), box no. 2, 4/a, document no. 00354/1961. Report of the 4th Political Department on Israeli restitutions and the related question of emigration, May 11, 1960.

<sup>112</sup> Endre Sík, *Bem rakparti évek* [Years on Bem quay] (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 1970), 189-192.

<sup>113</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Israel), box no. 2, 4/a, document no. 00354/1961. Report of the 4th Political Department on Israeli restitutions and the related question of emigration, May 11, 1960.

<sup>114</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Israel), box no. 1, 1/c, document no. 001632/1957. Letter from Károly Szarka, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs to Major József Tatai, Passport Department of the Ministry of the Interior, March 26, 1957.

with the passport issues of Hungarian emigrants... Therefore, we are not dealing with the lengthy list of rejected applicants attached to your letter.”<sup>115</sup> The Ministry of the Interior, in its negative attitude to emigration, also considered the danger of enemy work, illegal emigration, and the departure of experts and free professionals.<sup>116</sup>

Another factor blocking Jewish emigration was the official leadership of the Hungarian Jewish community, which was trying to prove its loyalty to the regime by discouraging emigration. “They are interested in the failure of *aliyah*, demonstrate fidelity to the power [centre], and keep the good jobs,”<sup>117</sup> was the bitter observation of the Israeli diplomats in 1960. The more Jewish emigrants towards Israel, the less validity the Hungarian Jewish leadership’s claim would have had about Hungarian Jews’ patriotism, the community’s budget, and the necessary personnel to run its affairs.

Third, it must be noted that Israeli expectations of the scope of Hungarian Jewish emigration were unrealistic. Those who really wanted to leave did so in the wake of the 1956 revolution. The disproportionally high number of Jews among illegal emigrants (about 10 percent)<sup>118</sup> certainly suggests so. But those who were left behind were not so willing to move.<sup>119</sup> Even if Hungarian authorities had authorized every single exit visa request, the number of emigrants to Israel would not have surpassed a few hundred each year, well below what the Israelis expected.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>115</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Izrael), box no. 1, 1/c, document no. 001632/1/1957. Letter from Major József Tatai to Károly Szarka, May 2, 1957.

<sup>116</sup> ISA, 93.10/1.29. (2154/9- ), Yerachmiel Ram Yaron’s report on Hungarian-Israeli relations to the Department of Eastern Europe at the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 26, 1960.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Tamás Stark, ‘Kísérlet a zsidó népesség számának behatárolására 1945 és 1995 között’ [Experiment to determine the number of the Jewish population between 1945 and 1995] in: András Kovács (ed.), *Zsidók a mai Magyarországon* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2002), 101-135, 122-123.

<sup>119</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Izrael), box no. 11, 29/e, document no. 008548/1961. Letter from Irén Rózsa to the Hungarian Embassy in Warsaw, January 29, 1962.

<sup>120</sup> Kovács, ‘A Matter of Embarrassment’



This chapter discussed the Kádár regime's initial attempts to regain control of the situation in Hungary and the connections of these policies to Jewish issues. State policies in these areas were ambiguous, yet rational. The Kádár regime manipulated its representations of popular antisemitism with two goals in mind. First, it applied sanctions selectively rather than consistently to suppress or appease threats to its consolidation. Second, it attempted to discourage the popular notion of 'Jewish Communism' in the official narrative of the "counterrevolution" in order to increase its own legitimacy. Meanwhile, Kádár tolerated manifestations of antisemitism within the Party that erupted because of cadre reshuffling and what is more, substantiated these anti-Jewish beliefs by intentionally minimizing the number of Party members of Jewish origin in the highest ranks of leadership. This tolerance of antisemitic language and possibly even anti-Jewish discrimination was in sharp contrast with the officially professed opposition to such beliefs, and served to accentuate that the new regime differed from its predecessor's in which Jews constituted the majority of the highest leadership. Conversely, to decrease its international isolation, the Kádár regime granted certain concessions to the Jewish community to establish Western contacts through the World Jewish Congress, and cultivated good relations with Israel. However, both of these were reversed because of Moscow's influence, however indirect.

**3.**

### 3. The Eichmann trial – the politics of amnesty and amnesia?

Adolf Eichmann, a former Nazi *SS-Obersturmbannführer* (Lieutenant Colonel) was captured by Israeli secret agents in Buenos Aires, Argentina on May 11, 1960. He was subsequently transported to Israel where he would stand on trial, indicted on 15 criminal charges, including crimes against humanity, crimes against the Jewish people and membership in an outlawed organization.<sup>1</sup> His trial began in Jerusalem on April 11, 1961. He was pronounced guilty on December 11, and executed in the spring of 1962.

Many historians have argued that the Eichmann trial signalled an important turning point in (if not the real beginning of) Holocaust memory. David Cesarani noted that “the capture, trial and execution of Adolf Eichmann... changed forever perceptions of the Nazi persecution and mass murder of the Jews.”<sup>2</sup> Michael Rothberg went as far as stating that “the Eichmann trial brought the Nazi genocide of European Jews into the public sphere for the first time as a discrete event on an international scale.”<sup>3</sup> Not only the trial itself, but Hannah Arendt’s iconic articles in the *New Yorker* magazine which were later turned into the book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, started the global scholarly debate about the character of Adolf Eichmann, the working logic of the totalitarian state and individual responsibility in its operation.

The significance of the trial in communist Eastern Europe, however, was somewhat different. The Eichmann case presented a problem for these countries because the regimes had to offer an interpretation of WWII which not only fit their

<sup>1</sup> OSA, HU OSA 300-40-1, box no. 1606. CNR Report, Munich, 29 March, 1961.

<sup>2</sup> David Cesarani (ed.), *After Eichmann. Collective Memory and the Holocaust after 1961* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Rothberg, ‘Beyond Eichmann: Rethinking the emergence of Holocaust memory’ in: *History and Theory*, Vol. 46, Issue 1 (February, 2007), 74.

contemporary Cold War narrative, but also corresponded to the principles of Marxism-Leninism. Communist doctrine interpreted WWII as the struggle between Fascism and anti-Fascism, but the proceedings of the Eichmann trial focused first and foremost on his and Nazi Germany's atrocities against Jews (rather than victims persecuted for their political beliefs). The tension between this historical interpretation and the communist narrative posed a problem for all countries of the Eastern bloc on a systemic level.

Though there has not been a single coherent Marxist-Leninist theory of Fascism,<sup>4</sup> it is possible to highlight some of the most important elements that Marxist thinkers and communist propagandists emphasized. Communist regimes were anti-fascist on an ideological basis, thus in the interpretation of communist dogma, WWII was first and foremost a fight between Fascism and anti-Fascism. George Dimitrov saw Fascism as the terroristic dictatorship of monopoly capitalism<sup>5</sup> while the official Comintern definition of 1933 saw it as a tool of "finance capital" which aimed at creating an organized mass basis.<sup>6</sup> This strictly materialistic definition remained the official interpretation in communist countries until 1989. During the inter-war period, a number of Marxist theories described Fascism as a reactionary ideology supported by the petty bourgeoisie which aimed to crush the working class (which was opposed to capitalism).<sup>7</sup> The widening support of Hitler's NSDAP (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) in the early 1930s was explained as the result of the bourgeoisie's manipulation.

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed account of Marxist theories of Fascism see: Dave Renton, *Fascism. Theory and Practice*. (London; Stirling, VA: Pluto Press, 1999)

<sup>5</sup> George Dimitrov, *Against Fascism and War* (New York: International Publishers, 1986), 2.

<sup>6</sup> 'Theses on Fascism, the War Danger and the Tasks of the Communist Parties' in: Jane Degras (ed.), *The Communist International: 1919-1943. Documents*. Volume 3 (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), esp. 296.

<sup>7</sup> David Beetham (ed.), *Marxists in Face of Fascism: Writings by Marxists on Fascism from the Interwar Period* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 197–204; Léon Trotsky, *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany* (London: Pathfinder, 1971), 155–6.

After WWII, the maintenance of the anti-fascist narrative had several functions in Eastern Europe. First, it served as a reminder of the successful struggle of communists in general, and the Soviet Union in particular, against Nazi Germany<sup>8</sup> which was viewed not only as a military victory, but also as a moral one.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, anti-Fascism was instrumentalized to legitimize post-war communist rule which was presented as the only guarantee against the resurgence of Fascism.<sup>10</sup> Finally, the theoretical linkage between Fascism and capitalism was used in the ideological battles of the Cold War. It served as a basis to attack Western European countries and the United States. Communist regimes claimed that repression remained inherent in those socio-economic structures that were based on capitalism.

In the context of fascist and anti-fascist struggle, the persecution of Jews was not a primary focus of communist interpretations of WWII history. While some academics assert that the memory of the Holocaust was completely oppressed in the Soviet Union<sup>11</sup> and its Eastern European communist counterparts,<sup>12</sup> others argue that it was normalized by being presented as part of a larger phenomenon.<sup>13</sup> There were also changes in the memorialisation of WWII at this time. During the Stalinist period, the ‘great leader’ had been credited for the defeat of Nazi Germany. But under

<sup>8</sup> Nina Tumarkin, ‘The Great Patriotic War as myth and memory’ in: *European Review*, Vol.11, No. 4 (October, 2003), 596.

<sup>9</sup> Nati Cantorovich, ‘Soviet Reactions to the Eichmann Trial: Preliminary Investigations 1960-1965’ in: David Silberklang (ed.), *Yad Vashem Studies*, 35 (2), (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007), 106.

<sup>10</sup> Mark R. Thompson, ‘Reluctant revolutionaries: Anti-Fascism and the East German opposition’ in: *German Politics*, Vol. 8, No.1 (1999), 43. James Mark, ‘Antifascism, the 1956 Revolution and the Politics of the Communist Autobiographies in Hungary 1944-2000’ in: *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 8 (2006), 1209-1240.

<sup>11</sup> See for example: William Korey, ‘Down History’s Memory Hole: Soviet Treatment of the Holocaust’ in: *Present Tense*, Vol. 10 (Winter, 1983), 53.

<sup>12</sup> See for example: Randolph L. Braham, ‘Assault on Historical Memory: Hungarian Nationalists and the Holocaust’ in: *Hungary and the Holocaust: Confrontation with the Past*. Symposium Proceedings, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, 2001, esp. 51; Shari J. Cohen *Politics without a Past: The Absence of History in Post-communist Nationalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), esp. 85-118 (on Czechoslovakia); Michael Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997)

<sup>13</sup> Zvi Gitelman, ‘Politics and Historiography of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union’ in: Zvi Gitelman (ed.), *Bitter Legacy. Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 14-42.

Khrushchev's rule, the emphasis shifted in the Soviet Union. It was the heroism and suffering of the Soviet people as a whole that became the focal point of remembrance.<sup>14</sup> This shift in WWII memorialisation did not lend favour the acknowledgement of Jewish victimhood which could have overshadowed the extent of sacrifices made by the people of the USSR.

The Eichmann trial posed another problem for 'real socialist' states, in that Israel asserted the role of the main representative and articulator of Jewish interests. Each of the Eastern European communist countries still had Jewish communities (some larger, some smaller) living within its territory. That the most recent history of these communities would be interpreted through a framework defined by an Israeli court was highly undesirable. Israel, especially since the Suez Crisis of 1956 and because of the increasingly Western orientation of its foreign policies, was viewed as the "mainstay of Western imperialism" in the Middle East.<sup>15</sup> The country's strengthening relations with West Germany since the 1950s<sup>16</sup> were considered by communist propaganda as the Jewish state's clear pact with Communism's arch-enemy in Europe.<sup>17</sup> This situation then raised important practical questions for the whole bloc with regards to the trial, including whether communist states should collaborate with the Israeli court (for example, by providing it with documentation), and whether the authority of the Israeli court over Eichmann could and should be acknowledged at all, instead of insisting on the trial of Eichmann in Eastern Europe.

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<sup>14</sup> For example, during Stalinism, the number of Soviet deaths attributed to the war was 7 million, while Khrushchev admitted to 20 million deaths. See: Catherine Merridale, 'War, Death, and Remembrance in Soviet Russia' in: Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (eds.), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 62.

<sup>15</sup> Yosef Govrin, *Israeli-Soviet Relations 1953-1967. From Confrontation to Disruption* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 45.

<sup>16</sup> Cantorovich, 'Soviet Reactions to the Eichmann Trial', 109.

<sup>17</sup> Govrin, *Israeli-Soviet Relations*, 80.

There were also certain country-specific problems that the capture of Adolf Eichmann and his trial presented for Eastern European leaderships. The German Democratic Republic (GDR), as the socialist German state and ‘Victor of History’ (*Sieger der Geschichte*), “exempted itself from all political and historical responsibility for the German past.”<sup>18</sup> The Eichmann case was thus an unparalleled opportunity and a very dangerous situation at the same time for East German propaganda. It was an opportunity to incriminate the German Federal Republic (GFR) through the presentation of that country as the sole heir of Nazi Germany and as opposed to the GDR, “the only true anti-fascist state on German soil.”<sup>19</sup> But it was also a danger, as leading or well-known East German political and intellectual personalities might be implicated at any point in the criminal process against Adolf Eichmann.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, perhaps to a greater extent than other countries of the bloc which had existed before 1945, the propaganda of the GDR especially favoured a future-oriented approach to national identity based on the “concept of successful struggle rather than a commemoration of past sacrifices or an acknowledgement of past failures and defeats.”<sup>21</sup> The criminal procedure against Adolf Eichmann forced GDR propagandists to turn back towards the past.

In Poland, the communist regime propagated a narrative of Polish victimhood during WWII in the hands of Nazi occupiers.<sup>22</sup> The Polish self-image as ‘martyr of the

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<sup>18</sup> Katharina von Ankum, ‘Victims, Memory, History: Anti-Fascism and the Question of National Identity in East German Narratives after 1990’ in: *History and Memory*, Vol. 7, No.2 (Fall-Winter, 1995), 42.

<sup>19</sup> Jan Herman Brinks, ‘Political Anti-Fascism in the German Democratic Republic’ in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (April, 1997), 210.

<sup>20</sup> In fact, in early 1960 the GFR government issued a Bulletin about former Nazis who had made remarkable careers in the GDR. Among them were not only scholars, artists, members of the press and diplomatic services, but several staff executives of the Communist Party. The bulletin mentioned 56 former NSDAP (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) members in the East German parliament. See: Brinks, ‘Political Anti-Fascism’, 212-216.

<sup>21</sup> Ankum, ‘Victims, Memory, History’ 42.

<sup>22</sup> Barbara Szaeka, ‘Polish Remembrance of WWII’ in: *International Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (Winter 2006-2007), 12.

nations' went back to (at least) the nineteenth century<sup>23</sup> and the communist leadership used this historical imagery to legitimize the country's post-war Western borders and to divert attention from the fact that the Soviet occupation of Poland during WWII was also tragic. The emphasis on Eichmann's crimes against Jews was a competing narrative and like that, particularly irritating from the point of view of this Polish self-image.

As opposed to Poland, a country "without a Quisling and, in all of Nazi-controlled Europe, the place least likely to assist the German war effort"<sup>24</sup>, Hungary entered WWII on the side of Nazi Germany and remained its ally up until the abortive attempt to switch sides in 1944.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, unlike Poland and Czechoslovakia which both had considerable resistance movements during WWII, Hungary's was weak and insignificant.<sup>26</sup> Up until the country's invasion in March 1944, there were barely any German soldiers on Hungarian soil to resist, which made the anti-fascist resistance struggle story particularly hard to substantiate. Furthermore, as opposed to Czechoslovakia or Bulgaria for instance, the home-bred communist movement in Hungary was also weak and received little support from the population. Therefore, the generic Fascism against anti-Fascism narrative was especially unfit for the Hungarian context and the Eichmann trial threatened to highlight these contradictions.

The nature of Fascism, Nazism and the history of WWII, as presented by communist theory and propaganda, had strong ideological undertones as well as policy goals, and did not correspond well to the forming Western understanding of the

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<sup>23</sup> Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe. A Short History of Poland* (London: Clarendon Press, 1984), 202. Gerhard Wagner, 'Nationalism and Cultural Memory in Poland: the European Union Turns East' in: *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 17, No.2 (Winter, 2003), 205.

<sup>24</sup> John Connelly, 'Why the Poles Collaborated so Little: And Why That is No Reason for Nationalist Hubris' in: *Slavic Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (Winter, 2005), 772.

<sup>25</sup> Andrew C. Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary 1825-1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982).

<sup>26</sup> István Deák, 'A Fatal Compromise? The Debate Over Collaboration and Resistance in Hungary' in: *East European Politics and Society*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Spring, 1995), 209-233.



Holocaust as the mass murder of Jews. Thus, the case of Adolf Eichmann presents an excellent opportunity to explore how Eastern European countries in general, and the Hungarian Kádár regime in particular, dealt with this problem. Furthermore, national histories did not always mesh well with the universal communist version of WWII, and thus it is possible to comparatively explore how systemic and country-specific problems related to each other, and how they were (or were not) resolved.

### **3.1. Hungarian political decisions and bloc-level considerations**

Even before Eichmann was captured, there had been signals from Moscow and elsewhere in the bloc as to which issues would later become prominent during his trial. The GDR had been intensively campaigning against West Germany, and as of 1956, East German propagandists leashed a full-scale attack. They claimed that former Nazis were returning to positions of power in the Federal Republic. The Israeli Foreign Ministry reported about a secret meeting of the leaders of Jewish communities from Poland, Romania, Hungary and East Germany in Warsaw in early February 1960. The goal of the gathering was to prepare a joint campaign against the Bonn government.<sup>27</sup> Shortly after Eichmann's capture was announced to the world, Soviet propaganda set out to attack West Germany, arguing that the country was trying to put a stop to holding the trial so as to prevent the exposure of ex-Nazis active in the ranks of the West German establishment.<sup>28</sup>

The prominence of the GFR among the issues stemmed from the Cold War power-balance and East Germany's untenable economic and demographic situation at that time. Berlin was the only territory where the military forces of the two superpowers

<sup>27</sup> ISA, 93.10/1-22. (2154/2- ). Letter from the Israeli Foreign Ministry to the Israeli Legations in Budapest, Warsaw and Bucharest, February 12, 1960.

<sup>28</sup> Cantorovich, 'Soviet Reactions to the Eichmann Trial', 111-115.

directly confronted each other and the question was causing repeated tensions between them. Despite communist propaganda's assertions about the "crisis of capitalism", thousands of East-Germans were escaping to West Germany on a daily basis.<sup>29</sup> A recurrent theme of the USSR's propaganda campaign against the GFR was the supposed resurgence of revanchism and militarism, indicating to some degree real Soviet fears of a rearmed and nuclearized West Germany. At least up until the mid-1950s, such propaganda also aimed at the West German public, among whom the aversion to rearmament was quite widespread, and whose resistance could have delayed the military integration of the GFR into NATO.<sup>30</sup> In the light of these long-term Soviet strategies, it was predictable that during the Eichmann trial, the main propaganda goal in the bloc would be the attack on the GFR.

Another element that was likely to appear in official communist comments on the Eichmann court procedure was the critical stand towards Israel. During the Suez Crisis, Moscow sided with its new Arab allies and after the war, Soviet-Israeli relations quickly deteriorated.<sup>31</sup> Israel became the subject of insulting attacks in Soviet media as an aggressor alongside France and Britain. Furthermore, the USSR government was also trying to counter Soviet Jewish aspirations for emigration with an active anti-Israel propaganda campaign.<sup>32</sup> The hostility towards the Jewish State would be carried on also during the Eichmann trial.

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<sup>29</sup> Between 1945 and 1961, about two and a half million people fled from the German Democratic Republic to the German Federal Republic, reducing the population of the former by fifteen percent. Frederick Taylor, *The Berlin Wall. A World Divided, 1961-1989* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), XVIII.

<sup>30</sup> Michael J. Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany and the West. From Khrushchev to Gorbachev* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 1991), 10.

<sup>31</sup> Benjamin Pinkus, *The Soviet Government and the Jews 1948-1967. A Documented Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 239.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

### 3.1.1. Dealing with the Israeli criminal court: consultations in the bloc

The Department of Foreign Affairs of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (*MSZMP KB Külgügyi Osztály*) was the first organ of the bureaucratic apparatus to work out an action plan to deal with the Eichmann case. Their first proposal<sup>33</sup> to the Politburo on June 24, 1960 suggested that Hungary should ask for the extradition of Eichmann from Israel so that he could be tried at a Hungarian court, on the account that he committed a great majority of his crimes against humanity in that country.<sup>34</sup> The draft also proposed consultations with Czechoslovakia and Poland, two other bloc countries where Eichmann was stationed during WWII. However, after some brief deliberations with the Foreign Ministries of these two states and the Soviet Union, the initial plan about requesting the expedition of Eichmann was dropped for fears of Israeli refusal and thereby the foreseeable loss of prestige of the socialist states. Though the Czechoslovaks originally considered extradition, Polish communists ruled it out because the plan would not have “the slightest prospect of success, also because such a procedure would mean taking part in the conflict between Argentina and Israel,<sup>35</sup> and because such a claim might bring

<sup>33</sup> MOL, 288.32/1960/11. Proposal of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party to the Politburo in relation to the Eichmann case, by Imre Hollai and János Péter, June 24, 1960.

<sup>34</sup> According to the Moscow Declaration (also known as “Declaration of the Four Nations on General Security”) signed by the governments of China, the United Kingdom, the United States and the Soviet Union on October 30, 1943, “those German officers and men and members of the Nazi party who have been responsible for or have taken a consenting part in the above atrocities, massacres and executions will be sent back to the countries in which their abominable deeds were done in order that they may be judged and punished according to the laws of these liberated countries and of free governments which will be erected therein.” It was based on this document that the Hungarian government thought to request Eichmann's expedition. However, as the Declaration was signed before the German invasion of Hungary, the atrocities that the document mentions refer to those committed in the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Greece, Norway, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France and Italy.

<sup>35</sup> In June 1960, Argentina requested a meeting of the UN Security Council, claiming that the Israelis violated the sovereign rights of the republic when they had abducted Eichmann in Buenos Aires. After months of negotiations and the involvement of the Security Council, Israel and Argentina eventually agreed to end their dispute with a joint statement.

about a counter claim by the German Federal Republic, which is undesirable.”<sup>36</sup> It was also decided that the explicit recognition of the Israeli court’s competence was to be avoided, though the Hungarians acknowledged it with regards to people who had become Israeli citizens by the time of the trial. The recognition of the court’s full authority would have run counter to the general position of socialist states which held that Israel had no right to speak up for the entirety of world Jewry.<sup>37</sup>

Eastern European ‘real socialist’ countries could not develop a uniform position on whether they should fulfill the Israeli court’s request for documentation on Eichmann’s activities on their territories during the war. Hungary proposed to provide Israel with the materials through a semi-official social organization, while Czechoslovakia insisted on publishing the materials first. Finally, a compromise was worked out inasmuch as the parties involved decided to do these two actions simultaneously. The organizations that published these materials, the National Committee of Persons Persecuted by Nazism in Hungary (*Nácizmus Magyarországi Üldözötteinek Országos Bizottsága*) and the Union of Anti-Fascist Fighters in Czechoslovakia<sup>38</sup> were not affiliated with the Jewish communities or any Jewish organization for that matter. That signalled not only that the Eichmann case would not be an occasion to open a discussion about the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, but also that the governments intended to hold their grips firmly on their monopoly of information.

<sup>36</sup> Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Antonín Novotný, August 12, 1960. Published in: Marie Crhová, ‘Israel in the foreign and internal politics of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in the 1960s and beyond’ in: András Kovács and Michael Miller (eds.), *Jewish Studies at the CEU IV*. (2004-2005) (Budapest: CEU, 2005), 264.

<sup>37</sup> Israel’s right to speak up for world Jewry was also contested in the West, especially by American Jewry. See: Yaacov Ro’i, *The Struggle for Soviet Jewish Emigration 1948-1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), esp. 93.

<sup>38</sup> Crhová, ‘Israel in the foreign and internal politics’, 263.

### 3.1.2 Anti-Zionism: a personal theme?

The Hungarian Politburo first discussed the Eichmann case and its implications for propaganda purposes on its meeting on June 28, 1960. István Szirmai, the member responsible for culture and ideology quickly rose to offer his opinion. He emphasized that the trial presented a good apropos for communist propaganda to implicate Zionism. He highlighted that

there are certain matters which severely compromise the Israeli government and the Zionist movement. Eichmann knows about these things, and the Israelis don't want them to come to light. Such factors also exist. There was that Kaszner [sic] affair whom the Israeli government had shot in order to shut him up.<sup>39</sup>

Contrary to Szirmai's claims, Rezső Kasztner was shot in Tel Aviv by a young, extreme right-wing supporter Zeev Eckstein, and not on the orders of the Israeli government, of which he was a member as a spokesman for the Ministry of Transportation. Szirmai's version of the story is therefore rather absurd, but highlights very well how biographies and personal dynamics played a role in the formation of state policies. Szirmai's animosity towards Kasztner and Zionism might have had more to it than simple political considerations.

Both men were born into Jewish families in 1906 in Transylvania. Szirmai in the small town of Zilah (Zalău), eighty kilometers away from Kasztner's hometown Kolozsvár (Cluj). Both became politically active at an early age. Szirmai started his political activities in the local organization of the Socialist-Zionist *Hashomer Hatzair* movement, while Kasztner entered the youth group *Barissia*, whose members were training to become citizens of Eretz Israel. After the First World War, Transylvania became part of Romania and the country's interwar governments followed

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<sup>39</sup> 'Minutes of the Politburo of the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party 28 June 1960' in: András Kovács and Michael Miller (eds.), *Jewish Studies at the CEU IV*. (2004-2005) (Budapest: CEU, 2005), 217-218.

increasingly authoritarian, nationalist policies against Jews. Szirmai and Kasztner represented two extremes of the answers given by the Jewish community. Szirmai joined the Romanian Communist Party in 1929, thus moved away from Zionist ideas, (if not completely leaving his Jewish identification behind) and considered communist internationalism the best answer to ethnic tensions. Kasztner on the other hand worked close to the National Jewish Party in Cluj, remained a supporter of Zionism, and was increasingly convinced that Palestine was the only safe place for Jews. The beginning of the forties found both men in Budapest: Szirmai was living in illegality as the liaison between Transylvanian communists and the Hungarian Communist Party; Kasztner was trying to help Jewish refugees to obtain exit visas to go to Palestine. It is possible that the two became personally acquainted when Kasztner, as a member of the Jewish Rescue and Aid Committee tried repeatedly to get financial help from the Hungarian communists, where Szirmai was a member of the Central Committee. However, while Szirmai spent the second half of the war in prison, Kasztner saved himself and sixteen-hundred other Jews on the famous ‘Kasztner train’. Kasztner made a political career in the *Mapai* (Labour) Party in Israel, Szirmai in communist Hungary where he acted as the Party’s functionary unofficially responsible for ‘Zionist affairs’. His position toward Zionism was not the least bit friendly at that time. He proposed to ban all Zionist organizations on the grounds that they were “spreading bourgeois nationalism, adding to the emigration craze through their organizations, smuggling hard currency, ‘rescuing property’, and damaging the forint.”<sup>40</sup> On a private meeting with two ultra-left Zionist emissaries from Palestine back in the late 1940s, Szirmai also opined that Zionism was “a dangerous ideology based on the disregard for realities” and prophesized that in a couple of years’ time,

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<sup>40</sup> András Kovács, ‘Hungarian Jewish Politics from the End of the Second World War until the Collapse of Communism’ in: Ezra Mendelsohn (ed.), *Jews and the State: Dangerous Alliances and the Perils of Privilege* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 133.

“nobody would consider himself Jewish in Hungary.”<sup>41</sup> The different trajectories these two lives took are representative of the very different choices Hungarian-speaking Jews made in the twentieth century and it is possible that the old controversy within the Jewish community influenced Szirmai’s harsh opinions in 1960.<sup>42</sup>

Besides historic circumstances, psychological factors possibly also played a role in Szirmai’s rather incongruous outburst. His stand might have been a representative example of ‘radical dissimulation’ that Viktor Karády characterized as “the censorship of Jewishness, understood even as an illusion of a thematic, concrete community experience.”<sup>43</sup> Jewish members of the Party did not consider themselves as members of the Jewish community but as members of the more universal ‘we’: the supporters of the regime. Even if Szirmai wanted to “censor his Jewishness”, ironically, he had been repeatedly reminded of it in the Party. First, he was imprisoned for his ‘Zionist activities’ by Mátyás Rákosi at the beginning of 1953, when Rákosi was planning a Hungarian Zionist show-trial similar to the Doctors’ Plot in the USSR and the Slánský trial in Czechoslovakia. A few months before his above speech at the Politburo, Szirmai had been the target of a personal attack of a hard-liner Party member who labeled him a Zionist.<sup>44</sup> Finally, that the Soviet Union had been using anti-Zionist language by quite some time surely encouraged Szirmai to adopt the harsh stand against Israel. Though no other Politburo members emphasized the Zionist angle of the case, the resolution of the political body included this issue when it ruled that

<sup>41</sup> George Garai’s interview with A. Yaari, Jewish Agency emissary to the Hashomer Hatzair in Hungary between 1946-1948. Quoted in: George Garai, *The Policy towards the Jews, Zionism, and Israel of the Hungarian Communist Party, 1945-1953* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, London School of Economics, 1979), 128.

<sup>42</sup> Biographical details of István Szirmai from: *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon* [Hungarian Biographical Encyclopedia]. Available at: <http://mek.niif.hu/00300/00355/html/ABC14240/15145.htm> (Retrieved: 26 July, 2011.) Biographical details of Rezső Kasztner from: Anna Porter, *Kasztner’s Train* (Vancouver, Toronto: Douglas McIntyre, 2007), esp. 9-50.

<sup>43</sup> Viktor Karády, *Túlélők és Újrakezdők* [Survivors and Restarters] (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2002), 209.

<sup>44</sup> This case is going to be presented and contextualized in the next chapter.

in view of neo-fascist symptoms visible in the life of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Zionist nature of the Israeli government's foreign and domestic policy, [the case] must be used to strengthen the antifascist front against fascist efforts.<sup>45</sup>

Szirmai successfully pressured the political body to pick up a propaganda theme that was personally important for him, to some extent because it was also corresponding to Moscow's line.

### **3.1.2. “...that Eichmann killed Hungarian citizens”: the problem of Hungarian attitudes during WWII**

At the same Politburo meeting where István Szirmai sought to implicate Zionism, János Kádár had slightly different issues troubling his mind. In his contribution to the debate on the Eichmann case, he emphasized that

[i]t's not a good idea to turn these awful fascist affairs into an exclusively Jewish question. If we do act in this affair, the decisive thing should be that Eichmann murdered hundreds of thousands of Hungarian citizens... Eichmann did not only murder Jews, there were others there, too. This is not a Jewish question; this is the question of fascism and anti-fascism.<sup>46</sup>

By emphasizing the fascist – anti-fascist struggle, Kádár signalled that he intended to strictly follow the official communist interpretation of WWII.

In itself, that about 600,000 Jewish victims of the Holocaust were Hungarians is a true statement. The problematic part of Kádár's approach was claiming that they had been citizens, which negates the fact that the elected governments of the Hungarian state (and not Nazi Germany) had by 1944 deprived Jews from most of the rights citizens would usually enjoy.<sup>47</sup> Kádár's regime condemned the Horthy establishment

<sup>45</sup> 'Decision of the Politburo, 28 June 1960' in: Kovács and Miller (eds.), *Jewish Studies*, 221.

<sup>46</sup> 'Minutes of the Politburo' in: Kovács and Miller (eds.), *Jewish Studies*, 218.

<sup>47</sup> Following the lost First World War and as a result of post-war settlements, the country lost about two thirds of the Hungarian Crown's previous territory. The most important goal of the then emerging, pre-



as fascist, and placed the blame for the alliance with Nazi Germany on “the ruling classes” and their manipulation of the proletariat and the peasantry. At the same time, it negated official governmental attempts during the course of the war to achieve armistice,<sup>48</sup> and acquitted the general public’s “home-bread” racial chauvinism and antisemitism.

The communist claim that the Horthy establishment was fascist was rather misleading. It inappropriately used the ideological opposition between Communism and Fascism to explain a phenomenon that was in reality the result of different

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eminent conservative Christian political line came to be the revision of the 1919 Paris (Trianon) Treaties. As the territorial losses resulted in the formation of significant Hungarian national minority groups outside Hungary’s new borders, the rhetoric of various governments under Regent Miklós Horthy’s stewardship emphasized the need to preserve and positively discriminate the remaining “authentic” Christian Hungarian population within the country. In the post-1919 monoethnic Hungarian state, Jews were obvious and convenient targets of exclusionist policies based on the above principles which were reinforced by the economic hardships of the period. The anti-Jewish *Numerus Clausus* law of 1920 was the first of its kind in Europe, and aimed at limiting Jewish enrolment in higher education. After Hitler came into power in Germany in 1933, the *Führer*’s aspirations to revise the post-war European order met with Hungarian goals of territorial revision and led to the two country’s alliance in WWII. Way before Adolf Eichmann arrived in the spring of 1944, Hungarian governments had already annihilated the country’s Jewish population by a myriad of discriminative laws. The Jewish Laws passed from 1938 up until the German occupation in March, 1944 restricted many Jewish rights. The so called “First Jewish Law” of 1938 ruled that Jews could occupy only up to twenty percent of positions in the free intellectual professions. The “Second Jewish Law” which was enacted a year later, maximized Jewish presence in intellectual occupations in six percent, forbade their employment in the legal and public administrative apparatuses, as well as in secondary school education. Jews could not be employed by theatres and in the press in positions where they could influence the organs’ intellectual focus. The law restricted the number of Jews employed at companies and reinstated the *Numerus Clausus* in education. Jews were completely excluded from trades that were subject to state authorization. The agricultural property acquisition of Jews was made significantly harder. The “Third Jewish Law” of 1941 which already appropriated the racial definition of Jews as used by the Nazi Nuremberg Laws, forbade mixed marriages between Jews and non-Jews and also punished sexual relationships between them. Other “Jewish Laws” enacted in the following years discriminated against the Jewish religious community, forbade the acquisition of agricultural property by Jews, forced Jewish men into labour service and restricted Jewish rights for free movement. For a detailed account see: Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági, *Hullarablás. A magyar zsidók gazdasági megsemmisítése*. [Robbing the Corpses. The economic destruction of Hungarian Jews. ] (Budapest: Hannah Arendt Egyesület – Jaffa Kiadó, 2005) Blinded by the possibility of easy prey as Jewish assets were confiscated starting in 1941 in Sub-Carpathia and in the rest of the country after the German invasion of 1944 (on the orders of the Sztójay government), the majority of Hungary’s population did not object to these developments. See: Gábor Kádár, *A magyarországi Vészkorszak gazdasági vetületei* [Economic aspects of the Hungarian Shoah], (Ph.D dissertation, Debreceni Egyetem, 2004), 46-50. Available at: [phd.okm.gov.hu/disszertaciok/ertekezesek/2004/de\\_2088.pdf](http://phd.okm.gov.hu/disszertaciok/ertekezesek/2004/de_2088.pdf) (Retrieved: June 27, 2011.) A similar argument is put forward in Götz Aly and Christian Gerlach, *Das Letzte Kapitel, Der Mord an den ungarischen Juden*. [The last chapter. The murder of Hungarian Jews] (Stuttgart: DVA, 2002).

<sup>48</sup> There were a few semi-official attempts by the Kállay government to contact the British and the Americans already in 1942, but from the spring of 1943 (largely triggered the catastrophic defeat of the Second Hungarian Army in the Voronezh area in January of that year), more serious efforts were made to contact the Allies to arrange armistice.

political interests. Horthy's regime indeed nursed various forms of antisemitism, which it did not hesitate to turn into political and legal actions if the political climate permitted. But Horthy did not ally with Nazi Germany out of adherence to its fascist ideology. The alliance promised territorial revision, remedying the losses inflicted upon Hungary by the Paris Treaties after WWI. Though the Horthy establishment was indeed anti-Bolshevik, this was based on a conservative-Christian set of values that fed on the traditions of the Hungarian nobility.

The social basis of the Horthy establishment was the Hungarian Christian middle-class, the former gentry who were slowly losing their landed estates but still clung to their privileged way of life.<sup>49</sup> During the period of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, many members of this social stratum streamed into employment in the public sector. However, after WWI, many of them lost their jobs as a result of the succession states' expulsions, and the generally much smaller need for public administration staff in the reduced country. When they consequently sought employment in liberal and intellectual professions, they found that those positions were by and large occupied by Jews, which fed this class' antisemitism. The Horthy establishment, representing these views and interests, identified Jews as the main internal enemies of the Hungarian Christian nation and 'Judeo-Bolshevism' as the most important outside threat.

Kádár's presentation deliberately ignored the domestic political roots and popular support of Hungary's alliance with Nazi Germany because these did not match the communist WWII narrative and because the story would have undermined Communism's claim for legitimacy in Hungary, built on the myth of widespread anti-fascist resistance. Kádár emphasized that the victims of Fascism (i.e. those who

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<sup>49</sup> Vera Ránki, *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion. Jews and nationalism in Hungary* (New York, London: Holmes and Meier, 1999), 95.

resisted it) were Hungarians, acquitting non-Jews from the accusation of antisemitism, indifference to Jewish suffering and cooperation with the Nazis.

The narrative focusing on the opposition of Fascism and anti-Fascism; and the importance of national unity, as propagated by Kádár was not unique in the Eastern bloc. It was identical to the Polish official standpoint, though there were different considerations behind it. In Poland, it was the Auschwitz camp, a very apparent site of WWII atrocities, which was transformed by the Communist regime into the symbol of fascist oppression and a memorial for Polish resistance to Nazism.<sup>50</sup> The site was acknowledged as a place of Jewish victimization; however, this aspect was not emphasized and was presented as part of a general, bigger tragedy. Auschwitz was very fit to carry the narrative about Polish victimhood and Soviet glory not only because of its significance as a Polish prisoners' camp during the war, but also as one of the few camps where the advancing Red Army actually liberated prisoners and not only trotted through abandoned, empty grounds. Auschwitz was an important tool of emphasizing Nazi crimes and thus minimizing Soviet offences such as the tragedy of Katyn.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, by emphasizing the martyrdom of Poles in the hands of the German Nazis, the Polish regime sought to legitimize its postwar western borders,<sup>52</sup> which at that time were not acknowledged by the GFR because they included a significant stretch of area that could have been claimed as historically German land.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Geneviève Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz. Nationalism and religion in post-communist Poland* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 103-108.

<sup>51</sup> Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz*, 106. Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, 'Re-presenting the Shoah in Poland and Poland in the Shoah' in: Ronit Lentin (ed.), *Re-Presenting the Shoah for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 183.

<sup>52</sup> With the participation of the Soviet Union, the United States and the United Kingdom, the Yalta Conference in February 1945 decided to move Poland's boundaries westwards. Though the exact location of the border was undecided, the Allies acknowledged in general the principle of the Odera River as the future western border of Poland and population transfer as the way to avert possible border disputes.

<sup>53</sup> Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead*, 68.

### 3.2. The execution of the policies and propaganda line: the Eichmann trial in the Hungarian press

Though it has been argued in academic literature that propaganda always reflects the policy goals of the Communist leadership,<sup>54</sup> in the post-Stalinist context, the two cannot be equated. Based on the Radio Free Europe Press Survey collections available at the Open Society Archives<sup>55</sup>, the following pages present the Hungarian media coverage of the court proceedings in four dailies (*Népszabadság*, *Népszava*, *Magyar Nemzet* and *Esti Hírlap*), in *Radio Kossuth*, and the official journal of the Jewish community: *Új Élet*<sup>56</sup>. *Népszabadság* was the national party paper of the HSWP, *Esti Hírlap* unofficially belonged to the Party's Budapest unit and the municipal leadership of the capital (*Fővárosi Tanács*), but was nearer to the style of a tabloid. *Népszava* was the official daily of the trade unions and like that, its target audience were the workers. *Magyar Nemzet* was the newspaper of the Patriotic Peoples' Front (*Hazafias Népfront*) and spoke mostly to the intelligentsia. As mentioned above, *Új Élet* was the official paper of the Jewish religious community, though under strict political supervision. Hungarian media covered the trial very thoroughly, with about seventy articles in the papers mentioned above during the trial, and hundred and thirty-seven articles altogether from the capturing of Eichmann until his execution (see Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1: Coverage of the Eichmann trial in Hungarian media (no. of articles)**

...the trial	Népszava	Népszabadság	Magyar Nemzet	Új Élet	Esti Hírlap	Other	Total
Before	17	8	12	10	3	8	58
During	5	14	20	10	4	16	69
After	1	3	1	3	2	0	10
Total	23	25	33	23	9	24	137

<sup>54</sup> See: Baruch Hazan, *Soviet Impregnational Propaganda* (Michigan: Ardis, 1982), 11-12.

<sup>55</sup> OSA, HU OSA 300-40-1, box no. 1606.

<sup>56</sup> Everything that appeared in *Új Élet* was proofread by an employee of the Department of Church Affairs, therefore articles could be viewed as serving the regime's propaganda purposes.

The analysis assesses the extent that the above outlined party-line was followed and draws conclusions from them about the degree that the Kádár regime controlled the narrative of WWII and the Holocaust during the Eichmann trial.

### 3.2.1. Successes: West Germany and Israel as collaborator

Hungarian media put great emphasis on the critique of West-Germany. That former Nazis were still occupying high positions in West-Germany was the most common topic appearing in the Hungarian coverage of the proceedings (see Table 3.2). The press claimed that out of 17 West-German Ministers and Secretaries of State, “12 belonged to the leadership of the Nazi Party” and that “among the admirals and generals of the *Bundeswehr*, 40 had served in Hitler’s *Wehrmacht*.”<sup>57</sup> The politicians in question were frequently mentioned by name, among them Hans Globke, one of the closest aides to Chancellor Adenauer and Gerhard Schröder, Minister of the Interior.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> István Merly, ‘Eichmann volt cinkosai a nyugatnémet államapparátusban’ [Eichmann’s former panders in the West-German state apparatus] in: *Esti Hírlap*, April 11, 1961.

<sup>58</sup> However, accusations against Schröder were not new, as his Nazi past had been aired years before, even in the West. For example, Time magazine mentioned it in an editorial entitled ‘The Case of Otto John’ as early as August 23, 1954. Article retrieved from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,823490,00.html> (Retrieved: January 20, 2011.)

**Table 3.2: Coverage of the Eichmann trial in Hungarian media (issues)**

...the trial	Before	% <sup>59</sup>	During	%	After	%	Total
Reporting on the trial itself	14	24.1	35	50.7	6	40.0	55
Eichmann's earlier life and career, Eichmann's activities in Hungary, Holocaust	37	63.8	6	8.7	0	0.0	43
Rich Jews' alliance with Nazis during WWII	8	13.8	1	1.5	0	0.0	9
Critique of West-Germany	25	43.1	33	47.8	6	40.0	64
Critique of other Western countries and organizations (Austria, USA, NATO)	0	0	3	4.35	1	6.7	4
Critique of Israel (alliance with West Germany)	4	6.89	16	23.2	2	13.3	22
Critique of Zionism	0	0	1	1.5	0	0	1

The focus on the critique of West Germany was perfectly in line with the interpretation of Soviet media, which held that during the Eichmann trial “attempts were made to not reveal former Nazis”<sup>60</sup> and that Chancellor Adenauer permitted “yesterday’s assistants of Hitler, Himmler and Kaltenbrunner to occupy leading posts”<sup>61</sup> in the Federal Republic. According to the contemporary press analysis of *B’nai B’rith*,

the press treatment of the Eichmann case in the Soviet Union prior to the opening of the trial on April 11 was marked by 1) relative paucity; 2) an emphasis upon an alleged relationship between Eichmann’s crimes and present-day rulers of West-Germany; and 3) a general minimization of Eichmann’s crimes against Jews compared with his crimes against people generally. These features continued after the trial began.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Of all the articles that appeared during the period under investigation (i.e. before, during or after the trial), how many percentages of the total number of articles dealt with the given issue. The total number of articles is in Table 1.

<sup>60</sup> Govrin, *Israeli-Soviet Relations*, 77.

<sup>61</sup> William Korey, ‘In history’s “memory hole”: the Soviet treatment of the Holocaust’ in: Randolph L. Braham (ed.), *Contemporary Views of the Holocaust* (Boston, The Hague, Dordrecht, Lancaster: Kluwer Nijhoff Publishing, 1983), 152.

<sup>62</sup> B’nai B’rith Report on Media Coverage of the Eichmann Case in Communist Countries, June 1961’ in: Kovács and Miller (eds.), *Jewish Studies*, 242-243.

Likewise, in the German Democratic Republic, the trial in Jerusalem served as a pretext to attack the political elite of the Federal Republic: a Jewish-German lawyer, Friedrich Karl Kaul was sent to Jerusalem to present compromising documents on Hans Globke,<sup>63</sup> and many brochures were published with regards to the issue at home.<sup>64</sup> The Israeli prosecution was approached by the East Germans to allow Kaul to join the team as an adviser but Attorney General Gideon Hausner denied it on the account that there were no diplomatic relations between Israel and East Germany.<sup>65</sup> In Poland, the press stressed the link between Israel and West Germany. In his memoirs, Władysław Gomułka's interpreter Erwin Weit recalled how bizarre it seemed to him that the Polish journalists, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Defense, "tried to give the absurd impression that Israel was only putting Eichmann on trial in order to protect other Nazis."<sup>66</sup> The Czechoslovak news agency *Ceteka* emphasized on the occasion of Eichmann's execution in 1962 that the trial had not been carried out "to the full" despite the death sentence. According to *Ceteka*, "fascist groups" in the GFR and some other Western countries not only offered financial support to Eichmann's counsel, Dr. Servatius, but also "moral support" in the Western press.<sup>67</sup>

It is clear that the implication of West Germany was a priority and a coordinated move of the communist states. Press and propaganda reacted in unison with well-used accusations that, in fact, did not present anything new in addition to the countries'

<sup>63</sup> ISA, RG 93.43/MFA/584/5. Moshe Hess, Deputy to the Official in Charge of the Information Section, Israel Mission in Cologne to Leo Savir, Deputy Head of the Mission, 20 February, 1960.

<sup>64</sup> Angelika Timm, 'Ideology and Realpolitik: East German Attitudes towards Zionism and Israel' in: *Journal of Israeli History*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (March, 2006), 203-222, 206. Right after Eichmann's capture, East Berlin propagandists already produced two pamphlets entitled 'Globke und die Ausrottung der Juden' [Globke and the Extermination of the Jews] and 'Neue Beweise für Globkes Verbrechen gegen die Juden' [New Proof of Globke's Crimes against the Jews].

<sup>65</sup> OSA, HU OSA 300-40-1, box. 1606. RFE Special Report, Tel Aviv, March 29, 1961. Also: John P. Teschke, *Hitler's Legacy. West Germany Confronts the Aftermath of the Third Reich* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 197.

<sup>66</sup> Erwin Weit, *Eyewitness. The Autobiography of Gomułka's Interpreter* (London: André Deutsch, 1970), 70.

<sup>67</sup> OSA, HU OSA 300-30-3, microfilm no. 63. Records of Radio Free Europe, Czechoslovak Unit: 'Eichmann – Communist reporting on execution'.

previous positions towards the GFR. Most of the accusations were old and already published in the West as well.

Closely connected to accusations of the Adenauer government for its forgiving (and even supportive) conduct toward former Nazis was the presentation of Israel as a collaborator with West-Germany. This was a much more complicated issue as the task of communist propaganda here was to criticize Israel without appearing antisemitic. Journalist Tibor Pethő remembered that before they were sent off to Jerusalem to report on the trial, István Szirmai had instructed them to be careful not to incite antisemitic feelings among the Hungarian population.<sup>68</sup>

The issue of Israeli-West German collaboration appeared twenty-two times in Hungarian newspapers and radio programs during the period under investigation. The articles claimed that in order to preserve good relations between Israel and West-Germany, Israeli authorities made sure that Eichmann's confessions would not affect certain high-ranking German politicians negatively. Ben Gurion "met Adenauer with a secretive smile on his face and he contentedly patted the side pocket of his jacket as he left. If one was to look into it (the pocket), one could have found a cheque of about 500 million [Deutsche] Marks,"<sup>69</sup> – an article reported. "The Eichmann-trial, instead of becoming the trial of the general condemnation of Fascism, turned into a West German - Israeli affair. Behind the trial, there are shady economic and political interests that are seldom revealed"<sup>70</sup> – claimed another report. The relations between Israel and West Germany, expressed in such images are reminiscent of older antisemitic stereotypes that view Jews as worldly and greedy. Even if we suppose that

<sup>68</sup> Adrienne Molnár (ed.), *A „hatvanas évek” emlékezete* [The memory of the „Sixties”] (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2004), 147.

<sup>69</sup> 'Az Eichmann-ügy a léláncolt kacsá görbe tükrében' [The Eichmann case in the crooked mirror of the chained duck] in: *Magyar Nemzet*, April 15, 1961.

<sup>70</sup> Tibor Pethő, 'Ami a jeruzsálemi perből kimaradt' [What was left out from the Jerusalem trial] in: *Magyar Nemzet*, 23 July, 1961.



the Hungarian Politburo indeed did not want to incite antisemitic feelings, such imagery clearly made use of them. In that sense, the bloc-wide anti-West German propaganda overwrote the goals of the Hungarians and could potentially evoke antisemitism.

### 3.2.2. Failures: the Holocaust and Zionism

Another crucial issue from the regime's point of view was how to present Jewish suffering during the Holocaust. Given the official Party line which preferred to talk about the victims as Hungarian citizens, it is rather striking that this aim was not completely realized in the media. Very few articles dealt with non-Jewish (or non-specified, general) suffering only. Even if one part of a certain article mentioned citizens in general without pointing out that they had been Jews, some other part of the piece revealed that they indeed were. Therefore, I also looked at when newspapers talked about both Jewish and non-Jewish suffering in the same article, because I considered that as the relativization of the former.

Before the trial, 36 articles dealt with suffering during the Holocaust, out of which 55.6% (20) dealt *only* with Jewish suffering, 13.9% (5) dealt *only* with non-Jewish suffering and 30.5% (11) dealt with *both* issues. During the trial, 33 articles dealt with suffering during the Holocaust, out of which 72.7% (24) dealt *only* with Jewish suffering, 21.2% (7) dealt *only* with non-Jewish suffering and only 6.1% (2) dealt with *both* issues (See Table 3.3). Articles and programs that dealt with Jewish suffering were much more pronounced *during* the trial than before, whereas non-Jewish suffering and the combined mentioning of the two issues (i.e. Jewish and non-Jewish suffering) in one article or radio program was much more frequent before the trial. The proceedings, witnesses and supporting documents of the trial were focused on the

persecution of Jews during WWII, revealed the Hungarian authorities' antisemitic measures already way before German occupation<sup>71</sup> and most of the Hungarian population's indifference.<sup>72</sup> It is possible that one reason for this propaganda failure can be found in the presence of journalists of Jewish origin in various Party papers.<sup>73</sup> Their conscious or unconscious resistance to absurd propaganda helped ensure that the Holocaust was not completely omitted from the news of the trial. Furthermore, the number of those of Jewish origin in Hungary at this time was around 100,000, which was a considerable mass to be ignored. Many among them were Holocaust survivors who knew that it was the Jewish population of the country that had been singled out for destruction during the war.

**Table 3.3: Coverage of the Eichmann trial in Hungarian media (Holocaust)**

...the trial	Before	During	After
Mentions Jewish suffering during the Holocaust	31	26	2
Mentions <i>only</i> Jewish suffering during the Holocaust	20	24	2
Mentions non-Jewish suffering during the Holocaust	16	9	2
Mentions <i>only</i> non-Jewish suffering during the Holocaust	5	7	2
Mentions Jewish <i>and</i> non-Jewish suffering during the Holocaust	11	2	0

Interestingly, an explicit condemnation of Zionism only appeared once in the Hungarian press, therefore the intention of the Politburo to implicate Zionism did not

<sup>71</sup> For example, during Session No. 51. document No. 972 presented to the Presiding Judge described a debate in the Hungarian Parliament from 7 December 1942 on the question of labor-camps for Jews and the work of Christian women in Jewish homes. During the same session, another document, numbered No. 1341. revealed that Jewish intellectuals were made to perform forced labor in Hungary in 1943, and State Attorney Bach emphasized that "this was in the period when Hungary had not been occupied, and the German army was not yet there." In: *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann. Record of Proceedings in the District Court of Jerusalem*, Vol. III. (Jerusalem: State of Israel Ministry of Justice, 1993), 929.

<sup>72</sup> Hansi Brand remembered one of the foot marches when thousands of Jews were driven to the streets by the SS: "Q. How did the Hungarian public react? A. Some just stared at them dully – they were the better ones; the others were pleased that those who had been bombed out were going to have nice Jewish flats." In: *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Vol. III, 1054.

<sup>73</sup> Éva Ständeisky, 'Értelmisségi antiszemitizmus a Kádár korszakban' [The antisemitism of intellectuals during the Kádár era] in: Zsuzsanna Kőrösi, Éva Ständeisky, János Rainer M. (eds.): *Évkönyv VIII-2000* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2000), 26-39.

realize. Originally, the authorities intended to present this issue through the stories of Joel Brand and Rezső Kasztner. However, when the journalists sat in the courtroom listening to Joel and Hansi Brand's testimonies at the end of May 1961, what they repeatedly heard was that the main goal of Zionist operations in Hungary was to save as many Jewish lives as possible.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, the testimonies revealed that though the Zionists did conduct negotiations with leading members of Eichmann's Special Operation Unit (*Sondereinsatzkommando Eichmann*) in Hungary, and were clearly granted some advantages that others (including the *Judenrat*) did not enjoy; the Germans did not consider them equal partners, repeatedly deceived them, used the Jewish contacts to enrich themselves and considered the negotiations over human lives as a pure business deal.<sup>75</sup> Not all elements of this story contradicted the goals of the Hungarian leadership: they too wanted to expose Eichmann as a cold-headed murderer; they too wanted to prove that the German Nazis tried to rob as many assets from Hungary as possible. Moreover, according to testimonies during the trial, in the final and most important stage of arrangements, when Zionist leaders from Palestine were already involved and informed the British about the "Trucks for Blood" deal, the

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<sup>74</sup> Joel Brand described the main goals of the Relief and Rescue Committee set up by the Zionists as follows: "...I presented the demands, which consisted of the following: (a) that there be no concentration, no ghettoization of the Jews in Hungary; at that time there were still no ghettos in Hungary; (b) that there be no pogroms, no bloodshed in Hungary; (c) that there be no deportation of Jews from Hungary; (c) permission for emigration to Eretz Israel." (p. 1018) He also explicitly stated that "... I was not in a position to determine who should live and who should not, I wanted to have everyone rescued." (p. 1020)

<sup>75</sup> Joel Brand described an important conversation with Eichmann as follows. "He [Eichmann] said: 'And so you want to have a million Jews?' And I replied that I would like to have all of them. He said: 'One million, that's what we're discussing right now – ten thousand trucks, one hundred Jews equals one truck. You're getting a bargain.'" "Eichmann never said to me that he wanted no deportations, that he wanted to rescue the Jews; his words, as previously cited by me, were: 'I have had you investigated and have determined that you are still capable of getting things done. I am prepared to sell you a million Jews – goods for blood, blood for goods.'" Hansi Brand spoke of her meeting with Eichmann and the discussion about the "Trucks for Blood" similarly. She recalled that "[m]y impression was that he was trying to create an atmosphere as if it were purely a business deal, a straightforward transaction, and that we were business partners." In: *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*., Vol. III, 1022, 1034 and 1047, respectively.

Soviets were also briefed and engaged in these talks.<sup>76</sup> In fact, even Hungarian communists collaborated intensively with them during WWII, a detail which could have easily surfaced from international Jewish and Zionist organizations had Hungarian communist propaganda against Zionism been too loud during the trial. It would have been hard to justify the condemnation of Zionist leaders in the light of this Soviet and Hungarian communist involvement.

The Israeli court was very cautious not to involve Kasztner's case in the proceedings. The whole Kasztner problem signified the deep ideological split in Israeli society and politics between the nationalist right wing and socialist-Zionist left wing. At any rate, the court was not particularly sympathetic to Kasztner, especially because Judge Benjamin Halevi had also been the President of the Court at the Greenwald trial, in which the Israeli government sued Malkiel Greenwald for libel against Rezső (Rudolf) Kasztner. Famously, the trial ended with Halevi ruling that three out of the four charges were true, therefore not libellous.<sup>77</sup> The judge was also quoted saying that Kasztner "sold his soul to the devil."<sup>78</sup> The trial shook the Israeli public and led to the resignation of Prime Minister Moshe Sharett in 1955. The government appealed to the Supreme Court immediately after Halevi had read out the ruling. However, it took another three years before the new verdict, which would overturn most of the judgment against Kasztner, was born. Before that, on March 3, 1957, Kasztner had been shot and died two weeks later. To avoid the possibility of a similar scandal, witnesses who would have been too supportive or too inimical to

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<sup>76</sup> See the documents presented by the Attorney General to Judge Halevi during Session no. 57 of the Eichmann trial and the discussion of their contents. Also, as for the money requested by the Germans for the "Trucks for Blood" operation, Joel Brand claimed that the sum was to come from the Allied powers, which thus included the Soviet Union (though he did not specify which of the Allies) In: *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Vol. III, 1029-1033, 1039.

<sup>77</sup> These were: collaboration with the Nazis; 'indirect murder' or 'preparing the ground for murder' of Hungary's Jews and saving a war criminal (Kurt Becher) from punishment after the war. See: Akiva Orr, *Israel: Politics, Myths and Identity Crises* (London, Boulder, CO: Pluto Press, 1994.), 83.

<sup>78</sup> 'On Trial' in: *Time Magazine*, July 11, 1955. Available at: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,807322-3,00.html> (Retrieved: July 25, 2011.)

Kasztner were not invited to testify at the Eichmann trial.<sup>79</sup> With the elimination of the Kasztner case, Hungarian propagandists lost their main trump card in the argument against Zionism.

The way Hungarian press presented the Eichmann trial was perhaps closest to that of the coverage in Poland. According to the aforementioned report of B'nai B'rith, "[w]hile criticism of the current West German Government and its alleged links to Eichmann is to be found in the [Polish] press coverage, Jewish martyrdom is the dominant theme."<sup>80</sup> Though the report has to be evaluated while keeping in mind its biases originating from the Cold War situation, other sources also confirm this claim. A journalist named Kazimierz Kąkol covered the Eichmann trial for the paper 'Law and Life' (*Prawo i Życie*). A book based on his dispatches was published in 1962 under the title 'Eichmann's Road to Beit Ha'am' (*Adolfa Eichmanna droga do Beit Haam*). Though the publication sharply criticized the Israeli government's ways of conducting the trial and accused it with cooperation with the FRG, it did not reject the distinctiveness of the Jewish genocide.<sup>81</sup> Social anthropologist Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, based on the re-reading of various literary and academic pieces of the period, also argued that while these texts only reached a limited circle of audience, "the Holocaust actually began to enter public discourse... in the wake of the Eichmann trial."<sup>82</sup>

However, Polish coverage presented the Holocaust in a way that it did not contradict Polish victimhood by pointing at the special significance of Poland in the

<sup>79</sup> Neither Andreas Bliss, nor Moshe Kraus, who both had relevant information with regards to the "Trucks for Blood" deal, were invited to testify. The former because he was believed to try everything to clear Kasztner's name, the latter for the opposite. See: Hanna Yablonka, *The State of Israel vs. Adolf Eichmann* (New York: Schocken, 2004), 118-119.

<sup>80</sup> B'nai B'rith Report on Media Coverage of the Eichmann Case in Communist Countries, June 1961' in: Kovács and Miller (eds.), *Jewish Studies*, 247.

<sup>81</sup> Anat Plocker, *Zionists to Dayan: The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland, 1967-1968* (Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest, 2009), 106.

<sup>82</sup> Orla-Bukowska, 'Re-presenting the Shoah in Poland', 184.

Jewish genocide and, similarly to the Hungarian case, by relativizing Jewish victimhood. *Trybuna Ludu* pointed out that

Polish territories have a special place in the history of the extermination of Jews. The very first acts of extermination were committed on Polish Jews. In the first phase of the criminal plan the persecutions were directed against both the non-Jewish and Jewish population of Poland.<sup>83</sup>

### 3.3. Hungarian policies, propaganda and the Eichmann case

This present chapter has examined the trial of Adolf Eichmann and its presentation in the Hungarian press. Communist ideology's anti-fascism determined its stance as "anti-antisemitic", yet the revolutionary commitment of Marxism-Leninism created a framework of interpretation of WWII, in which the two opposing categories were ideologically defined (fascists and anti-fascists). Consequently, it had difficulty accommodating the idea of non-ideological victimhood, i.e. the destruction of Jews based on racist ideas and not because of their political commitments. This became a problematic issue during the Eichmann trial, a process that highlighted the destruction of Jews as the worst crime of the Nazi regime.

Because of the Cold War situation during which West Germany (GFR) emerged as Communism's main "enemy" in Europe, bloc-wide attempts to control the interpretation of the trial focused on the perpetrators whom they hoped to connect with the government of the GFR. The identity of the victims was a secondary question, which effectively relativized Jewish victimhood among other casualties, and yet it was not actively suppressed, which allowed the surfacing of at least a partial Holocaust narrative. Despite Kádár's speech at the Politburo which warned against emphasizing the Jewish theme, Hungarian press reports repeatedly revealed who the

<sup>83</sup> B'nai B'rith Report on Media Coverage of the Eichmann Case in Communist Countries, June 1961' in: Kovács and Miller (eds.), *Jewish Studies*, 247.

primary victims of Nazi persecution were. The reasons for this are manifold. The lack of a considerable anti-fascist resistance movement and the existence of widespread anti-bolshevik sentiments among the population during the 1940s made the communist anti-fascist narrative completely unfitting to the Hungarian context. The Jewish origins of many journalists and other opinion-forming intellectuals, (not mentioning Party members), and a considerable domestic Jewish population that still included a significant number of Holocaust survivors also contributed to the subversion of the regime's propaganda goals. The apparent lack of an attempt from the regime to coerce them suggests that Kádár did not want to antagonise this group of the intelligentsia or the Jewish population more broadly.

Just as the Polish state instrumentalized Auschwitz as a political site of memory for WWII, the Hungarian regime attempted to use the Eichmann trial to strengthen (indirectly) its narrative of 1956. The Eichmann case served well to discredit the “fascist” Horthy period and its association of Communism with Jews (see the Judeo-Bolshevik myth above). Refuting this connection was paramount for Kádár to gain legitimacy and, as it has been argued in the previous chapter, to differentiate his regime from that of his predecessor Rákosi's. Moreover, by demonizing “Horthy Fascism”, presented as its own antithesis, the Hungarian communist leadership reinforced the official 1956 narrative, because the eruption of the “counterrevolution” had been linked to the infiltration of “Horthy fascists”. The importance of the issue for the Kádár regime was made apparent by the establishment of the Department of Contemporary History (*MTA Történettudományi Intézet Legújabbkori Osztály*) under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences in 1960 with the explicit mandate to research the history of the Horthy period.

#### 4. Friends and Enemies (1960-1967)

Writer István Eörsi, released from prison during the first amnesties in 1960, noted bitterly in the summer of that year:

I went to the Palatinus pool on Margaret-island, I watched the bellies of young girls who were hula-hooping. And I thought, look, I did not spend three years and nine months in prison for nothing, they did not execute so many people for nothing: it is permitted to hula-hoop, unlike during the years of Rákosi's tenure.<sup>1</sup>

Eörsi's remarks referred to the Hungarian regime's obvious attempts at the depoliticization of everyday life that started to take shape.

The following years up until Hungary's participation in the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 have been described as the period of (perceived) stability during which a limited structural correction of the Stalinist political model took place. The changes in Hungary were in line with Moscow's policies at the beginning of the 1960s. Khrushchev's renewed attack on Stalinism during the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the CPSU in October 1961 gave new impetus to the de-Stalinization campaign to get rid of the vestiges of the "cult of personality." It also indicated that domestic policies would take a more relaxed form in the near future.

However, Nikita Khrushchev fell from power during the CPSU plenum of October 13-14, 1964. He was replaced in the post of General Secretary by Leonid Brezhnev, who shared (some) political responsibility with Aleksei Kosygin (as Premier) and Nikolai Podgorny (the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet) in what came to be called the 'collective leadership'. Under Brezhnev, many of Khrushchev's relatively liberal reforms were revoked, but so were his rather erratic policy-making practices. Though in the first few years, the new Soviet administration invested

<sup>1</sup> István Eörsi, 'Egy átvilágítás átvilágítása' [The screening of a screening] in his: *Az ötlábú bárány. Publicisztikák* (Budapest: Pesti Szalon, 1996), 395.



heavily in agriculture and experimented with economic reform (with Kosygin as the latter's main advocate), by the beginning of the 1970s, the incentives withered away. The USSR embarked on a program of massive military growth, and an intensifying arms and space race. During the Brezhnev era, "the Soviet Union's status as one of the world's two superpowers... has become an established fact."<sup>2</sup>

To follow the new arrangement of Soviet leadership, János Kádár resigned from his post as Chairman of the Council of Ministers, which went to Gyula Kállai and then Jenő Fock in 1965. Hungarian economic reforms continued with Kádár continuously asserting that they were compatible with both Soviet and Hungarian interests.<sup>3</sup> Thus, literature suggests that despite the policy changes in the Soviet Union, the Hungarian 1960s followed a clear trajectory from the previous harsh retributive policies to those of consolidation and compromise.

This chapter examines how (if at all) these general regime characteristics apply to political decisions with regards to Jewish issues in Hungary. Did policies towards Jews and antisemitism follow those in Moscow? Did they run parallel with the Hungarian regime's other policies during the period under investigation? If not, what factors influenced their different direction?

#### **4.1. De-Stalinization and consolidation: cadre changes**

Following the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) which reaffirmed de-Stalinization, all the leaders of the Eastern bloc officially endorsed the CPSU's line but the domestic consequences differed in each country. In Poland, Władysław Gomułka spoke about the fight against "revisionist tendencies",

<sup>2</sup> 'The Brezhnev Legacy' in: *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 17, No. 48 (November 27, 1982), 1887.

<sup>3</sup> Bennett Kovrig, 'Hungary in the Era of the Kádár Compromise' in: *International Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 4, 722.

“dogmatism” and “sectarianism” in the Polish United Workers’ Party (PUWP) in past tense. He reassured everybody that the Party had already overcome these tendencies,<sup>4</sup> suggesting that the Polish First Secretary was not planning on a large-scale de-Stalinization campaign. It has been noted in academic literature that Romanian leader Gheorghiu-Dej, East Germany’s Walter Ulbricht and Czechoslovakia’s Antonín Novotný, three Eastern European Communist leaders who had been in power already during Stalinism and managed to keep their positions afterwards, were all worried about the consequences of the Soviet de-Stalinization campaign. This reflected in “the unwillingness of their press to publish in full the revelations about Stalin and Stalinism made at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress.”<sup>5</sup> In fact, much of the Stalinist legacy remained intact in Czechoslovakia<sup>6</sup>, Bulgaria<sup>7</sup> and Romania.<sup>8</sup>

In Hungary, the first effects of de-Stalinization were connected to a genuine but rather insignificant coup-attempt coming from the rank and file of the military.<sup>9</sup> In response, between November 1961 and August 1962, some leading Stalinist cadres were removed from the Ministry of the Interior and several officers of the State Security organs were demoted or removed to civil professions. Then, with the August 16, 1962 resolution of the Central Committee (CC), the old Stalinist leaders Mátyás

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Dallin, Jonathan Harris and Grey Hodnett (eds.), *Diversity in International Communism. A Documentary Record, 1961-1963*. (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1963), 331-332.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Z. Laqueur, ‘The End of the Monolith: World Communism in 1962’ in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 40, No. 3. (April 1962), 367.

<sup>6</sup> Though two of the Stalinist old-guard members in the Presidium, Karol Bacílek and Bruno Köhler, were dismissed.

<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, there were a few changes in the Bulgarian leadership. Valko Chervenkov, former General Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party who had been removed from his post in 1956, and demoted thereafter to lesser and lesser post, was removed from the Politburo and later, expelled from the Party as well. Prime Minister Anton Yugov and Deputy Prime Minister Georgi Tsankov were removed from their posts for their involvement ‘in the worst crimes of Stalinism’. See: Gordon Skilling, ‘National Communism in Eastern Europe since the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress’ in: *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 30, No. 3. (August, 1964), 321.

<sup>8</sup> János Fodor ‘Román-magyar kapcsolatok a kommunizmus időszakában. Az 1958-59-es találkozó körülményei és következményei’ [Romanian-Hungarian relations in the Communist period. The circumstances and consequences of the 1958-1959 meeting] in: *Stúdium*, Vol. 15, No. 3-4 (2010), 266.

<sup>9</sup> János Rainer M., ‘Ki van ellenünk? Kis magyar katonai puccskísérlet, 1961.’ [Who is against us? Small Hungarian military coup attempt, 1961] in: János Rainer M., *Ötvenhat után* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2003), 92-114.

Rákosi, Ernő Gerő and István Kovács were officially expelled from the Party.<sup>10</sup> The CC also endorsed the resolution of the Central Control Commission (*Központi Ellenőrző Bizottság*), which expelled a prosecutor, a judge and fourteen ex-state security officers from the Party for their “unlawful acts committed during the personality cult.”<sup>11</sup> The changes in the nomenklatura caused tensions within the rank and file of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (HSWP). When these tensions erupted as conflicts, overt and covert variations of antisemitic language also appeared, even if the specific intra-Party conflicts were not connected to any Jewish issues. Antisemitic stereotypes and clichés were so deeply ingrained in the thinking of even the communist Party membership that when their utilization (either positively or negatively) offered political rewards, they were freely applied. The two following cases—the ousting of Minister of Agriculture Imre Dögei and the resignation of Minister of State György Marosán—both illustrate this phenomenon.

#### 4.1.1. Accusations of Antisemitism: The Dögei case

One of the main areas where the Kádár regime returned to orthodoxy in its inaugural phase was agriculture. The collectivization campaign launched at the end of 1958 used methods identical to those of the Rákosi era to force peasants into collective farms. However, the campaign was significantly toned down in early 1960 in order to assure “undisturbed production and the consolidation of the new collective farms.”<sup>12</sup> One visible marker of the changes was the ousting of Imre Dögei, Minister of Agriculture, who had been “the leading instigator of the forced pace of

<sup>10</sup> MOL M-KS 288.4/55. Minutes of the meeting of the Central Committee, August 16, 1962. ‘Report about the criminal acts committed during the cult of personality’.

<sup>11</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.11/1962/1063. “Summary for the heads of interior affairs and legal authorities about the role of ex-state protection and legal authorities in illegal acts against individuals of the workers’ movement during the personality cult”, November 14, 1962.

<sup>12</sup> Bennett Kovrig, *Communism in Hungary – From Kun to Kádár* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1979), 343.

collectivization.”<sup>13</sup> Surprisingly, this seemingly irrelevant issue brought up antisemitism within the Party.

In a closed meeting of the Central Committee on February 12, 1960 János Kádár informed the political body that Imre Dögei had stated that “revisionists and Zionists are governing the HSWP. This is what the Central Committee is: a revisionist and Zionist bunch. Moreover, he also named certain members of the Central Committee”<sup>14</sup>. As a consequence of his behaviour, Dögei lost his membership in the Central Committee, and was expelled from the Party for his “sectarian” views shortly thereafter.

Who did Dögei list among the “revisionists and Zionists”? According to István Dobi’s<sup>15</sup> notes who witnessed the remarks, the Minister mentioned József Sándor, Jenő Fock, Lajos Fehér, István Szurdi, and István Szirmai.<sup>16</sup> József Sándor was the head of János Kádár’s Secretariat, and of the Party Economy Department of the HSWP’s Central Committee (*MSZMP KB Pártgazdasági Osztály*). Jenő Fock was a Secretary of the Central Committee and Lajos Fehér the newly promoted head of the Agricultural Department of the HSWP’s Central Committee (*MSZMP KB Mezőgazdasági Osztály*). In this function, he was perhaps Dögei’s most important political opponent as he had proposed a more gradual method of collectivization in the late 1950s, opposed Dögei’s plans to annihilate private farms by heavy taxation,<sup>17</sup> and belonged to those advocating economic reforms in the early 1960s. Fock was also a supporter of more lenient economic policies and the New Economic Mechanism would later be introduced under his leadership as Chairman of the Council of

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.4/30. Minutes of the meeting of the Central Committee on February 12, 1960.

<sup>15</sup> István Dobi was the Chairman of the Presidential Council (*Elnöki Tanács*) at this time.

<sup>16</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.4/30. Minutes of the meeting of the Central Committee on February 12, 1960.

Appendix: István Dobi’s handwritten notes about his conversation with Imre Dögei.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew Felkay, *Hungary and the USSR 1956-1988* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 137-138.

Ministers in 1968. Neither of these cadres was Jewish. István Szurdi and István Szirmai were indeed of Jewish origin but only Szirmai had had anything to do with the Zionist movement. Szurdi was a specialist of trade and a former social-democrat who had joined the workers' movement at the age of seventeen in 1928. As opposed to what Dögei claimed, that "he is from Eger and a rich Jew"<sup>18</sup>, he was born in the small town of Nagyszőlős (Vynohradiv) in Western Ukraine into a working class family, and lived in Budapest from a young age. István Szirmai was a rather moderate centrist<sup>19</sup> and had, as already referred to in the previous chapter, taken part in the Zionist movement but abandoned it before the war. Szirmai was unfriendly towards the Zionist cause to say the least, while Szurdi had never had any connections to it. Dögei thus used the term "Zionist" instead of "Jewish" to conform to the terminology of communist dogma.

In Dögei's interpretation, his political opponents working in the economic sphere and "Zionists" active in other areas (industry and trade in Szurdi's and culture in Szirmai's case) represented the same danger: "bourgeois [elements] are leading the Party, the old communists are oppressed"<sup>20</sup>, he lamented. Those who advocated economic reforms, the "revisionists" in Dögei's terminology, represented a "bourgeois" danger because their economic policy suggestions were at odds with orthodox economic and agricultural principles such as forced collectivization. The argument that Jews, euphemistically called "Zionists" by Dögei, also represented a "bourgeois" danger was the expression of economic antisemitism. It built upon the malicious and stereotypical interpretation of the successes that Jewish industrialists

<sup>18</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.4/30. Minutes of the meeting of the Central Committee on February 12, 1960. Appendix: István Dobi's handwritten notes about his conversation with Imre Dögei.

<sup>19</sup> Ferenc Fejtő, *A History of the People's Democracies. Eastern Europe since Stalin* (New York: Praeger, 1971), 321.

<sup>20</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.4/30. Minutes of the meeting of the Central Committee on February 12, 1960. János Kádár's speech.

and tradesmen achieved during 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian embourgeoisement and economic development.

Dögei, who was born in a town on the Northern edge of the Hungarian Great Plain (in Törökszentmiklós) and came from a peasant background, belonged to those within the HSWP who were supporters or former members of the National Peasant Party (*Nemzeti Parasztpárt*, NPP). This party, dominated by a strongly collectivistic and anti-liberal ideology, used to rely on the support of rural intellectuals and the poor peasantry who were traditionally inimical to landowners and the urban capitalist classes. It was this left radicalism which eventually made the NPP ally with the Hungarian Communist Party (*Magyar Kommunista Párt*). But it was also this political platform that made the Peasant Party's membership susceptible to economic antisemitism, which can be seen surfacing in Dögei's case. Because the hardliner Minister was already inconvenient for the Kádár leadership, his antisemitic remarks were used against him as justification for his ousting. That the Party was not ideologically committed to combating antisemitism, but only did so when it was politically convenient, can be demonstrated by contrasting the Dögei affair with another one: that of György Marosán.

#### **4.1.2. Accusations of Antisemitism: The Marosán/Szurdi case**

György Marosán, a former social-democrat turned communist, was basically the second in command after Kádár. He was a radical politician who passionately hated the Stalinists but at the same time, was known to have propagated the use of force and

violent crackdowns against the disobedient intelligentsia and the participants of the 1956 revolution.<sup>21</sup>

Rather unexpectedly for the rest of the leadership, Marosán stepped down from all his posts in September 1962. In a letter addressed to János Kádár, he detailed the reasons for his decision, all of which had to do with Kádár's leadership style, methods and cadre-policies.<sup>22</sup> His main problem was, as he put it later in his memoirs, that "the theoretical and ideological battle with regards to 1956 was halted" when he felt it was still incomplete.<sup>23</sup> This orthodox approach to the issue was inconvenient for the Party leadership at this time<sup>24</sup> and he was subtly but steadily ostracized from important decisions.

Marosán's letter also included references to anti-Jewish sentiments among the Party leadership, which he objected. He cited an incident with indignation.

On another occasion, the dismissal of a CC and district secretary came up. I defended the individual and asked to be given reasons for his dismissal. Comrade Sándor's [József Sándor, member of the Central Committee, Head of the Department of Party and Mass Organizations (*Párt- és Tömegszervezetek Osztálya*) – K.B.] answer was short: 'ugly and Jewish!'... But if people can be categorized this way, why do they not notice that in the highest leadership there are also both ugly and Jewish [members]? Or is he already, because he is in the highest leadership, a different kind of ugly and a different kind of Jew? What understanding is this in 1962?

His letter contained further specifics about the situation in which such antisemitic remarks came up.

I had to defend comrade István Szurdi on three occasions so far. Ever since the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress,<sup>25</sup> comrade [Jenő] Fock has proposed several times, and so have comrade [Sándor] Gáspár and comrade [József] Sándor, that comrade Szurdi

<sup>21</sup> Rezső Nyers, 'Ki volt Marosán György valójában?' [Who was György Marosán in reality?'] in: *Múltunk*, 1994/1-2, 176-180, 177.

<sup>22</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.4/58. Minutes of the meeting of the Central Committee (enlarged meeting), October 11-12, 1962. Appendix no.1: György Marosán's letter to János Kádár, September 1, 1962.

<sup>23</sup> György Marosán, *Fel kellett állnom* [I had to quit] (Budapest: Hirlapkiadó Vállalat, 1989), 88.

<sup>24</sup> Karola Némethné Vágyi – Levente Sipos, 'A Marosán-ügy 1962-ben' [The Marosán affair in 1962] in: *Múltunk*, 1994/1-2, 205.

<sup>25</sup> The 7th Congress of the HSWP took place between November 30 and December 5, 1959.

should go over to the state apparatus. Their reasoning: not Christian, not a worker and a weak workforce... I mentioned that other factors should also be taken into account with regards to Szurdi: that there is the workers' unity and he is honest about that! Sándor's answer was typical: this is not interesting anymore, we are communists.<sup>26</sup>

While Marosán's conflicts at the beginning of the 1960s were a direct result of the policy change which disfavoured hardliners, this particular situation was connected to the history of the Hungarian workers' movement and Jewish involvement in it.

Jenő Fock, Sándor Gáspár and József Sándor were all members of the Hungarian Communist Party from the early 1930s. However, both Marosán and Szurdi used to be members of the Social Democratic Party before its merger with the Communist Party in 1948, a move that they both supported. After the fusion, the two joined the newly established Hungarian Workers' Party (*Magyar Dolgozók Pártja*, HWP), this is what Marosán referred to as "workers' unity." Marosán soon became the Deputy President of the Politburo while Szurdi was working in the Party headquarters. However, Marosán fell victim to Rákosi's distrust of former social-democrats and was arrested and imprisoned in 1950. When Marosán joined Kádár's cabinet in 1956, he contacted those former social-democrats who were closest to him and urged them to "actively support" Kádár's government and "take on positions and tasks."<sup>27</sup> Among those whom Marosán approached was István Szurdi and, according to historian János Jemnitz, the former played a decisive role in Szurdi's promotion to the Head of the Industrial and Transportation Department of the Central Committee of the HSWP (*MSZMP KB Ipari és Közlekedési Osztály*).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.4/58. Minutes of the meeting of the Central Committee (enlarged meeting), October 11-12, 1962. Appendix no.1: György Marosán's letter to János Kádár, September 1, 1962.

<sup>27</sup> János Jemnitz, 'Kiegészítések Marosán György arcképéhez' [Supplements for György Marosán's portrait] in: *Múltunk*, 1994/4, 167.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.



The incident illustrates that though more than a decade passed since the merger of the two parties, the membership of the HSWP still kept in mind who had been the social-democrats and who had belonged to the Communist Party. In fact, the former leftist faction of the social democrats (including István Szurdi) wrote a letter to János Kádár in November 1956 in which they complained that though they had not wanted to form a political faction, “the practice of the HWP and the Politburo led by Rákosi viewed us as a separate group.”<sup>29</sup> During the Rákosi era, former social-democrats were not only considered a separate group but they were frequently singled out as representatives of the Jewish bourgeoisie,<sup>30</sup> accused of Western orientation and harbouring residues of capitalist ideas within the Party.<sup>31</sup> These antisemitic perceptions were manifest even during the 1956 revolution. Cadres were removed from their posts because of having social-democratic pasts and Jewish origins.<sup>32</sup>

The intra-Party tension documented by Marosán was the symptom of the same controversy and illustrates that political antisemitism survived within the Party. Marosán pointed out this phenomenon, however, the leadership members he accused of antisemitism remained in their positions. Had the HSWP been fully committed to the fight against antisemitism, this incident would have warranted at least an investigation. However, there are no documents that would suggest that anything like that happened.

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<sup>29</sup> Letter of former social-democrats to János Kádár, November 24, 1956. Published in: János Jemnitz, ‘A volt Szociáldemokrata Párt baloldali tagjainak 1956. novemberi levele Kádár Jánoshoz’ [Letter of the leftist members of the former Social Democratic Party to János Kádár in November 1956] in: *Múltunk*, 2007/2, 270.

<sup>30</sup> Many Jews joined the Social Democratic Party because of its traditional anti-racism and as many as one third of the leaders of the social-democrats were of Jewish origins during the interwar period. See: Éva Ständeisky, ‘A kommunisták politikai antiszemitizmusa (1945-1957)’ [The political antisemitism of the communists (1945-1957)] in: *Századvég*, Vol.12, No. 44 (2007), 14 and Viktor Karády, ‘Rétegmobilitás, státuszmobilitás és felekezeti vegyesházasság Budapesten a két világháború között’ [Stratum mobility, status mobility and religiously mixed marriages in Budapest between the two world wars] in: *Szociológiai Szemle*, 1993/2, 3-44.

<sup>31</sup> Ständeisky, ‘A kommunisták politikai antiszemitizmusa’, 11

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 23-24.

Kádár, in order to keep his position in power, balanced between the various interest groups within the Party. For that reason, he made concessions which included the tolerance of antisemitic opinions if that meant the support of his policies. In Dögei's case, condemning the Minister for his antisemitism was convenient to support his ousting with arguments corresponding to Marxist-Leninist principles. In Marosán's case, however, the very same arguments were dismissed as personal grievances and sectarian views.<sup>33</sup> The contradiction in the leadership's reactions highlights the Kádár regime's inconsistent position towards antisemitism within the Party.

#### 4.2. Artificially created enemies: "Zionists"

While the de-Stalinization campaign in the USSR announced the fight against political opponents within the Party; the quest for foes also took place outside the Party headquarters. Antisemitism was used in this context quite openly during the Khrushchev era. Several economic trials of anti-Jewish character were conducted between 1961 and 1964.<sup>34</sup> More than fifty percent of those executed as a result of these proceedings were Jews whose Jewish-sounding family names were all too often highlighted in the press. The alleged economic offences (most frequently foreign currency deals) were frequently committed in synagogues, while publications such as the ominous *Judaism without Embellishment* (which appeared in the Ukraine in October 1963) depicted Jewish religion "as a belief that promotes hypocrisy, bribery,

<sup>33</sup> MOL M-KS, 288.4/56. Minutes of the meeting of the Central Committee (enlarged meeting), October 11-12, 1962.

<sup>34</sup> "The annual number of trials involving Jews jumped from 38 in 1961 to 112 in 1962, peaking at 145 in 1963. There was a slight decline in 1964, but a major downward shift occurred only in 1965, when there were 36." in: Yaacov R'oi, 'Economic Trials' in: *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. Available at: [http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Economic\\_Trials](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Economic_Trials) (Retrieved: May 13, 2013.)

greed and usury.”<sup>35</sup> According to Yaacov R’oi, the convicted “economic criminals... became scapegoats for the failure of Khrushchev’s economic reforms and decentralization.”<sup>36</sup>

The political use of antisemitism did not cease during Brezhnev’s reign. In 1966, seven Israeli tourists were expelled from the USSR for alleged “espionage activities.”<sup>37</sup> In 1968, the author of *Judaism without Embellishment*, Trofim K. Kichko received the highly prestigious ‘certificate of honour’ from the Supreme Soviet Presidium of the Ukraine and subsequently published another similar book entitled *Judaism and Zionism*.<sup>38</sup> There were anti-Zionist campaigns with antisemitic overtones in the Soviet Union in the wake of the Six-Day War in 1967 and after the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The hunt for enemies was also present in Hungary. The repeated preoccupation of the HSWP’s leading bodies with “internal inimical forces”<sup>39</sup>, as well as the “subversive strategies of imperialists”<sup>40</sup> attests to this phenomenon. However, the Kádár regime did not resort to such harsh anti-Jewish measures as seen in the Soviet Union.

#### 4.2.1. Domestic “Zionists”

Under Endre Sós’ leadership, the official self-identification of the Hungarian Jewish community strictly conformed to the religious category. This conformity was so complete that in 1957, the NRHI informed the State Office of Church Affairs

<sup>35</sup> William Korey, *The Soviet Cage* (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), 80.

<sup>36</sup> R’oi, ‘Economic Trials’

<sup>37</sup> OSA, HU OSA 300-60-1 (Romania), box no. 277, item no. 30/67. UPI Moscow, January 11, 1966; “Israelis expelled”.

<sup>38</sup> Korey, *The Soviet Cage*, 18-19.

<sup>39</sup> The Politburo dealt with the issue during its November 14, 1964; July 20, 1965 and February 1, 1966 meetings.

<sup>40</sup> The Politburo dealt with the issue during its November 23, 1965 and February 1, 1966 meetings.

(SOCA) that they would like to include Hungarian Jewry in the work of the Patriotic People's Front in order to "increase the patriotic spirit of Hungarian Jewry which was struggling to get rid of the emigration craze."<sup>41</sup> In 1961 the president of the SOCA, Károly Olt reported that "the national leadership of the Israelite Church [sic!] are entirely loyal to the state and we manage to form a common point of view in every question. The most important positions... are filled with people loyal to us."<sup>42</sup>

Not everybody agreed with the above policies within the Jewish community and Endre Sós duly reported all discordant voices to the SOCA. For example, he described the visit of dr. Sándor Reis, a high-ranking representative of the Jewish community of the Great Plain region (*Alföldi Községkerület*) who posed the question to Sós: "Why do we always call ourselves Hungarian Jews? Why do we always have to reaffirm this in our articles and speeches? We are not Hungarian Jews, we are simply Jews!"<sup>43</sup> In the reports from Sós to the SOCA, members of the Jewish community who questioned or disapproved of the line followed by the loyal leadership were frequently termed "Zionist". Among them was Dr. Sándor Scheiber<sup>44</sup> whom Sós described as "the head of the invisibly operating Zionist clique."<sup>45</sup> He accused Scheiber of conducting "a consistent propaganda in the interest of the Zionist clique, always opposed to the patriotic line of the leadership of the NRHI."<sup>46</sup> In fact, Scheiber was not a Zionist, so much so that he refused the Hebrew University's offer to be appointed the director of

<sup>41</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-b, 8938/1957. Letter from the National Office of Hungarian Israelites to the Office of Church Affairs, July 19, 1957.

<sup>42</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-d, box no. 13, document no. 0039/1961. Report from Károly Olt to Gyula Kállai on the situation of Hungarian Churches, June 21, 1961.

<sup>43</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 50639, document no. 11-18/1958. Endre Sós' report about the internal situation of the Hungarian Jewish community, no date (approximately Summer, 1958).

<sup>44</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 52212, documents no. K-2-21/1961. Endre Sós' report about the visit of American freemasons to Budapest, September 13, 1961.

<sup>45</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 52213, document no. M-11-2/1963. Report of Endre Sós and Géza Seifert to the National Office of Church Affairs on Sándor Scheiber, no date (approximately Spring, 1963).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

its libraries<sup>47</sup> and a professorship in Tel Aviv<sup>48</sup>, both of which offered the possibility to move permanently to Israel. Even though the SOCA signalled to Scheiber that he would receive the necessary exit visa, he decided to stay in Hungary because he felt strongly connected to both Hungarian Jewry and Hungarian science.<sup>49</sup> However, he was indeed critical of the official Jewish leadership's politics such as the disaffiliation from the WJC<sup>50</sup>, and cooperated with the Israeli legation in Budapest to secretly distribute aid among Jews.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, Dr. József Schindler, the head rabbi of Szeged was presented by Sós as belonging to the "Zionist clique" because he did not agree with official policies towards Israel.<sup>52</sup>

Sós translated the above and other similar tensions within the community, and critical opinions about his leadership into a battle between "patriotic" and "Zionist" elements. But those who contradicted Sós' policies rarely did that from a truly Zionist stand. The critics merely requested the reconsideration of Hungarian Jewish political traditions, which the official Jewish leadership continued according to the desires of the communist state. Seeing that despite the loyal behaviour, the possibilities of Jewish self-expression were severely restricted, and the only possible Jewish self-identification (religious) strongly supervised, the doubters questioned the viability of the compromise. Sós' critics pointed out the need for a new self-definition for the Jewish community.

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<sup>47</sup> György Haraszti, 'Sándor Scheiber' in: *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. Accessible at: [http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Scheiber\\_Sandor](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Scheiber_Sandor) [Retrieved: July 16, 2013].

<sup>48</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 52212, document no. K-2-29/1962. Endre Sós' note about Sándor Scheiber's emigration plans to the Office of Church Affairs, April 19, 1962.

<sup>49</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 52213, document no. M-11-13/1962. Sándor Scheiber's letter to Endre Sós, 21 June, 1962.

<sup>50</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 50643, document no. M-11-7/a-1960. Endre Sós' letter to Károly Olt, July 24, 1960.

<sup>51</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Israel), box no. 2, 4/a, document no. 002127/6/1957. Note of János Horváth, Office of Church Affairs, November 22, 1957.

<sup>52</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 50639, document no. 11-18/1958. Endre Sós's note about the internal life of the Jewish community, no date (approximately Summer, 1958).

The authorities, depending on their own political interests, gave Sós' opinions different amounts of thought. The "enemy" category was neither absolute, nor static. In 1963, Sándor Scheiber embarked on an international tour which included Scandinavian countries, Canada and the United States. While four years before, he had not been allowed to travel to Israel for a scientific Congress on the account that he was considered by the SOCA "a politically unreliable, Zionist person,"<sup>53</sup> this time around the authorities claimed that he was permitted to travel overseas because of "the possibilities of émigré contacts."<sup>54</sup> From the beginning of the 1960s, the Kádár regime tried to cultivate good relations with Hungarian émigrés abroad to counteract the activities of their political organizations and increase the popularity (or at least acceptability) of the Hungarian administration.<sup>55</sup> Because a significant percentage of the dissidents living in capitalist countries were religious, Hungarian authorities encouraged religious organizations to increase their activities among them.<sup>56</sup> This process led the officials of the Office of Church Affairs to facilitate Scheiber's visit to capitalist Western countries in 1963, despite Sós' negative reports.

#### 4.2.2. Foreign "Zionists"

Foreign relations of the Hungarian Jewish community in the early 1960s, including those with some Jewish communities and organizations in the West, were encouraged by state-officials. These interactions were to somewhat counterbalance the loss of foreign contacts that occurred as a result of the disaffiliation from the WJC. Thus Mark Uveeler, the Director of the Department of Cultural and Educational

<sup>53</sup> MOL, M-KS XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 50640, document no. K-1-26/1959. Letter from the State Office of Church Affairs to the National Office of Hungarian Israelites, July, 1959.

<sup>54</sup> MOL M-KS, 288.22/1963/7. Materials of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda. Letter from József Prantner to István Balló, March 20, 1963.

<sup>55</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.5/116. Minutes of the meeting of the Politburo, February 3, 1959.

<sup>56</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.22/1963/7. Materials of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda. Letter from József Prantner to István Balló, March 20, 1963.

Reconstruction of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference)<sup>57</sup>, finally managed to secure a visit to Hungary in late 1959 and followed it up with yearly trips thereafter. The neediest Hungarian Jewish families had already received parcels containing clothes, food and medicine in the aftermath of the 1956 revolution, as part of the ‘Relief in Transit’ program of the Conference.<sup>58</sup> Hungarian state authorities then tried to acquire aid in financial form, and decided to facilitate Uveeler’s trips after he had made it clear that this was the prerequisite of the planned yearly 30-40,000 USD assistance for Jewish cultural programs.<sup>59</sup> Though the Office of Church Affairs duly protested Uveeler’s yearly visits, the official in charge of the case at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs countered that even the Ministry of the Interior, the main “watchdog” of Hungarian security against imperialist infiltration “supports Uveeler’s visit, because the Jewish religious community needs money... Uveeler can be let in [to Hungary] because Endre Sós will be by his side day and night.”<sup>60</sup>

Another important source of foreign income came through yearly renewed contracts with the Swiss *Société de Secours et d’Entr’Aide* (SSEA). The Hungarian regime manipulated with the exchange rates to gain extra profit on these international transactions. It provided the Central Social Committee (*Központi Szociális Bizottság*)

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<sup>57</sup> The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany was established in October 1951 with the main goal to obtain funds for the Jewish victims of Nazi persecution, help rebuild Jewish communities and communal institutions, and help return Jewish property lost during the Holocaust. For the institutional and policy history, and legal aspects of the Claims Conference see: Dean Silvers, ‘The Future of International Law as Seen through the Jewish Material Claims Conference against Germany’ in: *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3-4 (Summer/Autumn, 1980), 215-228. Ronald W. Zweig, *German Reparations and the Jewish World. A History of the Claims Conference* (Boulder, CO and London: Westview Press, 1987)

<sup>58</sup> Zweig, *German Reparations*, 107-108.

<sup>59</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 50641, document no. K-1-26/1959. Endre Sós’ note, October 30, 1959. These funds were then used to balance the loss of the Rabbinical Seminary and the Jewish Secondary School.

<sup>60</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 50642, document no. K-1-17/1960. Pál Veres to Károly Olt, September 6, 1960.

of the Hungarian Jewish religious organization with thirty million Forints<sup>61</sup> which was about half of the amount the actual exchange rate would have indicated.<sup>62</sup> However, when President of the SSEA Erwin Haymann requested additional information on the usage of their financial aid because he had found the financial accounts unsatisfactory, Endre Sós immediately reported it to the SOCA as an attack against his “anti-Zionist, socialist” leadership.<sup>63</sup> Also, Haymann’s 1963 visit was reported as “accompanied by a significant Zionist commotion”<sup>64</sup> because he met with Sándor Scheiber and a few other community members who did not necessarily support Sós’ leadership.

The Claims Conference spent around 270,000 USD in Hungary between 1954 and 1964. By comparison, 534,000 USD went to Czechoslovakia, 135,000 USD to Poland and more than a million USD to Yugoslavia during the same time period.<sup>65</sup> No money reached the Bulgarian, East-German, Romanian and Soviet Jewish communities. The Claims Conference was allowed to operate in Hungary for economic reasons, even though the authorities suspected “Western imperialist” influences and thus the Ministry of the Interior got involved in Uveeler’s surveillance.<sup>66</sup> The security services established that some members of the Jewish community kept in touch with Haymann and Uveeler for “contraband and intelligence” purposes, and to “spread Zionist propaganda.”<sup>67</sup> Those who kept in touch with foreign Jewish organizations did so in order to receive funds for their Zionist activities.

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<sup>61</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-d, box no. 13, document no. 0027-1/1961. Károly Olt’s report on negotiations carried out on the subject of Jewish foreign aid, March 1, 1961.

<sup>62</sup> For reference, the exchange rate between USD and HUF on January 1, 1968 was 1:60. Source: <http://fxtop.com>

<sup>63</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 50641, document no. 17-8/e/1959. Letter from Erwin Haymann to Endre Sós, no date.

<sup>64</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 52213, document no. M-11-3/1963. Endre Sós’ report, March 9, 1963.

<sup>65</sup> Zweig, *German Reparations*, 122.

<sup>66</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 50642, document no. K-1-17/1960. Handwritten notes on Endre Sós’ letter to Károly Olt, July 29, 1960.

<sup>67</sup> (Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára (Henceforth: ÁSZTL), O-17169/1, agent report, March 6, 1963. Document courtesy of András Kovács.



The information held by the Hungarian authorities was rather far from reality. It was indeed the Joint that financed both the “Relief in Transit” and the SSEA,<sup>68</sup> which were used as covers because of the unwillingness of Hungarian authorities to establish direct relations with the American organization. The Joint was officially termed a Zionist association; however, the case was rather that aid was coming openly from an American organization<sup>69</sup> would have been much too embarrassing for communist countries to accept. Hungarian authorities were well aware of the origins of the aid money, and the JDC knew that they knew.<sup>70</sup> The SSEA was established in 1953 with the explicit goal to facilitate the transfer of money from the JDC to the secret Israeli organization *Nativ*<sup>71</sup> and as such, help this office to work towards Jewish emigration from Central Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the primary goal of SSEA was to provide aid for needy Central-East European Jews rather than to instigate for emigration. These various aid activities were not traditional Jewish communal actions, but were necessitated by the special conditions following WWII, when the re-building of Jewish life began in Eastern Europe. However, this broad range of Jewish self-help coming from secular Western Jewish organizations was at odds with the Hungarian regime’s religious definition of Jewish identity, as well as its claim to having provided its citizens an adequate life quality. Even more embarrassing for the Kádár regime was the fact that the JDC increased its aid after the

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<sup>68</sup> American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives (Henceforth: JDC) New York, CF, F. Internal Revenue—Relief In Transit, 1966: 3. Letter from Charles Jordan to Richard Seidel, June 9, 1966.

<sup>69</sup> The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the world’s largest Jewish transnational philanthropic organization, was established in November 1914 to offer relief to distressed Jews in and from Central and Eastern Europe during World War I.

<sup>70</sup> JDC New York, Relief in Transit 1959-1964, NY55-64 /3/9/820. Letter from JDC Office in Frankfurt to Moses Leavitt, July 18, 1956.

<sup>71</sup> In 1952, an organization called ‘*Nativ*’ ( ) or the Liaison Bureau was set up as part of the Prime Minister’s Office in Israel under Moshe Sharett. *Nativ*, led by Shaul Avigur, was designed to operate secretly (as to avoid setting off Arab propaganda) on behalf of Soviet Jews, establishing contacts, developing Jewish education and helping Jewish emigration from the USSR to Israel. See also: Michael Beizer, “‘I Don’t Know Whom to Thank’: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee’s Secret Aid to Soviet Jewry” in: *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Winter 2009), 111–36.

1956 revolution, which suggested a worsening, not improving situation. “The Hungarian revolution has deprived many of the older people of the support from younger members of the family.” Charles Jordan, at that time Director-General for Overseas Operations of the JDC described the glum situation to Executive Vice Chairman Moses Leavitt in 1959. “There is still much sickness around. Altogether the dependent group in Hungary continues to be a pathetic one.”<sup>72</sup>

Similarly to what was going on in Moscow, the relative openness to the West in Hungary meant an increased perception of threat from the same direction. To justify this perception, the image of a widespread world network of Zionist conspirators was invoked with the help of some of the Jewish community’s leaders, who saw an opportunity to link this “Zionist network” to their opponents. At the same time, Hungarian authorities and the Jewish community worked together with Western Jewish organizations (including the Joint) to facilitate incoming aid. The representatives of these associations were allowed to visit Hungary and were openly negotiating with the authorities, while constantly being tailed by agents of the Ministry of the Interior who sensed a “Zionist threat” in these aid operations. While never acknowledging that they cooperated with the JDC, and continuing to label Western Jewish representatives “Zionists”; Hungarian authorities more than willingly accepted the economic benefits of such assistance. Just as it was willing to overlook antisemitism if convenient, the Kádár regime was also bent on coping with what it considered a “Zionist influence” if it meant political and/or economic benefits.

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<sup>72</sup> JDC New York, Relief in Transit 1959-1964, NY55-64\_SM\_040\_0500. Letter from Charles Jordan to Moses Leavitt, May 14, 1959.

### 4.3. Relations with Israel

Though advocating ‘peaceful coexistence’ with the United States from the second part of the 1950s, the Soviet Union did not give up on the idea of enhancing its hegemonic influence in the Middle East. The Soviets’ biggest goal in the area was a rapprochement between pro-Soviet Arab countries in the face of the anti-communist Baghdad Pact alliance, supported by the United States and Great Britain.<sup>73</sup> After a short fall-out following Nasser’s anti-Communist attacks in 1959, Moscow cultivated good relations with Egypt again,<sup>74</sup> especially because Nasser’s advocacy of ‘pan-Arabism’. This connection, Khrushchev hoped, “would serve to enhance its [i.e. the Soviet Union’s] regional diplomatic role.”<sup>75</sup> Another important partner of the Soviet Union in the Middle East was Syria, where Moscow established close relations with the moderate wing of the Baath Party, which supported Arab unity. When the militant Neo-Baath Party took power in 1966, though the Soviet Union endorsed the new regime, it did not encourage its hostility to Israel.<sup>76</sup> Behind the scenes, the USSR was trying to appease the Syrians’ martial spirit towards the Jewish state.<sup>77</sup> Moscow also started supporting the Palestinian Liberation Organization while relations with Israel, whose orientation was increasingly Western, were kept at a relatively low level. There were several gestures coming from Soviet diplomacy that hinted at the possibility to slightly improve relations. In 1964, the sale of the Russian Compound in Israel ended

<sup>73</sup> See: Magnus Persson, *Great Britain, the United States and the security of the Middle East: the formation of the Baghdad Pact* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1998)

<sup>74</sup> The positive Soviet evaluation of Egyptian developments was largely the result of Nasser’s nationalization project which he started after Syria had left the UAR in 1961. Nasser claimed the necessity of nationalization in order to protect his regime from “feudalism, monopolies and capitalist exploitation.” It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to decide whether this nationalization was in any way influenced by Communist ideas or was simply a device to strengthen state-control. See: Walter Laqueur, *The Struggle for the Middle East* (United States: Macmillan, 1969), 67-68.

<sup>75</sup> Arthur Jay Klinghoffer and Judith Apter, *Israel and the Soviet Union. Alienation or Reconciliation?* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1985), 23.

<sup>76</sup> Audrey McNerney, ‘Prospect Theory and Soviet Policy Towards Syria, 1966-1967’ in: *Political Psychology*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (June, 1992), 269.

<sup>77</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Israel), box no. 48, document no. 14-00784/1967. Summary report of the 6th Regional Department with regards to Hungarian-Israeli relations, February 17, 1967.

the Russian trade boycott which had been in effect since the Suez Crisis.<sup>78</sup> Contrary to previous practice, members of the Soviet diplomatic corps in Israel appeared several times in front of the Israeli public,<sup>79</sup> trying to explain away Soviet discriminatory practices blocking Jewish emigration which had been criticized by an increased international campaign in the West.<sup>80</sup> It was against this backdrop of close Soviet relations with Arab countries and unfriendliness, but not militancy towards Israel that ‘real socialist’ countries of Eastern Europe developed their relations with the Middle East.

#### 4.3.1. Trade and economic relations

Hungarian foreign policies towards Israel in this period were inconsistent both internally and vis-à-vis Soviet policy. In spite of the 1964 real estate deal, the Soviet Union remained one of the two countries of the bloc (together with Czechoslovakia) that did not have a trade agreement with Israel.<sup>81</sup> In stark contrast, trade and economic relations with Israel in the 1960s were, from the Hungarian point of view, a success story. While at the end of the fifties trade with Israel was rather modest, by the beginning of the sixties it produced a stable profit for Hungarian economy.

Hungary’s ties with Arab countries in the Middle East, especially Egypt, were considerably strengthened following Moscow’s orientation. However, this liaison did not produce stellar trade balance payments. For instance, the balance of trade

<sup>78</sup> Gideon Rafael, *Destination Peace. Three Decades of Israeli Foreign Policy. A Personal Memoir* (New York: Stein and Day, 1981), 120.

<sup>79</sup> OSA, HU OSA 300-60-1 (Rumanian unit), box no. 277. RFE Special, New York, September 7 1964. “Improvement seen in Israeli Curt [sic] relations.”

<sup>80</sup> Yaacov Ro’i, *The Struggle for Soviet Jewish Emigration 1948-1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 161-202.

<sup>81</sup> Yosef Govrin, *Israeli Soviet Relations 1953-1967. From Confrontation to Disruption* (London: Frnak Cass, 1998), 97-110.

with the most significant trading partner in the Middle East, Egypt, was rather hectic and incalculable (see Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1: Hungary's foreign trade between 1957 and 1966 (in million Hungarian forints)**

Country		1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965
Israel	Export	15.80	9.60	5.50	17.06	34.17	39.00	64.05	75.06	84.00
	Import	7.60	7.50	12.30	9.60	21.10	21.50	51.90	64.70	78.00
Egypt	Export	133	169	128	79	104	185	145	93	224.4
	Import	31	118	72	90	105	67	149	161	99.30

Sources: MOL, XIX-j-1-j (Egyiptom), box no. 19, 25/c and box no. 42, 36. MOL, XIX-j-1-j, box. no. 41, 36-41. MOL, XIX-J-1-j, 1967/ box no. 35, document no. 00905/1. MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Izrael), box no. 2, 4/a, document unnumbered/1966; Gábor Bebők's report about the „actual questions of Hungarian-Israeli relations”, January 14, 1966. MOL, XIX-J-1-k (Izrael), box no. 3, 4/bf.

Tourism between Hungary and Israel also became significant from the beginning of 1963, because Hungarian authorities were concerned about the insufficient level of foreign currency income the country received from that source.<sup>82</sup> Until that point, the Ministry of the Interior opposed any agreement of this kind with Israel, but this instruction was reversed to allow tourists who would take advantage of pricey hotel services.<sup>83</sup>

The Hungarian leadership's intent for a comprehensive reform of the Hungarian economy became pronounced from around 1963-64. It was clear that in order to successfully implement plans of modernization and policies intended to raise Hungarians' quality of life, the country needed to acquire financial and natural resources from outside of the Soviet bloc as well. Eitan Ben-Tsur, second secretary and head of the consular department at the Israeli Legation in Budapest between 1965

<sup>82</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-k (Izrael), box no. 7, 15/e, document no. 00691/5/1962. Letter from János Katona to László Földvári about tourism between Hungary and Israel, October 24, 1962.

<sup>83</sup> MOL, MOL, XIX-J-1-k (Izrael), box no. 7, 15/e, document no. 00691/6/1962. János Marton, co-director of IBUSZ transport company, March 20, 1962.

and 1967 confirmed the link between the importance of foreign relations and economic reforms. According to Ben-Tsur, “in light of the economic reforms that were carried out in Hungary, and were just about to come into effect... they [the Hungarians – K.B.] all put a special emphasis on the economic area.”<sup>84</sup> Moreover, the reliably positive trade balance and tourism from Israel ensured a steady flow of hard foreign currency. It was due to these considerations that the rather fruitful trade relations with Israel were not reduced despite repeated Arab protests and boycott-threats. The Soviet Union, though not engaged in significant trade operations with Israel, did not prevent the positive development of Hungary’s economic relations with the Jewish State.

#### 4.3.2. Diplomatic relations

As opposed to steadily growing trade, other areas of foreign relations between Hungary and Israel were not particularly positive. The discrepancy was allowed by the disfunctionality of the Hungarian bureaucratic apparatus involved in policy formation.

From a political point of view, it is necessary that the Hungarian People’s Republic increases its presence, weight and influence in the State of Israel. This is what is needed to propagate and increase the appreciation of our socialist social order. With our political presence, we can help the Israeli progressive forces and on occasion, may be able to influence the politics of the State of Israel.<sup>85</sup>

This was the proposition of the 6<sup>th</sup> Regional Department of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was responsible for relations with Israel, in February 1967.

While maintaining that the State of Israel hurt “progressive interests” in the Middle

<sup>84</sup> Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Henceforth: HUJI), Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Oral History Division, ‘Israel and the Eastern European States at the Time of the Six-Day War’ Project, Interview no. 50(3) with Eitan Ben-Tsur, February 15, 1968.

<sup>85</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Israel), box no. 48, document no. 14-00784/1967. Summary report of the 6th Regional Department with regards to Hungarian-Israeli relations, February 17, 1967.

East, the Department tried to cautiously improve relations with Israel during the 1960s, up until the Six-Day War.

As early as 1960, the desk proposed the appointment of a permanent minister at the head of the Hungarian Legation in Tel Aviv, which had been led by only a chargé d'affaires since the “smuggling scandal”.<sup>86</sup> It also propagated more open cultural policies towards Israel.<sup>87</sup> The proposal was encouraged by a remark of the Soviet Ambassador to Israel that urged Hungarians to improve cultural relations with the Jewish State,<sup>88</sup> and indirectly by the brief ‘thaw’ that occurred in Soviet-Israeli relations in 1964-1965.<sup>89</sup> At the beginning of 1967, they suggested the introduction of direct freight-service routes to facilitate an increased volume of trade between the two countries,<sup>90</sup> as well as the launching of direct passenger services to Tel Aviv by the Hungarian Airlines and the Hungarian Naval Agency.<sup>91</sup>

The 6<sup>th</sup> Regional Department’s attempts to intensify diplomatic relations were repeatedly objected to by the 9<sup>th</sup> Regional Department, which was responsible for Arab relations. The 9<sup>th</sup> Department was concerned that any kind of improvement in diplomatic relations with the Israelis would lead to Arab protests. They propagated a cautious attitude about raising the level of the Hungarian diplomatic representation in Tel Aviv. They objected the proposed development of commercial transportation

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<sup>86</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Israel), box no. 1, 1/c, document no. 007751/1960. Proposal by István Igaz, 6th Regional Department of the appointment of a Minister in Israel, December 2, 1960.

<sup>87</sup> ‘Information on current issues of Hungarian-Israeli relations by Gábor Bebők, 6<sup>th</sup> Regional Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 14, 1966’ in: *Kovács and Miller (eds.), Jewish Studies at the Central European University*.

<sup>88</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Israel), 1965/ box no. 61, document no. 005356/1965. Letter from Kálmán Csécssei to János Péter, December 3, 1965.

<sup>89</sup> OSA, HU OSA 300-60-1 (Rumanian unit), box no. 277. RFE Special, March 23, 1966. “Soviet diplomatic efforts in Israel”

<sup>90</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Israel), box no. 1966/61, document no. IV-10. Report on the tendencies of Israel’s foreign and domestic policies in 1965, November 29, 1966.

<sup>91</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Israel), box no. 48, document no. 14-00784/1967. Summary Report of the 6th Regional Department for the Deputy Ministerial meeting, February 17, 1967.

options between Budapest and Tel Aviv.<sup>92</sup> The 6<sup>th</sup> Department on the other hand, argued that

we ought to take into account the political goals of Arab countries to the reasonable and necessary extent, but this must not affect Hungarian sovereignty negatively. Right now, our [diplomatic] steps are, on numerous occasions, decided by the 9<sup>th</sup> Regional Department and not by the department that is responsible for the area. As a result, we do not use our possibilities to the full extent.<sup>93</sup>

Despite the aspirations of the 6<sup>th</sup> Department, many areas of Hungarian-Israeli relations remained minimal, including culture and emigration. According to the archival records of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the years 1959, 1960 and 1961, exit visas to Israel were issued to 128, 303 and 114 persons, respectively.<sup>94</sup> In 1962, 202 exit permits were issued; in 1963, 280; in 1964 201; and in 1965, 175.<sup>95</sup>

As emigration numbers remained insignificant, Israeli diplomats sought other areas of contact to establish direct relations with the Jewish community. They hoped that such relations would increase the demand for emigration and pressure authorities to increase the number of exit visas.<sup>96</sup> Israeli diplomats took part in celebrations during all religious holidays not only in Budapest, but in as many major provincial towns as much as possible.<sup>97</sup> They were present during memorial services of the victims of the *Shoah*. The Israeli legation also tried to help Hungarian Jews acquire

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<sup>92</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Israel), box no. 1967/48, document no. 00784/1967. Remarks and suggestions of the 9th regional department with regards to the proposition of the 6th Department, February 1, 1967.

<sup>93</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Israel), box no. 1966/61, unnumbered document. Report of the 6th Regional Department for the deputy ministerial meeting, June 13, 1966.

<sup>94</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Israel), box no. 11, 29/e, document no. 003297/1961 and MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Israel), box no. 11, 29/e, document no. 004627/6/1962. József Tatai's reports to Károly Szarka, 1961-1962.

<sup>95</sup> 'Information on current issues of Hungarian-Israeli relations.' Gábor Bebök's report, January 14, 1966. in: *András Kovács and Michael Miller (eds.), Jewish Studies at the Central European University, Vol. VII (2008-2009) (Budapest: CEU, 2013), 203-204.*

<sup>96</sup> 'Information on current issues of Hungarian-Israeli relations', 203.

<sup>97</sup> ISA, 93.10/1-22. Report of the Israeli Foreign Ministry about Pesach celebrations in Budapest, Belgrade, Prague and Sofia, May 8, 1960; ISA, 93.10/1-31. Report from Meir Sachar to the Department of Eastern Europe at the Israeli Foreign Ministry about Hannukah celebrations, December 28, 1962.



medicines that were not readily available in Hungary.<sup>98</sup> On the occasion of commemorating the founding of the State of Israel, the Legation held impressive banquets to which hundreds of Hungarian Jews were invited.<sup>99</sup> However, after the protest of the State Office of Church Affairs (SOCA),<sup>100</sup> the Ministry of Foreign Affairs intervened at the Israeli legation to minimize such activities.<sup>101</sup>

The 9<sup>th</sup> Department got involved, on an ideological basis, in areas where it had no jurisdiction. The SOCA interfered with foreign affairs even though it should have only concerned itself with religious matters. The overlapping interests were partly the products of the communist bureaucratic system itself, which sought to control all spheres of politics through structures of mutual supervision. The structural disfunctionality within the Foreign Ministry was the result of what Andrew C. Janos described as arbitration in the name of a higher purpose<sup>102</sup> inasmuch as the 9<sup>th</sup> Department referred to the confrontation of “progressive” and “imperialistic” forces in the Middle East to substantiate their arguments and to manipulate their organizational position vis-à-vis the 6<sup>th</sup> Department. Nevertheless, the specifically Hungarian origin of disfunctionality was to be found in the repeated clash of the Hungarian state’s restrictive religious definition of Jewishness and the pluralistic, ethno-cultural/ethno-religious understanding of Jewish identity by the Israelis.

Soviet influence did not determine the low level of relations, and not only because of the Ambassador’s suggestion to increase cultural relations. The example of Poland proves that it was possible to improve relations with Israel at this time. Throughout

<sup>98</sup> See: MOL, XIX-J-1-j, Izrael, box no. 1965/ 61, document no. 003629/1965. Letter from Pál Veres to István Beck, June 15, 1965.

<sup>99</sup> MOL, IX-A-21-d, box no. 14, document no. 004-2/1962. Letter from József Prantner to Frigyes Puja, August 28, 1962.

<sup>100</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-k, box no. 3, 4/af. Letter from János Grnák to János Katona, November 22, 1962.

<sup>101</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-k, box no. 3, 4/af. Report from István Beck, 6<sup>th</sup> Regional Department to János Péter about the visit of the Israeli chargé d’affaires, May 6, 1964.

<sup>102</sup> Andrew C. Janos, ‘Systemic Models and the Theory of Change in the Comparative Study of Communist Politics’ in: *Authoritarian Politics in Communist Europe. Uniformity and Diversity in One-Party States*. (Berkeley, CA.: Institute of International Studies University of California, 1976), esp. 6-7.

the 1960s, “Poland maintained relatively good relations with Israel.”<sup>103</sup> The country raised their legation in Tel Aviv to ambassadorial level in 1962 and soon, Israel recognized Poland’s Western border<sup>104</sup> with West Germany which had a symbolic significance, as already discussed in the previous chapter. The exchange of cultural groups was not uncommon, including long visits to Israel by Poland’s Jewish State Theatre, as well as the Polish State Circus from Warsaw. Even more indicative of Polish efforts to build good relations with Israel was the gesture of the Polish government to allow the meeting of Israeli diplomats serving in Eastern Europe to take place in Warsaw in May 1966. Even Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban<sup>105</sup> participated and used the occasion to meet with his Polish counterpart Adam Rapacki. Though rumour has it that the meeting was diligently tapped by the Polish authorities,<sup>106</sup> it has nevertheless been argued that the gathering was not viewed favourably by the Soviets who considered it a demonstration of Poland’s endeavours for greater policy independence.<sup>107</sup>

Poland’s strengthening foreign relations with Israel fit into the line the country had been following since its 1956 crisis. Since then, it had pursued policies that aimed at the widening of Poland’s autonomy from the Soviet Union. Warsaw had close ties with several countries that Moscow did not, such as Yugoslavia,<sup>108</sup> and relatively

<sup>103</sup> Dariusz Stola, ‘Anti-Zionism as a Multipurpose Policy Instrument: The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland, 1967-1968’ in: *The Journal of Israeli History*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (March, 2006), 175-201, 179.

<sup>104</sup> Jacob Abadi, ‘The Road to the Israeli-Polish Rapprochement’ in: *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 6. (November, 2005), 863-888.

<sup>105</sup> Abba Eban, *An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1977), 306-308.

<sup>106</sup> According to Gideon Rafael who was also present, Polish authorities attempted to tap the meeting but they ran into some technical difficulties and thus had to ask the Israelis to repeat the “performance”. Gideon Rafael, *Destination Peace. Three Decades of Israeli Foreign Policy. A Personal Memoir* (New York: Stein and Day, 1981), 124.

<sup>107</sup> See for example: Moshe Gilboa, *Shesh Shanim – Shisha Yamim* [Six Years – Six Days], (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1968), 69; Arthur Jay Klinghoffer and Judith Apter, *Israel and the Soviet Union. Alienation or Reconciliation?* (Boulder, CO and London: Westview Press, 1985), 48.

<sup>108</sup> Adam Bromke, ‘Poland’s Role in the Loosening of the Communist Bloc’ in: *International Journal*, Vol. 20, No.4 (Autumn, 1965), 496.

close economic and cultural relations with the United States.<sup>109</sup> This demonstrative distancing from Moscow's foreign policy line fit in well with the 'Polish road to socialism' slogan, both with those Party members who interpreted it as the easing of orthodoxy, and with those who propagated national interests in the spirit of the prewar *Endecja*.<sup>110</sup>

The German Democratic Republic demonstratively shunned diplomatic relations with Israel. Walter Ulbricht represented a militant position concerning the Jewish state, perhaps the most hostile in the Soviet bloc.<sup>111</sup> Apparently, Ulbricht sought to please and then establish diplomatic relations with Arab countries to weaken West Germany's contacts in the area because it would have had to give those contacts up according to its own Hallstein Doctrine. According to this principle, the GFR would not maintain diplomatic relations with countries that had ties with the GDR. Eventually, Ulbricht's 1965 visit to Cairo led to the break off of diplomatic relations between West Germany and 10 Arab countries, while formal relations between the former and Israel were established the same year.<sup>112</sup>

Both in the case of Poland and East Germany, the Israeli relation was fit into broader ideological and political schemes, which determined these countries' well-defined positions. Hungary, on the other hand was not following a clear, ideologically dominated strategy (except for the vague goal of obtaining foreign currency). This factor, combined with the structural disfunctionality of socialist bureaucracy, determined the inconsistency of policies towards Israel.

<sup>109</sup> In 1957, Poland received a \$95 million loan from the United States and \$97 million the next year. At the end of the 1950s, several hundred Polish scholars visited Western universities and research centres from money coming from the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations. See: Adam Bromke, *Poland's Politics: Idealism vs. Realism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 129.

<sup>110</sup> Michael Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust*. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 65-66.

<sup>111</sup> Yosef Govrin, *Israel's Relations with the East European States: from Disruption to Resumption (1967 - 1989-91)*, (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011), 96.

<sup>112</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.32/1965/5. Report from Béla Szilágyi to Frigyes Puja on his meeting with Eliezer Doron, May 29, 1965.

#### 4.4. The inconsistent sixties

Inconsistency was the main attribute of the Kádár regime's policies towards Jewish issues in the period investigated by this chapter. In this sense, they only vaguely corresponded to broader policies of consolidation and compromise. Inconsistency was present when it came to countering antisemitism within the Party. As the Dögei and Marosán/Szurdi cases demonstrate, Kádár acted against such sentiment only if it made his position at the helm of the Party and state more stable. Similarly, in its fight against "inimical elements", codenamed Zionists in the Jewish context, the Hungarian administration selectively applied this category. Though members of the religious Jewish community opposing Sós' policies, and representatives of international Jewish organizations visiting Hungary were routinely categorized as Zionists, their activities were thoroughly taken advantage of if they offered political benefits for the Kádár regime.

From the beginning of the 1960s up until the Six-Day War, Moscow influence on Hungarian communist policies towards Jewish issues and antisemitism can only be detected indirectly. De-Stalinization caused intra-Party rifts that brought antisemitism to the surface. The increased vigilance that accompanied "peaceful coexistence" with the West produced "Zionists". Finally, Moscow's close ties with Arab countries inimical to Israel hindered the possibility of close relations between Hungary and the Jewish State. However, all these issues were mediated by the Hungarian Party and bureaucratic structure which modified them in a way that was most advantageous for the Kádár leadership.

## 5. Summer war in the Middle East

Repeated incidents in the demilitarized zones along the border between Israel and Syria escalated into a considerable tension after the installation of the radical new Ba'ath regime in the latter country at the beginning of 1966. This regime encouraged cross-border sabotage activities by al-Fatah against Israel,<sup>1</sup> to which the Jewish State answered by threatening with military action. Based on most likely false Soviet information that reported Israeli troop concentrations on the Syrian border,<sup>2</sup> Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser instructed his military in May 1967 to occupy the Sinai Peninsula. He requested the withdrawal of the UN Emergency Force from the demarcation line separating his country from Israel. Nasser also announced the blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba, preventing Israeli ships from accessing the Red Sea from Eilat, a move that Israel answered yet again by threatening with military attack. According to Richard B. Parker, who was a political counselor at the U.S. Embassy at the time, the Egyptians did not expect Israel to go into full war but if so, they anticipated that their army would be a match for the IDF.<sup>3</sup> They miscalculated on both counts.

An armed conflict broke out on 5 June when Israel struck with a surprise assault to prevent a unified Arab military effort. In a matter of a few hours, Israeli planes destroyed the majority of the UAR's air force, while also striking other targets in the

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<sup>1</sup> Galia Golan, 'The Soviet Union and the Outbreak of the June 1967 War' in: *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Winter 2006), 6. Richard B. Parker, 'The June 1967 War: Some Mysteries Explored' in: *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 46, No.2 (Spring, 1992), 178-179.

<sup>2</sup> Anwar Sadat, *In Search of Identity* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 171-172. Yaacov Ro'i and Dima P. Adamsky, 'Conclusions' in: Yaacov Ro'i and Boris Morozov (eds.), *The Soviet Union and the June 1967 Six Day War* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 268.

<sup>3</sup> Parker, 'The June 1967 War', 180.

UAR, Syria and Jordan. Subsequently, the Israeli army advanced deep into Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian territories, occupying the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula (from Egypt), the West Bank, East Jerusalem (from Jordan), and the Golan Heights (from Syria).

Within a few days the USSR, then all other countries of the Eastern bloc except Romania broke-off diplomatic relations with Israel. While literature usually dismisses this episode as a uniform action dictated by Moscow,<sup>4</sup> it remains to be seen whether this uniformity was all encompassing in every area of relations, and how domestic discussions in satellite countries evolved around the Soviet dictate. To what extent were reactions in the ruling communist parties to the Middle East crisis and the conclusions drawn uniform? If they were not, what factors brought about the differences? How did the regimes deal with differing opinions within the Party and among the population and was this determined by bloc-wide regime characteristics or local circumstances? A more in-depth analysis of these aspects of the war and its aftermath can shed light on the extent of Moscow's control over satellite policies, as well as on the degree to which uniform ideology and power structure determined the handling of similar foreign policy and domestic issues.

### **5.1. The Six-Day War in the Middle East and communist diplomatic efforts**

Despite the USSR's part in bringing about the June 1967 crisis, the dominant position in scholarship today is that the war itself came as an unpleasant surprise to

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<sup>4</sup> Dariusz Stola, 'Anti-Zionism as a Multipurpose Policy Instrument: the Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland, 1967-1968' in: *The Journal of Israeli History*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (March, 2006), 181.

Moscow.<sup>5</sup> The rapid Israeli advances during the war threatened with the fall of the pro-Soviet regimes in Syria and Egypt. The final Israeli victory was a grave embarrassment because it suggested the inferiority of Soviet-supplied Arab arms. The reaction of Moscow to these unpleasant events was twofold. The USSR became the main advocate in the international arena (including the UN) of Arab struggles for the return of territories occupied by Israel. At the same time, behind the scenes, Moscow tried to convince its Arab allies of the desirability of the disputes' peaceful settlement.<sup>6</sup> The following pages examine the extent to which diplomatic efforts of satellites conformed to Moscow's above strategies. The analysis uncovers the extent of compliance with Moscow and activity in the field of Hungary's foreign relations.

#### **5.1.1. Communist diplomacy at the UN regarding the Middle East Crisis**

The UN Security Council, attempting to arrange a cease-fire and representing US and Soviet fears of the escalation of the crisis, met on each day of the fighting. The position of USSR Ambassador to the UN Nikolai Fedorenko was that cease-fire would only be possible if Israel was ordered to draw back behind the pre-war armistice lines. Both Fedorenko and Bulgarian representative Milko Tarabanov<sup>7</sup> represented a harsh anti-Israeli position during the meetings. According to Gideon Rafael, Israel's UN representative at the time, the Soviet and Bulgarian delegates were conducting a "psychological warfare" in the Security Council by their coordinated effort of

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<sup>5</sup> Rami Ginat, 'The Soviet Union: The Roots of War and a Reassessment of Historiography' in: Wm. Roger Louis and Avi Shlaim (eds.), *The 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Origins and Consequences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 193-218; Arthur Jay Klinghoffer and Judith Apter, *Israel and the Soviet Union. Alienation or Reconciliation?* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1985), 38-39 and 52-55; Guy Laron, 'Stepping Back from the Third World. Soviet Policy toward the United Arab Republic, 1965-1967' in: *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Fall, 2010), 99-118.

<sup>6</sup> Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents (1962-1986)* (New York: Times Books, 1995), 148-152; Henry A. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little Brown, 1982), 204.

<sup>7</sup> Bulgaria was elected as a nonpermanent UN Security Council member for the years 1966-1967.

“dragging the sessions late into the night” and “by constant verbal battering and provocation.”<sup>8</sup>

Several cables between the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry and the Bulgarian UN Mission in New York attest to an extremely close coordination between Moscow and Sofia. As early as June 6, the Bulgarian Deputy Foreign Minister Gero Grozev instructed Tarabanov to proceed in the Security Council “in concert with the Soviet Comrades.... The Soviet leadership coordinates its positions with our leadership.”<sup>9</sup>

After Israel disobeyed the June 6 and 7 cease-fire resolution of the Security Council, Nikolai Fedorenko threatened with the break-off of diplomatic relations.<sup>10</sup> When the IDF came dangerously close to occupying Damascus and thus toppling the pro-Soviet regime, the Soviet Union broke off diplomatic relations with Israel.<sup>11</sup> Czechoslovakia also announced the severance of diplomatic ties the same day. All other Central-East European Communist countries followed suit within the next few days (Bulgaria on June 11, Poland and Hungary on June 12, Yugoslavia on June 13), with the exception of Romania.

The harsh Soviet position is frequently attributed to the pressure coming from the Arab countries that were unhappy about the passive Soviet behaviour during the initial phase of the fighting.<sup>12</sup> However, there was another factor at play as well. The Chinese attacked the Soviet Union from the onset of the war, claiming that the “Soviet

<sup>8</sup> Gideon Rafael, *Destination Peace. Three Decades of Israeli Foreign Policy. A Personal Memoir* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), 162.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in: Jordan Baev, ‘Eastern Europe and the Six Day War: The Case of Bulgaria’ in: Ro’i and Morozov, *The Soviet Union and the June 1967 Six Day War*, 187.

<sup>10</sup> The USSR Government issued a statement on 7 June, 1967 in which it warned the Israeli government that “[i]f the Government of Israel does not now comply at once with the concerted demand of States for an immediate cease-fire,... the Soviet Union will reconsider its attitude to Israel and will take a decision concerning the further maintenance of diplomatic relations with Israel”. In: *United Nations Security Council Official Records*, 1350<sup>th</sup> meeting, 7 June 1967. (New York: United Nations, 1970), 7.

<sup>11</sup> ‘The Soviet Union’s Policy Regarding Israel’s Aggression in the Middle East’, report by Leonid Brezhnev to the CPSU Central Committee Plenum, June 20, 1967 in: Ro’i and Morozov (eds.), *The Soviet Union and the June 1967 Six Day War*, 317.

<sup>12</sup> See for example: Michael B. Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).



revisionist click is bent on stamping out the flames of the Arab people's just struggle."<sup>13</sup> Brezhnev himself referred to Chinese attacks in his speech at the Moscow meeting of bloc leaders and in front of the Soviet Politburo in June 1967. He claimed that the Chinese incited Nasser to go into war<sup>14</sup> and that Chinese propaganda made many people in Arab countries believe that "the Soviet Union 'let them down,' 'did not give sufficient assistance in a difficult moment', and so on."<sup>15</sup> Trying to avoid going into war as suggested by the Chinese and expected by the belligerent Arab countries, the furthest the USSR could go to appease these two parties was to break off diplomatic relations with Israel and use harsh language instead of real weapons. There was much at stake as China had stepped up its diplomatic efforts to gain allies in the Middle East since the mid-1960s and had been propagating armed struggle as the only way to attain national liberation.<sup>16</sup> However, Moscow could not afford to lose its Arab allies in the Middle East. All its diplomatic efforts, including enlisting Bulgarian support for Moscow's policies in the Security Council, served to maintain the alliance despite the Arab military defeat.

The Bulgarians had their own motives for engaging in the debates of the Security Council, and later in the General Assembly with such vehemence. They were mostly concerned about the possible escalation of the crisis which could have involved a Turkish or Greek military action. This concern is apparent in the evaluation the Bulgarians prepared of the potential of their armed forces in the wake of the Six-Day

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<sup>13</sup> 'Editorial by the Official Organ of the Chinese Communist Party "Renmin Ribao" (People's Daily)', Peking June 6, 1967. In: Fuad A. Jabber, *International Documents on Palestine 1967* (Beirut: The Institute of Palestine Studies, 1970), 75.

<sup>14</sup> "The Soviet Union cautioned Nasser, but others influenced him as well, including the Chinese.", Brezhnev said at the Moscow meeting. In: 'Memorandum of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to János Kádár about the Moscow meeting' in: András Kovács and Michael L. Miller (eds.), *Jewish Studies at the Central European University*, Vol. VI. (2007-2009) (Budapest: Jewish Studies Project Central European University, 2011), 157.

<sup>15</sup> 'The Soviet Union's Policy Regarding Israel's Aggression in the Middle East', report by Leonid Brezhnev to the CPSU Central Committee Plenum, June 20, 1967 in: Ro'i and Morozov (eds.), *The Soviet Union and the June 1967 Six Day War*, 327.

<sup>16</sup> Nigel Disney, 'China and the Middle East' in: *MERIP Reports*, No. 63 (December, 1977), 3-18.

War. Finding that the capabilities and readiness of the Bulgarian army would be highly inadequate in the face of a Greek or Turkish attack, the Bulgarian Politburo proposed to enlist Soviet help to solve the problem.<sup>17</sup> The close cooperation between the Bulgarian and USSR representatives in the Security Council reflected this Bulgarian perception, and sought to secure Soviet help in exchange for diplomatic backup. But even besides this military concern, the Bulgarian regime was one of the most dependent on Soviet economy in the bloc,<sup>18</sup> which probably played a role in their staunch support of the USSR position in the Security Council.

On June 13, the Soviet Union requested that a Special Emergency Session of the General Assembly be convened on the grounds that the Security Council would be unable to influence the Israeli position.<sup>19</sup> The main Soviet motive was to try to push through a resolution calling on Israel to withdraw behind the 1949 armistice line. Moscow's diplomatic objective was to return the lost territories to Egypt, "a *quid pro quo* for obtaining and maintaining a military presence in the country."<sup>20</sup> The high number of decolonized and officially neutral countries in the General Assembly provided a wider range of possible support for USSR proposals than in the Security Council.<sup>21</sup>

Kosygin addressed the Assembly on June 19. He called for the condemnation of Israel, withdrawal of its forces from all areas occupied in the war (and thus behind the

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<sup>17</sup> Report on the State of the Bulgarian Army in the Wake of the Middle East War, October 7, 1967. Published in: Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne (eds.), *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991*. (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2005), 245-248.

<sup>18</sup> John R. Lampe, *The Bulgarian Economy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).

<sup>19</sup> 'Letter dated June 13 1967 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the Secretary General' United Nations General Assembly Document No. A/6717. Available at:

<http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/5ba47a5c6cef541b802563e000493b8c/2aacf966659eae64052566cc006d4e70?OpenDocument> [Retrieved: September 29, 2013].

<sup>20</sup> Golan, 'The Soviet Union and the Outbreak', 17; Ro'i and Adamsky, 'Conclusions', 271-272.

<sup>21</sup> Brian Urquhart, 'The United Nations and the Middle East: A 50-Year Retrospective' in: *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 49, No 4, (Autumn, 1995), 576.

1949 truce-lines), and Israeli compensation payment for damage inflicted upon its belligerent parties.<sup>22</sup> With that, the USSR returned to the original position it had previously propagated (unsuccessfully) in the Security Council, topped with the demand for Israeli war restitution. During his lengthy speech, Kosygin identified Israeli policies with that of the Third Reich, when he likened the occupation administration set up by the Israeli government to those of the *gauleiters* in Nazi Germany.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, Kosygin also affirmed in no uncertain terms Israel's right to exist, a view that contrasted that of many among the 'friendly' Arab countries.

The Soviet delegation soon realized that their proposal would not gain the necessary support even in the General Assembly, thus they changed strategies. A draft resolution was officially proposed by Cyprus, Yugoslavia and seventeen Afro-Asian states<sup>24</sup> which would have called on Israel to immediately withdraw all its forces to the positions they held prior to June 5, 1967 though it did omit the harsh condemnatory references. However, this draft resolution also failed to win the required two-third majority: it received only 53 votes in favour from the Arab states, the communist countries, Muslim countries and France. The entire Latin-American bloc and many African delegations voted against it. According to US Ambassador to the UN Arthur J. Goldberg, the failure occurred because the new proposal "differed in tone but not in substance from the Soviet resolution that was rejected by the Security Council."<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> 'General Assembly' in: *International Organization*, Vol. 22, No. 2. (Spring, 1968), 558-559.

<sup>23</sup> "In the same way as Hitler's Germany used to appoint gauleiters in the occupied regions, the Israeli government is establishing an occupation administration on the territories it has seized and is appointing military governors there" in: 'General Assembly' in: *International Organization*, Vol. 22, No. 2. (Spring, 1968), 557-594.

<sup>24</sup> Hal Kosut (ed.), *Israel & the Arabs: The June 1967 War* (New York, N.Y.: Facts on File Inc, 1968), 129.

<sup>25</sup> Arthur J. Goldberg, 'What Resolution 242 Really Said' in: *American Foreign Policy Interests*, No. 1. Vol. 33 (February 2011), 42.

In the UN arena and, as I will soon demonstrate, also during meetings among the Soviet bloc countries, the Bulgarians and the Yugoslavs turned out to be the most active and engaged in debates with regards to the situation in the Middle East. Tito was alarmed by the Israeli army's ability to move ahead speedily, seize and keep territories from its neighbouring states, which he attributed to American assistance. He saw a potentially dangerous parallel in Italy, which (backed by NATO) he feared could perform a similar military move to seize Istria from the Yugoslavs. At the meeting of the bloc leaders in Moscow in June, he claimed that "in collaboration with the Italians, the Americans want to destroy Yugoslavia too."<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, Tito was known to have good political and personal relations with his Egyptian counterpart Nasser, which compelled the former to openly support and lobby for the Egyptians.

The UN Assembly Special Emergency Session considered seven draft resolutions but only adopted two: one that called for adoption of humanitarian principles and another that forbade Israel to take action in order to alter the status of Jerusalem.<sup>27</sup> Though the Soviets gradually increased their efforts to work out a compromise resolution, they were unable to convince the more militant Arab countries (most importantly Syria and Algeria) to vote in favour of such resolutions. Thus, in order to push their resolutions through, the Soviets would have had to openly and actively oppose the radical Arabs, a move that they did not intend to undertake. It became clear that a deadlock had developed: Israel would not agree to withdraw its troops without some kind of political settlement between the belligerent parties (most importantly the

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<sup>26</sup> 'Memorandum of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to János Kádár about the Moscow meeting' in: Kovács and Miller (eds.), *Jewish Studies at the Central European University*, 153. Burke Elbrick, American Ambassador to Yugoslavia at the time also realized that this was Tito's main fear. See: C.L. Sulzberger, *An Age of Mediocrity. Memoirs and Diaries 1963-1972* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1973.), 418.

<sup>27</sup> CIA Intelligence Report, "Soviet Policy and the 1967 Arab-Israeli War" (Reference title: CEASAR XXXVIII), 30. Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room. Available at: [www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document.../14/caesar-50.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document.../14/caesar-50.pdf) [Retrieved: August 29, 2013.]

Arab countries acknowledging Israel's right to existence). This possibility was in turn unacceptable for the UAR, Syria and Jordan that demanded the withdrawal of Israeli troops first.

After the failure of the General Assembly to pass a resolution, the problem of the Middle East was once again discussed in the Security Council. After a prolonged struggle in that body, in November 1967 the USSR representation eventually voted in favour of Resolution no. 242 initiated by Britain which called for the "[w]ithdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict". The missing definite article before the word "territories" permitted a flexible interpretation of the sentence and became the subject of many debates for years to come. While Israel understood the condition as withdrawal from *some* territories, the Arab states and the USSR were adamant on withdrawal from *all* occupied areas.

UN Secretary General U Thant appointed the Swedish diplomat Gunnar Jarring as UN Special Representative to the Middle East under the terms of Resolution 242. Though Jarring sought out repeatedly all the interested parties in the Middle East, by the spring of 1968 it became clear that his mission was unsuccessful in resolving the conflict.

Despite the unified actions of the Eastern bloc, the political solution favourable for the Arab countries did not come about in the United Nations. The UN arena served as a demonstration of unity and strength, which was paramount for the Soviet Union trying to save face and lobby for its Arab clients, and to keep up its influence in the Middle East. Though the Romanians emerged during the conflict as the deviants of the bloc by not severing diplomatic ties with Israel, their demand for troop withdrawals at the General Assembly<sup>28</sup> brought them nearer to the position of the other bloc

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<sup>28</sup> 'General Assembly', 564.

countries. In this respect, the concerted effort of the bloc in the UN served Soviet expansionist goals, which sought to conquer the Middle East in the name of an ideological battle against imperialism. Despite the unity displayed in the international theatre, behind the scenes, the differences between the positions of the bloc countries were apparent.

### **5.1.2. Behind the scenes: diplomatic policy coordination within the bloc**

Leaders of the Soviet bloc met several times during and after the crisis to discuss the situation. These extraordinary gatherings of the highest bloc leadership were not uncommon during the 1960s,<sup>29</sup> and usually took place when a political conflict or an international crisis flared up.<sup>30</sup> The minutes of the meetings that took place during the 1967 Middle East crisis reveal the diversity of opinions among bloc leaders with regards to the conflict that their unified performances in the UN arena masked.

The highest representatives of socialist countries (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Hungary, Poland, Romania, the USSR and Yugoslavia,) were first summoned to Moscow on June 9-10, 1967. American President at the time Lyndon B. Johnson was convinced that the Soviets had convened it to coordinate their satellites' support for the Arab cause.<sup>31</sup> However, according to the report of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Brezhnev informed the participants that the purpose of the gathering was to “analyze the facts..., draw consequences and decide on action” together, with regards

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<sup>29</sup> Brezhnev himself claimed at the 23rd Party Congress of the CPSU in 1966 that “businesslike contacts and political consultations between the leaders of fraternal parties of the socialist countries have become a system”. Quoted in: Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc. Unity and Conflict*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 474.

<sup>30</sup> For example, there was an emergency meeting during the Berlin crisis in August 1961, several such meetings took place during the Czechoslovak crisis in 1968, one on the situation in Vietnam the following year, and bloc leaders were again summoned in 1970 to discuss a unified policy towards West Germany's ‘Ostpolitik’.

<sup>31</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency 1963-1969*. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 272-273.

to the Middle East crisis.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the contributions of country leaders during the meeting revealed quite a wide range of opinions.

The leaders of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and East Germany expressed militant opinions, arguing in favour of a military intervention. Tito argued that “[t]he imperialists must be shown that we are prepared to do anything, and that we will even go as far as war if our interests and our allies are at stake.”<sup>33</sup> Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov agreed with him, arguing that “[i]f we do not hit back at the aggressor, then they will grow bolder, and this will also affect our political prestige.”<sup>34</sup> Walter Ulbricht attributed Israeli aggression to NATO’s influence, and identified their final goal as the liquidation of the German Democratic Republic.<sup>35</sup> He hinted that the bloc should have used “instruments other than diplomatic channels” to prevent Israeli aggression. Ulbricht’s remarks also suggest that he would have supported military intervention.

Though General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party Nicolae Ceaușescu and Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer were also present, they disagreed with the others’ assessment that Israel was the only aggressor of the Six-Day War. Ceaușescu argued that because the Arab countries had repeatedly threatened Israel with destruction, they lost the support of world opinion, including the backing of “the many branches of the progressive movement.”<sup>36</sup> The Romanians refused to sign the joint statement and to break-off relations with Israel when the other countries did so. In that sense, the positions of the bloc countries were between the two extremes represented by the militant and the Romanian positions.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Memorandum of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to János Kádár about the Moscow meeting’ in: Kovács and Miller (eds.), *Jewish Studies at the Central European University*, 150.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> ‘Minutes of the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo, June 13, 1967’ in: Kovács and Miller (eds.), *Jewish Studies at the Central European University*, 136.

Some of the bloc leaders were openly, though cautiously critical of the Soviet Union's actions before and during the crisis. Tito urged Moscow to reconsider its strategies towards local wars and get more involved in such conflicts. As a result of the accumulation of nuclear weapons, Tito argued, these local tensions were not threatening to escalate into global wars.<sup>37</sup> Ceaușescu opined that it would have been better to have the meeting earlier, before combat operations started. He suggested that he would have preferred to be briefed about the Soviet Union's actions in the Middle East and thus have the opportunity to prevent the war. Ulbricht refused to view Nasser as the sole responsible person for not consulting with the Soviet Union, because he thought that the "relationship was not of that kind... even among ourselves we cannot always agree on economic issues."<sup>38</sup> It is hard to dissect from the brief notes what economic issue Ulbricht had in mind, but he probably aimed his words at the Soviet leadership which, while continuing the mandatory propaganda against West Germany, increased trade relations with East Germany's arch-enemy right at this time.<sup>39</sup>

The declaration adopted at the meeting condemned Israeli aggression against the Arab countries and enlisted the United States as the agent behind Israeli belligerence. The statement called for the immediate halting of military operations and the withdrawal of Israeli troops beyond the armistice line established at the end of the 1948–1949 Arab-Israeli War.<sup>40</sup> Later on, Soviet propaganda claimed that the publication of this statement had a decisive effect on Israel to stop the war.<sup>41</sup> The

<sup>37</sup> 'Memorandum of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to János Kádár about the Moscow meeting', 153.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 156.

<sup>39</sup> West Germany had strong ties in trade with Moscow so much so that only a year later, in 1968, it became the most important trading partner of the USSR with a total of 567 million USD yearly volume. See: Lawrence L. Whetten, 'The Role of East Germany in West German – Soviet Relations' in: *The World Today*, Vol. 25, No. 12 (December, 1969), 507-520.

<sup>40</sup> The full text of the statement is quoted in: Avigdor Dagan, *Moscow and Jerusalem. Twenty years of relations between Israel and the Soviet Union*. (London, New York, Toronto: Abelard-Schuman, 1970), 234-236.

<sup>41</sup> In a speech at the Graduation Ceremony of the Military Academy in Moscow at the beginning of July 1967, Brezhnev asserted that "[t]he Moscow Declaration of the socialist countries played a big role in



Romanians, now clearly emerging as the deviants of the bloc, did not sign the statement and were therefore not invited to the next meeting of the bloc in Budapest.

However, even though the Romanians were not present, the Budapest meeting in July revealed that the participants of the conference were still far from unanimous with regards to the important issue of military and economic aid to the Arab peoples after the war. Prior to the meeting, Cairo had submitted a detailed list of country-specific requests for military equipment. But the Egyptian ‘wish-list’ was not received enthusiastically everywhere. At the Budapest meeting, Poland’s Władysław Gomułka was of the opinion that “military assistance is without purpose, as there are no people who can use such weapons [in Egypt].”<sup>42</sup> János Kádár questioned Arab demands from Hungary for military aid. The First Secretary pointed out that “[w]e have also received a list of requirements with demands for sending planes, tanks, etc. It’s not serious. In Hungary, e.g., we do not produce military aircraft.”<sup>43</sup> Antonín Novotný refused further military commitments and opined that “military assistance is...up to the USSR.”<sup>44</sup>

Josip Broz Tito thought that economic assistance in the form of “steady economic cooperation, long-term contacts”<sup>45</sup> was, at this point, of crucial importance. Yugoslavia had by then supplied Egypt with aid (such as sugar, grain, medicines, etc.) in a total value of 8 million USD, and assisted the Arab countries with economic assistance amounting to 65 million USD.<sup>46</sup> But there was dissent with regards to

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terminating the war in the Near East.” In: Jabber, *International Documents*, 131. Chairman Kosygin similarly asserted at the UN General Assembly Session a week after the hostilities ended that “a number of states had to sever diplomatic relations with Israel and give a firm warning about the use of sanctions before the Israeli troops stopped military actions.” In: Jon D. Glassman, *Arms for the Arabs. The Soviet Union and War in the Middle East* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 58.

<sup>42</sup> “Polish Record of Meeting of Soviet-bloc leaders (and Tito) in Budapest (excerpts)” July 11, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, KC PZPR, XI A/13, AAN, Warsaw. Available at: <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113622> (Retrieved: June 12, 2012.)

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. Kiro Gligorov’s speech.

economic aid as well. Alexei Kosygin requested the bloc countries at the meeting to assist the Arab allies with food shipments, especially grain. However, First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party Antonín Novotný was of the opinion that help extended toward countries of the 'Third World' should be reconsidered in the future and be given only if it "made sense", in other words only if it served long-term economic development, the return of investments and not senseless spending.

No doubt, most countries of the Soviet influence zone were not particularly enthusiastic about the prospect of spending further amounts of money that would not return, or at least be risky investments in the Middle East. However, from János Kádár's report to the Hungarian Politburo following the Budapest meeting<sup>47</sup> it is clear that the Soviets found economic aid restoring industrial and agricultural production paramount. They thought this essential in order to curb public unrest and the possible toppling of the Egyptian and Syrian regimes.

In the aftermath of the conflict, the Hungarian government provided Egypt and Syria with military aid (for example anti-tank cannons and mortars) of 100 million Hungarian Forints value; medication and food aid in 4 million Hungarian Forints value, and offered a government-loan of 15 million Forints, as well as the postponement of payments for previous loans.<sup>48</sup> This, if converted, was worth less than 5 million USD total value of goods. Records of Hungarian Politburo meetings suggest that the highest leadership did not intend either to completely fulfill the aforementioned Egyptian requests from the 'wish-list', or to spend a penny more on

<sup>47</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.5/430. Minutes of the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo, July 18, 1967.

<sup>48</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j, (Egyiptom), box 1968/32, document no. 00734/1/1968. Report of the 9th Regional Department about relations between the Hungarian People's Republic and the United Arab Republic in 1967, no date (around April, 1968).

assisting the Arab countries than it was absolutely necessary.<sup>49</sup> To this effect, Zoltán Komócsin's remark from the June 13 Politburo meeting set the direction, when he suggested sending Egypt and Syria medicine in the value of 3 million Hungarian Forints total because this small amount "would not cause any disruptions" in Hungary.<sup>50</sup>

The question of economic aid to Egypt came at the worst possible moment for Kádár and his fellow Party leaders who were about to introduce the New Economic Mechanism (NEM). Right before such economic changes, the extra expenses associated with the aid package to Egypt were particularly unwelcome. Moreover, obeying Moscow's aid demands for the Middle East evoked memories of economic policies conducted by the Rákosi regime in Hungary in the 1950s. Back then, the one-sided growth of heavy industry based on the Soviet model was faithfully followed by the leadership, despite Hungary's lack of the required natural resources, mining capacities and metallurgy industry. The forced industrialization at the expense of agricultural production had put the country's economy on the verge of collapse and brought about social tensions that were to erupt in 1956. Following Moscow's lead in 1967 to invest considerable financial resources in the Middle East where Hungary had no relevant political or economic interests whatsoever, could remind many of the 1950s. Moreover, Hungarian public opinion was not overly supportive of further spending in the Middle East. As *Ma'ariv* reported in early August, "Hungarians say, that it is time to end working 'in support of...' (be it Cuba, Vietnam, Korea, or now the Arabs) and that maybe the time has come to work 'in support of the Hungarian

<sup>49</sup> See: "Report on the assistance (material and technical) to be offered to the Arab countries" at the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo on 18 July, 1967. In: Kovács and Miller (eds.), *Jewish Studies at the Central European University*, 168-170.

<sup>50</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.5/ 427. Minutes of the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo, June 13, 1967.

people’.”<sup>51</sup> János Kádár was very well aware of the public’s unfavourable opinion which he mentioned at the Budapest meeting of bloc leaders in July.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the Hungarian Party leadership was rather reluctant to mobilize financial resources to aid Egypt and Syria after the Six-day War.

The meetings held in the summer and fall of 1967 had several goals. First, they served to demonstrate the unity and determination of a group of countries; and to add weight to Soviet demands to coerce Israel into obeying the resolutions of the Security Council. As Brezhnev put it, these meetings “demonstrated that the combined actions of the socialist countries constitute a powerful factor in restraining the aggressive circles of international imperialism.”<sup>53</sup> Moreover, these bloc meetings served to pass information between the countries (especially from Moscow towards the satellites and from Yugoslavia to the rest of the bloc) and consult upon strategies in the United Nations to acquire the necessary support for Soviet or other bloc-country proposals. Furthermore, the meetings provided opportunities to discuss the future of military and economic aid for the ‘friendly’ states in the Middle East in light of their catastrophic performance in the Six-Day War. Contrary to the widely accepted belief that the Soviet Union coerced its satellites to follow its foreign policy line with regards to the conflict in the Middle East, it seems that the Soviet leadership did look for the opinions and initiatives of the other bloc leaders. “It’s worth pondering how to invigorate activities in the UN, and in the lobbies, as long as the General Assembly

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<sup>51</sup> OSA, 400-40-1, box no. 1601. RFE Special, Tel Aviv, August 14, 1967.

<sup>52</sup> “In our public opinion, and I think that in other countries it is likewise, the question looks like this: we were giving to Ghana it failed, we gave to Indonesia it failed, we gave the Arab countries - failed too. Therefore, the question is raising doubts. Of course, socialist countries cannot have the same attitude toward assistance to other countries as the capitalist countries do, but the socialist countries should have a minimal guarantee that assistance rendered by them will not be wasted”, said Kádár. In: ‘Polish Record of Meeting of Soviet-bloc leaders (and Tito) in Budapest’ <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113622>

<sup>53</sup> ‘The Soviet Union’s Policy Regarding Israel’s Aggression in the Middle East’, report by Leonid Brezhnev to the CPSU Central Committee Plenum, June 20, 1967 in: Ro’i and Morozov (eds.), *The Soviet Union and the June 1967 Six Day War*, 316.

works... We do not propose any formula, we await your proposals,”<sup>54</sup> Brezhnev said at their meeting in Moscow in June. The minutes of the meetings prove that indeed, bloc leaders did have opinions, which were on occasion critical of Moscow. Furthermore, the Soviet leadership did back initiatives coming from the bloc such as the Yugoslav resolution in the UN General Assembly. Josip Broz Tito’s good relationship with Nasser was also taken advantage of during bilateral meetings between the two, encouraged by Moscow.<sup>55</sup> Finally, actual bloc political steps were far from being uniform. The Romanian example is well known. The seemingly conformist Hungarian leadership, though extremely quietly, also managed to practically sabotage providing aid to the Arab countries of any significant extent.

## **5.2. Reactions to the Six-Day War in Hungary and the regime’s answers**

Hungarian political circles were highly unprepared for the war, thus there was no pre-drawn concept about how to react to it. In the very initial phases after the outbreak of the conflict, the unfolding debates in the Party leadership reveal confusion, fears and differing interpretations of what was happening and to be done. Moreover, among the Jewish community, the Hungarian intelligentsia, and the population at large, there were many differing and dissenting opinions detected by the regime. How did the state react to these and what do the reactions tell about the Kádárist version of the socialist Party state?

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<sup>54</sup> ‘Polish Record of Meeting of Soviet-bloc leaders (and Tito) in Moscow’, November 09, 1967. History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, KC PZPR, XI A/13, AAN, Warsaw. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113629> [Retrieved: August 18, 2013.]

<sup>55</sup> ‘Polish Record of Meeting of Soviet-bloc leaders (and Tito) in Budapest (excerpts)’ <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113622>

### 5.2.1. Reactions in the Party

János Kádár received the first phone call from Leonid Brezhnev about the outbreak of a military conflict in the Middle East in the afternoon of June 5, 1967.<sup>56</sup> The call was followed by similar ones every day of the fighting, as well as daily briefings from Soviet Ambassador to Hungary Vladimir Titov.

Having received one short update from Brezhnev, during the June 6 session of the Hungarian Politburo the First Secretary was only able to provide the political body with minimal information about military developments and Soviet action that had taken place in the Middle East thus far. Kádár was quick to emphasize that the war in the Middle East was “a purely foreign policy issue.”<sup>57</sup> Though he probably wanted to restrict the debate in the Politburo with this remark, the membership was not unanimous about how to evaluate the matter.

Rezső Nyers was of the opinion that both the Arabs and Israelis contributed to the repeated outbreaks of hostilities in the Middle East over the years. In connection to the ongoing conflict, Egypt had escalated the situation by closing the Gulf of Aqaba, he pointed out. Because it was therefore debatable who the aggressor was, Nyers suggested emphasizing long-term American and British responsibility instead of focusing on Israel in official publications. István Szirmai also agreed with this approach but not Zoltán Komócsin and Béla Biszku. The former considered it indisputable that Israel was the aggressor while with regards to the closure of the Gulf of Aqaba, he thought that the step was warranted by Egypt because “it had always been theirs.”<sup>58</sup> Béla Biszku warned that delving deeper into the issue of who the aggressor was, as suggested by Nyers, “might introduce uncertainty in public

<sup>56</sup> Strictly confidential record of the telephone conversation between János Kádár and Leonid Brezhnev, June 5, 1967. In: Kovács and Miller (eds.), *Jewish Studies at the Central European University*, 141.

<sup>57</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.5/426. Minutes of the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo, June 6, 1967.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

opinion.”<sup>59</sup> János Kádár, rather annoyed, put an end to the dispute by categorically refusing the need to reconsider the matter.

The situation in the Middle East is well-known, we know what it is about. Imperialists are there for the oil, they keep these countries in their grip, they influence and terrorize them in every way... and Israel is their device, their puppet. This has been known for years, let us not start to re-evaluate the situation.<sup>60</sup>

It is perhaps not a coincidence that it was Rezső Nyers and István Szirmai who had differing opinions in the Politburo from the rigidly pro-Arab position of Kádár and some other members. Rezső Nyers, a prominent reformist, was working on the NEM as the Head of the Economic Working Group of the CC (*Közgazdasági Munkaközösség*). In that body, many of his coworkers were not Party members and the atmosphere was conceivably freer, the opinions more diverse than in other state organs. As a matter of fact, it was generally true even in the Party membership towards the end of the 1960s that the more important economic areas were entrusted in the hands of specialists.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, Hungary was actively working on strengthening its economic relations with the West and an unbalanced anti-Israeli stand could have hindered these good relations. Nyers thus expressed a less ideologically permeated, more balanced opinion. István Szirmai, at this time the Head of the Committee of Agitation and Propaganda (*Agitáció és Propaganda Bizottság*) was in frequent contact with intellectuals who did not (always) support Party policies. Moreover, it was precisely the areas of economy and culture where the Kádár leadership consciously resigned its omnipotent political influence. “[W]e interpret the Party’s leading role in a political sense, and this is true in the areas of economy and culture as well, but with the distinction that we do not apply direct leadership methods

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Gyula Kozák, ‘A hatvanas évek társadalmáról (adalékok)’ [About the society of the 1960s (supplements)] in: János Bak (ed.), *Évkönyv X.* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2002), 11–35.

[in those areas],”<sup>62</sup> János Kádár explained this issue a year later to Czechoslovak First Secretary Alexander Dubček. Komócsin and Biszku, representatives of foreign affairs and Party organization, were working in fields that were more ideological and perhaps more closely supervised (if not infiltrated) by the Soviets. Thus the reactions of the Politburo members were strongly influenced by the characteristics of the areas they were working in within the Party and state apparatus.

In this foreign policy matter, Kádár was not ready to openly discuss any alternatives of a strictly pro-Arab position. If, as Nyers suggested, evaluations of the events linked Israeli actions to British-American imperialism and at the same time, criticized Arab actions, these could have easily lead to deductions about Soviet responsibilities for the latter. Kádár did not want critical positions toward Soviet actions in the Middle East appear in either official Party resolutions or in the press. Consequently, the flow of information about the Middle East in the Party was heavily controlled, and policy formation monopolized by Kádár and a handful of CC Secretariat members. The Politburo informed the county-level Party committees about its official evaluation of the situation that very day (June 6) and called them to “calmly continue their work,”<sup>63</sup> in other words they were instructed to refrain from debating the issue. There was a meeting for higher-level functionaries, county-level and Budapest Party Secretaries on June 14, and they were informed about the official position in more details.<sup>64</sup> Though it was not explicitly stated during the June 6 Politburo meeting, from the minutes of the next gathering of the political body it is clear that actual policy-making with regards to the Six-Day War was taken out from the hands of the Politburo. A four-member committee of the CC Secretariat with János

<sup>62</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j (Csehszlovákia), 1968/ box no. 23, 29-1, document no. 001969/35. Minutes of the meeting between János Kádár and Alexander Dubček, June 16, 1968.

<sup>63</sup> MOL M-KS, 288.4/88. Minutes of the meeting of the Central Committee, June 23, 1967. Zoltán Komócsin’s speech.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.



Kádár, Jenő Fock, Zoltán Komócsin and Béla Biszku as members<sup>65</sup> decided about all important policy decisions, including the severance of diplomatic relations with Israel.<sup>66</sup> The Politburo only gave its formal approval to the political steps *post facto*. This committee practically removed the Politburo and any other official state organs from the task of policy formation, and restricted their role to following orders. Shunning the Marxist-Leninist principle of Party democracy and that of the “collective leadership” so frequently advocated in the Brezhnev era, Kádárism displayed a strong authoritarian quality in this case.

Despite the committed intervention by Kádár during the previous Politburo meeting, the records of the June 13 session of the political body make it clear that there were dissenting opinions with regards to the Middle East crisis within the Party. Zoltán Komócsin, speaking about the situation, listed three groups that did not agree with the Party’s evaluation of the situation: those harbouring antisemitic feelings; those who “see a Jewish question in the affair;” and those who are “oppositional” and “inimical” towards the regime such as “extreme right-wing nationalist, antisemitic circles.”<sup>67</sup>

Though Komócsin mentioned public reactions that were against the Party line, from the First Secretary’s speech, it became clear that the leadership found it way more problematic that there were *Party* members who expressed their dissenting opinion. János Kádár clearly identified Jewish communists as deviants.

A smaller part of the party membership... has behaved in a non-communist manner. And I don’t want to draw some kind of conclusion based on race, and I understand that it is not clear to everyone who is the aggressor and attacker. A certain amount of anxiety is understandable but this does not permit them to

<sup>65</sup> MOL M-KS 288.5/427. Minutes of the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo, June 13, 1967.

<sup>66</sup> “After all that, we returned to the question of severing diplomatic relations and consulting with Comrades Kádár, Biszku and Fock we suggested to the Poles to sever diplomatic relations...” – Zoltán Komócsin informed the Politburo on June 13, 1967. MOL M-KS 288.5/427. Minutes of the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo, June 13, 1967.

<sup>67</sup> MOL M-KS, 288.5/427. Minutes of the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo, June 13, 1967.

debate the position of the party and the government on such a decisive issue as that of whom we should support and against whom we should fight. I cannot ignore this. This is a vital question for our system that the party should be intact and stable... I recommend clear and consistent leadership in all areas rather than fluster, but if such tendencies were to spread, then measurements would have to be adapted.<sup>68</sup>

While only a week earlier, Kádár wanted to handle the issue as a foreign policy matter, it is clear that the reactions within the Party compelled the First Secretary to change his mind. Not only did he propose a clampdown on dissenting opinions within the Party, but clearly framed the problem as that of Jewish HSWP members.

Kádár's threats were followed by a hushed purge of Jews from the apparatus, though it is hard to determine the extent of dismissals. The only clear-cut case of removal of a functionary because of his disagreement with the official Party-line was that of Tibor Zádor. The government's foreign affairs spokesperson was demoted to a less public post.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, according to an anonymous source informing Radio Free Europe (RFE), many state officials of Jewish origin were let go but it was emphasized for them that the lay-offs did not happen because of their Jewishness but as a result of the New Economic Mechanism.<sup>70</sup> András Kovács also opined that there was a "silent purge" behind the scenes in foreign affairs, military and security organs.<sup>71</sup> Péter Kende similarly claimed that following the Six-Day War, "a real 'de-Judaization' wave swept through the various governing bodies and in the apparatus"<sup>72</sup>

<sup>68</sup> 'Speech of János Kádár at the Politburo meeting of 13 June 1967' in: András Kovács and Eszter Andor (eds.), *Jewish Studies at the Central European University*, Vol. III (2002-2003) (Budapest: Jewish Studies Project Central European University, 2003), 276.

<sup>69</sup> OSA, HU OSA 300-40-3, box no.9, RFE Special, Report no. F-61, May 2, 1968 and OSA, 300-40-1, box no. 1601, RFE Special, "Hungary's Jews live in comfort", May, 1968.

<sup>70</sup> OSA, HU OSA 300-40-3, box no. 9, Report no. XII-5853, July 1967.

<sup>71</sup> András Kovács, 'Hungarian Jewish Politics from the End of the Second World War until the Collapse of Communism' in: Ezra Mendelsohn (ed.), *Studies in Contemporary Jewry, Vol. XIX: Jews and the State: Dangerous Alliances and the Perils of Privilege* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 140.

<sup>72</sup> Péter Kende, *Röpirat a zsidókérdésről* [Pamphlet about the Jewish Question] (Budapest: Magvető, 1989), 159.

of the Hungarian state bureaucracy. Up until today, there are no known documents that would prove the decision about purges in the HSWP after the Six-Day War.

Around the same time, there were a few known dismissals in the Soviet Union which might suggest that Kádár was simply following the example of Moscow to eliminate those who did not fall in line with official policies. However, the closer examination of dismissals happening in the USSR, Hungary, and even Poland suggests otherwise. Moscow city Party Secretary Nikolai Egorychev was dismissed at the end of June 1967. Around the same time, Minister of Light Industry and Commerce Andrei Shelepin was demoted from his post as Secretary of the Central Committee and also transferred to an inferior position. KGB Chair Vladimir Semichastny was dismissed from his post in May 1967. Western observers connected these developments to these politicians' differing positions from that of Brezhnev with regards to the situation in the Middle East. However, recent research based on Soviet archival sources and personal interviews does not support these claims. According to Boris Morozov, every single one of the dismissals can be explained by long-term factors independent of the Six-Day War.

There were purges in the apparatus in Poland as well. As early as June 1967, the Ministry of Internal Affairs "engaged in a hunt for 'subversive Zionists' within the party and the state administration"<sup>73</sup> and within a few weeks, managed to draw up a list which included, among others, 51 individuals "in upper managerial posts within the administration."<sup>74</sup> Several members were dismissed from the Party (a lot of them Jews) for refusing to contribute to the efforts of the Arab countries in the form of overtime work, blood plasma, medicines and other articles. Similarly, a report of the Jewish Labor Committee charged that the Polish government dismissed three generals

<sup>73</sup> Anat Plocker, *Zionists to Dayan: The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland, 1967-1968* (Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest, 2009), 2.

<sup>74</sup> Stola, 'Anti-Zionism as a Multipurpose Policy Instrument', 186.

and the commander of the Polish Air Force because they refused to ‘use anti-Israeli propaganda’ when educating new recruits.<sup>75</sup> General Czesław Makiewicz was ousted from the military based on simple rumours that his wife was Jewish. Altogether, some 150 Jewish officers were dismissed from the Polish army.<sup>76</sup> The Hungarian Embassy reported that Artur Starewicz was demoted from his post as Secretary of the Polish Central Committee responsible for agitation and propaganda after criticisms had surfaced of the authorities’ propaganda activities “during the June 1967 events.”<sup>77</sup> The purges in Poland were more widespread, not restricted to Party members or those of Jewish origin.

Despite the uncertainty about the extent of purges in the Hungarian apparatus, they were definitely selective. Certain high ranking functionaries of Jewish origin, such as György Aczél, István Szirmai or Péter Vályi<sup>78</sup>, were clearly not removed. If, as Kovács claims, purges happened in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense and in the Ministry of Interior, then these policy areas correspond to those that János Kádár appointed to control and execute policies with regards to the Middle East crisis.<sup>79</sup> In this case, it could be argued that the purges happened in areas where the highest leadership feared that the execution of its policies could be sabotaged. This suggests a pragmatic, rather than ideologically determined discrimination of Jews.

<sup>75</sup> OSA, HU OSA 300-30-4, microfilm no. 102. Radio Free Europe, Czechoslovak Unit. RFE Special, New York, November 15, 1967. “Increased anti-Semitism laid to Eastern Europe.” Also in: Arthur J. Wolak, *Forced Out: The Fate of Polish Jewry in Communist Poland* (Tucson, AZ: Fenestra Books, 2004), 50.

<sup>76</sup> Stola, ‘Anti-Zionism as a Multipurpose Policy Instrument’, 188.

<sup>77</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j, (Lengyelország), box no. 61, document no. 87-2/003171/1968. Report of Ambassador Béla Némethy to the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 20, 1968.

<sup>78</sup> In fact, Vályi was promoted to the post of Minister of Finance right after the Six-Day War, on June 14, 1967.

<sup>79</sup> “...with regards to the direct leadership, we agreed that these cases [i.e. policies and information relating to the Middle East crisis] should be controlled in the following areas: first in news sources, then in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the Ministry of Defense and in the Ministry of the Interior”, Kádár said at the June 6, 1967 meeting of the Hungarian Politburo. MOL M-KS, 288.5/426. Minutes of the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo, June 6, 1967.

In its policies during the 1967 Middle East crisis, the Kádár regime did not appear any less authoritarian than its counterparts in the area. The usual way of Party decision-making was curbed when a four-member committee was set up to take immediate political decisions relating to the crisis. The information reaching lower Party echelons was closely controlled from above. Furthermore, while conducted more discretely and restrictively than in Poland, the HSWP also purged some Jewish members from its ranks.

### 5.2.2. Reactions in the Jewish community

On August 1, *Új Élet* published an article about the Six-Day War which was in essence the official position of the Jewish community's leadership. The piece expressed agreement with the Hungarian government's Middle East policy, though it did not condemn Israel as the aggressor. Rather, it listed the United States, Britain and the German Federal Republic as the orchestrators of the conflict. The article also expressed concern for peace in Israel, in the Middle East and all around the world.<sup>80</sup> The piece was published under the close supervision of the SOCA whose functionaries deemed it necessary to bring the Jewish community under stricter control in the wake of the conflict in the Middle East<sup>81</sup> to make sure that no open expression of dissent took place. Not all Jewish communities in the Communist bloc managed to avoid having to condemn Israel. The East Berlin daily *Neues Deutschland* for example published on June 23 a "declaration of citizens of Jewish origin of the

<sup>80</sup> 'Országgyűlésünk és a béke ügye' [Our national assembly and the cause of peace] in: *Új Élet*, August 1, 1967.

<sup>81</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-d, box no. 39, document no. 0020-4/1967. József Prantner's report about his discussion with the leaders of the Jewish community, June 29, 1967.

German Democratic Republic” condemning “the aggression of the ruling circles of Israel against the neighbouring Arab states”.<sup>82</sup>

However, the official Hungarian Jewish declaration above did not represent a real unanimous position. Many members of the Jewish community, including its leadership, found it hard to accept the official Party line. Sándor Scheiber asked the officials of the state to be patient with those who refused to agree with the government’s assessment of Israel’s responsibility and aggression.<sup>83</sup> Many believed that Israel’s existence was truly threatened by the Arabs and that the country acted in self-defence.<sup>84</sup> However, the Jewish community was divided with regards to Israel’s territorial gains, many believing that it was impossible and inadvisable to keep them;<sup>85</sup> while others thought that the city of Jerusalem should remain under Israeli control in its entirety.<sup>86</sup>

József Prantner, President of the State Office of Church Affairs met with 13 leaders of the Hungarian Jewish community on June 23, 1967 in order to “steer their perceptions towards the correct direction”<sup>87</sup> in the wake of the war, especially with regards to two issues: the revival of antisemitism in Hungary and Israel’s role in the Middle East conflict. Though he noted with satisfaction that all his conversation partners reassured him about their loyalty to the Hungarian People’s Republic, it did

<sup>82</sup> CZA, Z6/1176. General Correspondence, letters A-E, 1967. Memo to Dr Nahum Goldmann from F. L. Brassloff, 26 September, 1967.

<sup>83</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j, box no. 1967/48, document no. 003675/1867. ‘Report of the Office of Church Affairs to the HSWP Central Committee and the Foreign Ministry about the atmosphere in the Jewish community with regards to the Middle East conflict’, 23 August 1967.

<sup>84</sup> ‘A secret agent’s report on the opinion of the leading representatives of the Hungarian Jewish Congregation’ in: Kovács and Andor (eds.), *Jewish Studies at the Central European University*, 278.

<sup>85</sup> Imre Benoschofsky reported: “Israel’s territorial conquests fill my religious believers with mixed feelings...It is impossible that Israel wants to keep the occupied part of Jerusalem or the Sinai.” MOL, XIX-J-1-j, box no. 1967/48, document no. 003675/1867. ‘Report of the Office of Church Affairs to the HSWP Central Committee and the Foreign Ministry about the atmosphere in the Jewish community with regards to the Middle East conflict’, 23 August 1967.

<sup>86</sup> “Sándor Scheiber also said that from a political, economic and military point of view it is impossible that Israel should keep the occupied territories. However, he thinks it is fair that Jerusalem remained in Israeli hands in its entirety.” Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-d, box no. 39, document no. 0020-4/1967. József Prantner’s report about his discussion with the leaders of the Jewish community, June 29, 1967.

not escape his attention that none of them named Israel as the aggressor during the conversation, neither did they explicitly condemn Israeli behaviour. Prantner dismissed the worries of Sándor Scheiber, who expressed concern over the deep-rooted antisemitism in the country which he saw surfacing after the Six-Day War. Prantner assured the Jewish leadership that “we stand up firmly against any expression of antisemitism, though philosemitism is similarly contrary to our principles, which would only pour oil onto the fire of antisemitism.”<sup>88</sup> It seems that after seeing the insistence of the Jewish leadership, the authorities eventually let them off the hook when it came to the condemnation of Israel, as the above cited *Új Élet* article suggests. However, with regards to the open discussion of antisemitism and other consequences of the anti-Israeli stand of the regime, there was no room for compromise. These issues were to remain taboos for the community and the public.

Developments at home following the conflict in the Middle East caused unease among all Jewish communities in the Eastern bloc. RFE reported that Jews in Hungary were afraid in the aftermath of the war that their private businesses would be closed down or that they would be laid off from their employment.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, members of the Prague Jewish religious community felt insecure, like “intruders” and reported that they were “artificially isolated” in the wake of the war.<sup>90</sup> This feeling was reinforced by unsettling articles that appeared in official Party publications, such as the daily *Rude Pravo*, which carried a piece on the “evil influence” that Israeli diplomats had exerted on the Jewish religious communities in Czechoslovakia. The consequences

<sup>88</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-d, box no. 39, document no. 0020-4/1967. József Prantner’s report about his discussion with the leaders of the Jewish community, June 29, 1967.

<sup>89</sup> OSA, HU OSA 300-40-3 (Hungary), box no. 9, Report no. XII-5853, July 1967.

<sup>90</sup> OSA, HU OSA 300-30-4 (Czechoslovakia), microfilm no. 102. RFE Research: “The cultural scene in Czechoslovakia (January-July, 1967)”, 11 September 1967.

included arrests in the Jewish religious community in Prague.<sup>91</sup> A special report by the Czechoslovak unit of RFE in August 1968 observed that

[i]n weeks since the fighting in the Middle East ceased, the Prague party leadership has greatly increased secret police surveillance of all persons having connections with Israel or with Jewish organizations, according to information reaching Western Europe.<sup>92</sup>

Shortly after the fighting in the Middle East ceased, the Polish leadership was informed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs that Polish Jews had not supported the government's pro-Arab position and had enthusiastically cheered the Israeli victory.<sup>93</sup>

In Hungary too, the Security Services were shadowing "Zionist" groups. An agent of the III/III Department who had been entrusted with the surveillance of the Jewish community reported in early August that "there were no noteworthy changes in the behaviour and activities of young Zionist groups and Western-friendly individuals ever since the break-off of diplomatic relations with Israel."<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, the agent noted, among the above groups, nationalist (Zionist), anti-Soviet and anti-socialist feelings had grown stronger. At the same time, the surveillance of those within the Jewish religious community who had already been on the radar of the authorities for "Zionist" activities was increased to collect incriminating data against them.

The III/I Group Leadership of the Ministry of the Interior (*III/I-es Csoportfőnökség*) which was responsible for intelligence, had discovered a "Zionist" association in the Frankel street synagogue in Budapest back in 1966. That year marked the tenth anniversary of the 1956 revolution, and the Hungarian political leadership was preparing for the occasion with increased alertness. The vigilant agents

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> OSA, HU OSA 300-30-4 (Czechoslovakia), microfilm no. 102. RFE Special, August 18, 1967.

"Bonn notes M/E war causes Czechoslovak split"

<sup>93</sup> Włodzimierz Rozenbaum, 'The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland, June-December 1967' in: *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, Vol 20, No. 2. (June, 1978), 218-236, esp. 223.

<sup>94</sup> ÁSZTL, O-17169/2, "Zionists engaged in inimical activities" file, agent report on August 14, 1967. Document courtesy of András Kovács.



of the Ministry extended their observance to various “oppositional” and “inimical” groups, as well as individuals. Religious gatherings, events attended by young people, groups of “hooligans” and other street “gangs” all made it to this impressive list.<sup>95</sup> Among these were various “Zionist associations” as well. According to one informant of the Ministry of Interior, a group of about 20 young Jews organized by a young medical student named József Donát, held meetings to “read and discuss propaganda materials about Jewish issues that were able to incite Zionist feelings.”<sup>96</sup> The main goal of this group, according to a secret agent report of the Ministry, was to “agitate young Jewish people to migrate to Israel legally or illegally” which “was carried out with the help of the Israeli Legation.”<sup>97</sup>

Based on information from this case, by the end of 1966, two such “Zionist associations” were under surveillance not only in Frankel Leó street but in the provincial town of Szeged as well.<sup>98</sup> There, Rabbi Tamás Raj organized local Jewish youth to “prevent assimilation and incite Zionist feelings,”<sup>99</sup> at least according to the Ministry of Interior. As a consequence of the investigations, eight persons were arrested in September 1967. The Supreme Public Prosecutor’s Office issued an official police warning to six of them, while two individuals were found guilty in “repeatedly committed incitement” for which they each received 4-month prison sentences. The Prosecutor’s Office suspended these for a three-year trial period. Meanwhile, four other individuals were arrested with the same accusations, and were sentenced by the Secondary Court to one year and three months imprisonment and

<sup>95</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.5/405. Report for the Politburo about the measures taken against internal and external inimical forces. Among the minutes of the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo, September 20, 1966.

<sup>96</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 52216, document no. M-11-2/b/1966. Report of Dr. József Deák to József Prantner, October 31, 1967.

<sup>97</sup> ÁSZTL, V-154251. Investigation file about the case of József Sárvári. Document courtesy of András Kovács.

<sup>98</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-a, microfilm no. 52216, document no. M-11-2/b/1966. Report of Dr. József Deák to József Prantner, October 31, 1967.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

two years of disqualification from public affairs. Tamás Raj was reprimanded by the authorities.<sup>100</sup>

Another area of Jewish institutions where the regime tightened its control was the Rabbinical Institute which, under the direction of Sándor Scheiber, had already been considered a Zionist hotbed by the regime. Following the Six-Day War, the autonomy of the Institute was curbed further, it lost its independent legal status and was rendered under the jurisdiction of the NRHI.<sup>101</sup>

With the help of the loyal leadership of the Jewish religious community and the control of the agents of the Ministry of Interior, the Hungarian regime kept the community under tight control. That this tightening was evoked by events in the Middle East proved yet again that though officially applying a religious definition, the Kádár regime viewed the Jewish community as an entity with ethnic characters as well. The lack of any substantial increase in the activities of the controlling state organs was the result of earlier functional decisions about these bureaucratic units. In the case of the Ministry of the Interior and its security apparatus, it became clear as of the early 1960s that their main function from then on would be surveillance and prevention. This was ensured on the one hand by placing loyal (or at least cooperative) leaders at the head of the Jewish religious community; and by ensuring that the Ministry remained well-informed and could take the necessary steps (intimidation, arrests, etc.) before any activity deemed inconvenient or inimical by the state could cause destabilization. That there was no open campaign against the Jewish

<sup>100</sup> ÁSZTL, V-155 325/1-2. The case of József Donát and partners. Document courtesy of András Kovács.

<sup>101</sup> Róbert Győri Szabó, 'Zsidóság és kommunizmus a Kádár-korszakban III. Zsidóság, cionizmus, antiszemitizmus az 1967-es arab-izraeli háború utáni években' [Jews and Communism in the Kádár era 3. Jews, Zionism, antisemitism during the years following the Six-Day War] in: *Valóság*, Vol. 51, No. 12 (December 2008) Available at: <http://www.valosagonline.hu/index.php?oldal=cikk&cazon=1044&lap=0> [retrieved: September 2, 2013).

community in Hungary after the Six-Day War was partly the result of this preventive mechanism.

### 5.2.3. Reactions of the Hungarian public

In its June 20, 1967 issue, the county paper *Fejér megyei Hírlap* issued a long article on the Hungarian public's reaction to the Six-Day War in the Middle East. The report was very reassuring.

The reaction of the Hungarian public is almost completely unanimous...Hundreds of letters received by the editors of newspapers and the numerous spontaneous expressions of opinion attest that our public opinion supports the standpoint of our government.<sup>102</sup>

However, other sources suggest that the situation was quite the opposite. By the second day of fighting, the Politburo had information about public mood in relation to the Middle East crisis. The source suggested that the pro-Arab line was not popular.<sup>103</sup> RFE conducted their own audience and public opinion survey and reached similar conclusions. There appeared to be a “psychological wedge... between the Hungarian regime and broad sections of the country's public opinion as a result of the diametrically opposite judgement”<sup>104</sup> of the conflict. Another source interviewed by RFE confirmed this situation claiming that with regards to the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1967, “the real separation-line was not between antisemitism and filosemitism [sic], but between real Communist and non-Communist [people].”<sup>105</sup> Many who opposed the official standpoint took celebratory pleasure in the defeat of the Soviet-supported Arab countries. Others disagreed out of economic concerns because they were worried

<sup>102</sup> 'A Közel-Kelet és a magyar közvélemény' [The Middle East and Hungarian public opinion] in: *Fejér megyei Hírlap*, June 20, 1967, 3-4.

<sup>103</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.5/426. Minutes of the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo, June 6, 1967.

<sup>104</sup> OSA, OSA HU 300-40-4 (Hungary), box no. 3, Item no. 1291/67. “Opinion concerning the Arab-Israeli War”

<sup>105</sup> OSA, OSA HU 300-40-4 (Hungary), box no. 3, item no. 1354/67. “Hungarians on Middle East crisis”

that money spent on aiding Arab countries would negatively affect Hungarian living standards. At a conference of diplomatic representatives of the Hungarian People's Republic in August 1967, the former Hungarian diplomatic representative to Tel Aviv, Kálmán Csécssei, addressed this issue. He urged the Party leadership to "examine what we can do to counterbalance the propaganda which claims that the support of the Arabs is wasted money, more precisely wasted money at the expense of the Hungarian people's quality of life."<sup>106</sup>

The reaction of the public was not unique to Hungary. In the Slovak parts of Czechoslovakia, people countered what they perceived as the Czech-dominated government's animosity towards Slovaks by cheering the Israeli victory.<sup>107</sup> In Poland, Israeli Ambassador Dov Sadat claimed that during the Six-Day War, his embassy received as many as 3,200 letters that expressed support for Israel.<sup>108</sup> The senders were not only Jews: the messages also came from Poles who suddenly discovered a connection between the Israeli Defence Forces and the fleeing of Polish citizens of Jewish origin since WWII. As the popular joke went, "*Jojne poszedl na wojne*", "the cowardly Jew went to war."<sup>109</sup> "And won", added many Poles with not a little *shadenfreude*: as they understood, the Israeli soldiers, many of whom were of Polish origin, defeated the Soviet-trained Arab troops in six short days. The use of the old antisemitic stereotype, "*Jojne*", suggests that Polish society did not shed antisemitism in an instant. But among many Poles, anti-Soviet feelings were expressed through their pro-Israeli stands with regards to the Middle Eastern war.

<sup>106</sup> Politikatörténeti Intézet (Henseforth: PTI), PIL/909/26. Personal Papers of Dezső Nemes. Minutes of the Ministerial Conference of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 14-19, 1967.

<sup>107</sup> Mark Kurlansky, 1968: *The Year that Rocked the World* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004), 33.

<sup>108</sup> 'Poland: The Jewish Question' in: *Time*, August 18, 1967. Accessible at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,840966,00.html> (Retrieved on November 20, 2012.)

<sup>109</sup> Mark Kurlansky, 1968: *The Year that Rocked the World* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004), 67.

The World Jewish Congress got hold of a larger study which examined public reaction to the Six-Day War in communist Eastern Europe<sup>110</sup> based on close to 700 interviews between 10 June and 17 July 1967 with tourists visiting Western countries.<sup>111</sup> Though it is questionable whether the study was representative, the results are nevertheless instructive. These showed that in Western and Eastern Europe, public opinion was similar with regards to the war inasmuch as sympathies were “overwhelmingly on the Israeli side.”<sup>112</sup>

The above reports and findings suggest that public opinion about the Six-Day War did not initially form within the framework of feelings towards Jews. Rather, people’s sympathies showed positions towards the regime and towards Soviet dominance. That was exactly what worried the Hungarian leadership the most: that public disagreement because of the situation in the Middle East would erupt and it would be anti-Soviet. The Kádár regime tried to not antagonize public opinion any further and only conducted a moderate propaganda campaign and kept retributive measures to a minimum.

As opposed to several other countries of the bloc, there were no organized public protests in Hungary. Already during the first Politburo meeting at the time of the conflict, Kádár expressed his disapproval of some Arab students’ request to demonstrate in front of the Israeli Legation in Budapest, probably because of the possible other demonstrations or manifestations of antisemitism this could lead to.<sup>113</sup> This position was in contrast to those of some other communist leaderships, for example Moscow and Prague. In the latter city, Radio Free Europe reported that

<sup>110</sup> 665 interviews were completed, including 208 with Hungarian, 179 with Polish, 112 with Czech and Slovak, 78 with Rumanian and 88 with Bulgarian respondents.

<sup>111</sup> This might have been the same that Radio Free Europe conducted, but I could not verify this with full certainty.

<sup>112</sup> CZA, Z6/1179. Letters R-Z, 1967. Strictly confidential letter from S.J. Roth to the Members of the WJC Governing Council, 17 October, 1967.

<sup>113</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.5/426. Minutes of the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo, June 6, 1967.

“Arab students were encouraged to parade with posters saying ‘Israel must be destroyed’. Official press agencies gloatingly reported these demonstrations.”<sup>114</sup> Three days after the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo, the Soviet Press described the “spontaneous” demonstrations that had occurred in the Soviet Union, demanding the condemnation of Israel and the withdrawal of its forces.<sup>115</sup> In Poland, several anti-Israel public protests were organized through Party mobilization “in every enterprise and institution”.<sup>116</sup>

The Hungarian leadership at the time applied “administrative measures” among the population at large to a very limited extent. According to Western reports, the police handled “the Israeli question with unbelievable caution, and did not arrest anybody even in case of the most extreme opinions.”<sup>117</sup> At the same time, the regime was trying to counter certain symptoms of antisemitism, which had received some encouragement by the staunch anti-Israeli position of the socialist bloc. Some schools received instructions on how to inform students about the Middle East crisis. These included the need to protect children of Jewish origin against the possible antisemitic attacks of their peers.<sup>118</sup> As opposed to Gomulka’s vituperative speech about the ‘fifth column’<sup>119</sup>, Hungarian propaganda declared that among the population, those who did not agree with the Party line were “politically good-willing, but uninformed people

<sup>114</sup> OSA, HU OSA 300-30-4, microfilm no. 102. Radio Free Europe, Czechoslovak Unit. RFE Special, New York, September 2, 1967. “Resistance to anti-Semitic policy.”

<sup>115</sup> Ilana Kass, *Soviet Involvement in the Middle East: Policy Formulation, 1966-1973* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978), 43.

<sup>116</sup> Rozenbaum, ‘The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland’, 224.

<sup>117</sup> OSA, HU OSA 300-40-3 (Hungary), box. no. 9. Report no. IV-12.515, August, 1967.

<sup>118</sup> OSA, HU OSA 300-40-4 (Hungary), box no. 3, item no. 1371/67. „Instructions for teachers during the Middle East crisis”

<sup>119</sup> The Polish First Secretary made his infamous speech at the Trade Union Congress in Warsaw on June 19, 1967. He condemned Israeli aggression and hinted at people in Poland of a certain “nationality” who came out “in favour of the aggressor, the wreckers of peace and the forces of imperialism”, he ended his speech by declaring that “[w]e do not wish a Fifth Column to be created in our country.” Quoted in: Michael Checinski, *Poland. Communism, Nationalism, Anti-Semitism*. (New York: Karz Cohl Publishing, 1982), 213.

under the influence of... emotional waves and conscious imperialist propaganda.”<sup>120</sup> Political leaders commenting on the events always emphasized that the problems of the Middle East were not questions of religion or race, but should be approached on a class basis.<sup>121</sup> While in Poland the anti-Zionist campaign took on “a local Polish-Jewish dimension” after Gomułka’s ‘fifth column’ speech,<sup>122</sup> there were no suggestions coming from high-ranking Hungarian politicians that Zionism was such an imminent threat in the country.

Corresponding to the highest leadership’s intentions as expressed in the Politburo, the Middle East crisis was handled as a foreign policy issue, with little consequences for the general public. This suggested to those who did harbour dissenting views that the Hungarian regime was only conforming to Moscow to the absolute necessary extent and did not expect the public to openly demonstrate its support, only to keep the volume of dissenting opinions low. At the same time, the leadership’s political measures to strictly control what information reached the general public about the crisis limited the degree of potential dissent. The rationale for more subdued domestic actions was the prevention of public unrest and not, as it is generally suggested with regards to the relationship between domestic and foreign policies, the exploitation of the opportunity to dissent from Moscow in internal affairs. It was not the conformist foreign policy decision that paved the way for domestic consequences different from Moscow but the Kádár regime’s fear of the reactions of its own subjects. Zoltán Komócsin summarized this fear, stating “[I]nnimical elements, nationalists, antisemites now became friendly to Jews and hoped that Israel’s victory would result in the defeat

<sup>120</sup> Dániel Csátári, ‘A burzsoá nacionalizmus ikertestvérei az antiszemitizmus és a cionizmus’ [The twin brothers of bourgeois nationalism are Zionism and antisemitism] in: *Pártélet*, September 1967, 67.

<sup>121</sup> “we are not talking about questions of religion or race, but about who is against imperialist goals” – said Zoltán Komócsin on a televised interview. Transcript of the interview: ‘Most az a legfontosabb, hogy erősödjön minden haladó erő szolidaritása és egysége’ [Now the most important thing is that the solidarity and unity of all progressive forces should strengthen] in: *Népszabadság*, June 15, 1967.

<sup>122</sup> Dariusz Stola, ‘Anti-Zionism as a Multipurpose Policy Instrument’, 185.

of the Soviet Union and our system.”<sup>123</sup> Just like in 1956, the Kádár regime was most anxious about anti-Soviet reactions.

### **5.3. Consequences of the Six-Day War in foreign relations**

#### **5.3.1. Relations with Israel**

Hungary announced the break-off of diplomatic relations with Israel on 12 June, two days after Moscow’s similar decision. The diplomatic step was followed by arrangements to entrust the diplomatic corps of Switzerland in Budapest to represent Israeli interests in Hungary, while Hungary was represented in Israel by Sweden. The break-off of diplomatic relations was preceded by talks and coordination among the bloc countries. It was the Hungarian and Polish leadership that hesitated about the measure but eventually, according to the official version circulated within the upper circles of the HSWP, the split became inevitable because of “relations with Arab countries.”<sup>124</sup> The severance of diplomatic relations was clearly prompted by Soviet pressure, though it seems there was no explicit order from Moscow.

This is probable for several reasons. The meeting of the leaders of European Communist countries had ended in Moscow on the day the USSR announced the step; however, the declaration signed there did not include any reference to the severance of diplomatic relations.<sup>125</sup> There was no discussion about it during the meeting either. The Soviet General Secretary explicitly told the Central Committee of the CPSU that other socialist countries at the Moscow meeting were not asked to sever diplomatic

<sup>123</sup> MOL M-KS, 288.4/88. Minutes of the meeting of the Central Committee, June 23, 1967. Zoltán Komócsin’s speech.

<sup>124</sup> MOL M-KS, 288/5/427. Minutes of the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo, June 13, 1967. Zoltán Komócsin’s speech.

<sup>125</sup> See the full text of the statement in: Avigdor Dagan, *Moscow and Jerusalem. Twenty years of relations between Israel and the Soviet Union*. (London, New York, Toronto: Abelard-Schuman, 1970), 234-236.



ties.<sup>126</sup> János Kádár told the same to the Hungarian Politburo.<sup>127</sup> Finally, when Kádár informed Brezhnev about the Hungarian decision to follow suit and take the diplomatic step, the Soviet leader was relieved and “said: they did have the impression that maybe the Poles and us could have difficulties with regards to this [i.e. the break-off of diplomatic relations].”<sup>128</sup>

Hungary did not step out of the line and fulfilled Moscow’s expectations. The official explanation which refers to Arab pressure is unconvincing given the relative unimportance of these countries to Hungary and because there was one country, Romania, which did not follow suit. The question thus arises: would it have been possible for the Kádárist leadership to follow an independent policy line like the Romanians did with regards to Israel? And if yes, why did it not do so? If we consider the problem in isolation and theoretically, it would have been possible for the Hungarian leadership not to break diplomatic relations with Israel. It is unlikely that Moscow would have used force or removed Kádár as this would have been a way too risky move amidst the already tense international situation and would have surely prompted international criticism for intervening into a sovereign country’s internal affairs. 1956 made the Soviet leadership more cautious too and it was already losing a diplomatic battle in the UN in relation to the Middle East conflict. Moreover, Moscow did not have an alternative to Kádár in the Hungarian Party at this time, for the possible rivals were not strong enough and belonged to a more dogmatist wing which was not what Moscow was looking for in light of the results of the Rákosi leadership’s

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<sup>126</sup> Brezhnev said that “at the Moscow meeting we did not ask the other socialist countries to sever diplomatic relations with Israel.” ‘The Soviet Union’s Policy Regarding Israel’s Aggression in the Middle East’, report by Leonid Brezhnev to the CPSU Central Committee Plenum, June 20, 1967 in: Ro’i and Morozov (eds.), *The Soviet Union and the June 1967 Six Day War*, 321.

<sup>127</sup> “I mention this because it is important that there was no mention, at the joint conference or within the framework of a separate discussion, of who should break off diplomatic relations, nor when and with whom – all were to decide that themselves.” János Kádár said. Kovács and Andor (eds.) *Jewish Studies at the Central European University*, 272.

<sup>128</sup> MOL, M-KS 288.5/427. Minutes of the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo, 13 June 1967. Zoltán Komócson’s speech.

policies between 1948 and 1953. In fact, if any East-Central European socialist country other than Romania had decided to keep relations with Israel, there would have been a chance for Hungary to follow suit. Hungary's severance of diplomatic relations with Israel had more to do with the situation of Hungarians in Romania than the pressure of Arab countries or even Israel's "aggression".

Romania's discriminatory policies against the Hungarian minority living on its territory had caused a lot of headache to the Kádár administration for years. The Hungarian leadership claimed that the Romanians had lost track of the "correct Leninist path"<sup>129</sup> and this led to the unfavourable developments from the point of view of the Hungarian minority. However, Kádár was trying to avoid open conflict with the Romanians to 'preserve the unity of the socialist camp' but at the same time, subtly signalling Hungarian disagreement with Romanian policies.

The Middle East crisis and deviant Romanian foreign policies relating to it caused a shift in the thinking of Hungarian politicians about the Hungarian minority question. The Romanian decision to not break-off relations with Israel was seen, as remarks and speeches of the June 23 session of the Central Committee show, as yet another example of this incorrect "nationalist", "individualist" line. It prompted many to rethink the hitherto cautious Hungarian line and to urge a more openly critical position towards Romanian minority policies. "Shunning big, common socialist solidarity, in concrete questions they always prioritize their own narrow, local national interests,"<sup>130</sup> Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Károly Erdélyi burst out. He suggested that the Hungarian leadership confront the Romanians with their erroneous policies every single time in the future. László Orbán also suggested "tactical changes" in Hungarian policies to call on Romania when Hungarian minorities were receiving discriminatory

<sup>129</sup> György Földes, *Magyarország, Románia és a nemzetiségi kérdés 1956-1989*. [Hungary, Romania and the nationality question 1956-1989] (Budapest: Napvilág, 2007), 64.

<sup>130</sup> MOL M-KS 288.4/88. Minutes of the meeting of the Central Committee, June 23, 1967.

treatment. He felt that criticism, though sensitive because it could be viewed as interfering with another state's domestic affairs, would now be warranted because the Romanians exhibited an erroneous tendency in their policies, proven by their separatism during the Middle East crisis.<sup>131</sup> Viewed in this context, the Romanian decision to not break off diplomatic relations with Israel did not appear to the Hungarian Party leadership as something to follow but, on the contrary, as yet another element in a series of ill-advised policies, to which the discrimination of Hungarians in Romania also belonged.

The break-off of diplomatic relations between Hungary and Israel was not followed by similar developments in the area of trade. A report of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade from August 1967 contently reported that

after the ceasing of immediate war efforts, as a result of the partial consolidation of the situation, the mutual exchange of products was restarted [between Hungary and Israel]. Consequently, our exports in June reached 6.6 million, and imports 7.3 million Forints which correspond to the trade levels of the earlier normal months.<sup>132</sup>

The trade agreement between the two countries was valid until December 31, and included a paragraph stating that it would be renewed automatically if no note was given otherwise by one of the two sides at least three months before the renewal was due. As Hungary did not indicate any wish for non-renewal in 1967, the contract remained in effect until the end of 1968.<sup>133</sup> Eitan Ben-Tsur observed that representatives of Hungarian economic enterprises continued to visit Israel and did not expect the discontinuation of economic relations after the war. The Israeli diplomat was convinced that right before introducing the NEM, the highest Hungarian political

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> MOL, XIX-J-1-j, box no. 1967/49 (Israel), document no. 00541/2/1967. Report of the Ministry of Foreign Trade about Hungarian-Israeli trade relations, August 28, 1967.

<sup>133</sup> OSA, HU OSA 300-50-2 (Poland), box no. 2. Records of Radio Free Europe/Liberty Research, Polish Unit, Special Report, December 27, 1967.

leadership “would not let political considerations intervene” in economic affairs.<sup>134</sup> As in earlier years, trade relations did not follow the direction of diplomatic policies.

### **5.3.2. Foreign contacts of the Hungarian Jewish community**

Following the Six-Day War, the Jewish community’s opportunities for foreign contacts were severely curbed by the Hungarian regime. Their participation at the meetings of the World Jewish Congress was yet again discontinued. Hungarian Jewish representatives were not allowed to take part even as observers because, according to Hungarian authorities, the organization “served the interests of international political imperialism.”<sup>135</sup> Even visiting guests of the WJC were denied entry to Hungary. The few permitted ongoing relations were with the Jewish communities of the bloc (Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Romania, Poland, Czechoslovakia and even the USSR), and some Jewish organizations in France, the United Kingdom, Austria and the United States. The Office of Church Affairs tried to balance the loss of Western contacts with increased cooperation with the Jewish communities of the bloc. For example, USSR relations were new as even a few years before, contacts between the Hungarians and the Soviet Jewish community were non-existent.<sup>136</sup> But by the end of the 1960s, Soviet Jewish delegations took part in certain celebrations in Hungary and a decade later, there were several students from the Soviet Union studying at the Budapest Rabbinical Institute as well. Western relations on the other hand were mainly maintained to provide the Hungarians with forums to criticise the WJC’s “negative,

<sup>134</sup> HUJI, Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Oral History Division, ‘Israel and the Eastern European States at the Time of the Six-Day War’ Project, Interview no. 50(3) with Eitan Ben-Tsur, February 15, 1968

<sup>135</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-d, box no 48, 0020.1/1969. Károly Grnák’s first draft of the report on church policy experiences with regards to the Israelite Church and suggestions for concrete measures; January 16, 1969.

<sup>136</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-c, box no. 88, 530-55/1. Géza Seifert’s note with regards to Soviet Jewry, April 24, 1967.

reactionary aspirations.”<sup>137</sup> Mark Uveeler of the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture continued his visits, which were allowed to ensure continued foreign financial support. The situation somewhat eased by the early 1970s, which saw even the establishment of relations with the JOINT for hopes of foreign resources.

Following the Six-Day War, the Hungarian authorities drastically restricted the number of incoming visitors from Israel as well, no matter if they were official guests of the Hungarian Jewish community, tourists, or family members. A committee was formed under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which investigated every single incoming visa-request from Israel. The new organ looked at 184 visa applications between June 20 and December 30, 1967 but only approved a minority (78) of them.<sup>138</sup> Even harsher restrictions were introduced in the area of exit visas to Israel. As a result of a decree issued by the Ministry of the Interior, every single passport containing an exit visa to Israel was withdrawn, visas which had already been approved were not issued, and travel to Israel was only possible with the personal approval of the Minister of the Interior himself. As a result, the second half of 1967 saw less than ten Hungarian visitors in Israel (half of them were official visits of employees of the Ministry of Foreign Trade).<sup>139</sup> As a consequence of these measures, the relations of the Hungarian Jewish community with *Eretz* completely ceased, and thus an important source of information, material help and support was eliminated.

Nevertheless, one genie was out of the bottle and it could not be stuffed back in. The Six-Day War prompted a certain revival of Jewish identification and interest in

<sup>137</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-d, box no 48, 0020.1/1969. Károly Grnák's first draft of the report on church policy experiences with regards to the Israelite Church and suggestions for concrete measures; January 16, 1969.

<sup>138</sup> MOL, XIX -J-1-j, box no. 1968/46 (Izrael), document no. 00811/1968. Summary of the 6th Regional Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungarian-Israeli relations in 1967, March 19, 1968.

<sup>139</sup> MOL, XIX -J-1-j, box no. 1968/46 (Izrael), document no. 002177/1968. 'Note of the 9th Regional Department about travel of Hungarian citizens to Israel after the 1967 Israeli aggression', April 22, 1968.

things Jewish, mostly among the younger members of the community.<sup>140</sup> The Six-Day War served as the first point of reference to dissent from the official Party position on Israel. This topic was then followed by other questions about the Hungarian state's relations to the Jewish community and, as the message of the SHALOM group cited in the Introduction shows, grew to a long list of criticisms by the early 1980s. The rift between the loyalist official leadership of the Jewish community and younger Jews deepened as a result of these developments.

This chapter has argued that diplomatic battles during and after the Six-Day War demonstrate that Moscow's coercion of its policies onto the satellites was limited. Though on the surface, diplomatic actions in the UN and the severance of relations with Israel suggested that Eastern European countries were acting in unison, in fact there were differing opinions from Moscow on the origins of the crisis, the necessity of military action and economic aid to Arab countries. Moreover, as the Hungarian example shows, the severance of diplomatic relations did not necessarily stem from Moscow's coercion only, but was (at least in the Hungarian case) the result of an ongoing antagonism with Romania. Moreover, the severance of diplomatic relations with Israel did not lead to the discontinuation of trade relations. Domestic consequences were similar within the bloc in that purges of Jewish cadres happened in more than one Party, and that the lack of popular support for the pro-Arab line reflected broader positions towards the regimes. However, the varying extent of retributions against Jews in general was connected to different ways and degrees of the exploitation of nationalism in Eastern European 'real socialist' countries.

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<sup>140</sup> Kovács, 'Hungarian Jewish Politics', 143.

## 6. Polish Spring, Czechoslovak Fall – Two Crises (1968)

The year 1968 “rocked the world”. It brought student riots, strengthening anti-war rallies and civil rights protests in the United States, a widely publicized Biafran famine following the Nigerian blockade, massive civil unrest in France and protest movement in the German Federal Republic. Eastern Europe also saw two major crises in the form of student protests in Poland in the spring, and a reform attempt in Czechoslovakia which was ended by the invasion of five Warsaw Pact countries in August.

In the Soviet Union, the leadership was working on resolving the diplomatic and military debacle of the Six-Day War. Military aid was important to save “progressive” Arab regimes and to enable them to fight their own wars.

Our general line is to assist maximally the progressive Arab states, contribute to their strength, their capacity to prevent new blows from imperialism, directed against the progressive regimes of those countries, but not to get the USSR involved in a new war. We have to do everything so that they should be able to fight on their own and conduct war themselves,<sup>1</sup>

Brezhnev said at the Budapest meeting of bloc leaders in July 1967. In fact, the Central Committee (CC) of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) had already issued a statement on 21 June claiming that the UAR army should be put back on its feet by providing it with further arms shipments and sending military personnel as advisors to the Middle East.<sup>2</sup> The decision of the Soviet leadership required rather burdensome sacrifices from the Soviet population. To make these more palatable,

<sup>1</sup> ‘Polish Record of Meeting of Soviet-bloc leaders (and Tito) in Budapest (excerpts)’ July 11, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, KC PZPR, XI A/13, AAN, Warsaw; Available at: <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113622> [Retrieved: August 21, 2013.]

<sup>2</sup> Jordan Baev, ‘Eastern Europe and the Six Day War: The Case of Bulgaria’ in: Yaacov Ro’i and Boris Morozov (eds.), *The Soviet Union and the June 1967 Six Day War* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 184.

Moscow's propaganda evoked yet again the threat of international Zionism.<sup>3</sup> The Soviet government suggested to its people that the country was gravely threatened by the existence of the State of Israel, a state that was supported by all the Jews around the world. The campaign was in full swing in 1968, with numerous articles, and books being published. Furthermore, the anti-Zionist campaign in the wake of the Middle East crisis was also motivated by Moscow's desire to suppress Jewish demands for the right to emigrate, which were strengthened by the war. Merely two days after the war a young Jew, Yasha Kazakhov, openly renounced his Soviet citizenship and declared himself a citizen of Israel in absentia.<sup>4</sup> Kazakhov's action was only the latest sign of the existence of an underground Jewish movement, which had been forming since the early 1960s.<sup>5</sup>

Compared to these turbulent events, the year was relatively uneventful in Hungary. Though the introduction of the New Economic Mechanism (NEM), an attempt for a major overhaul of planned economy, might have caused excitement for some, the Polish events passed almost unnoticed and the invasion of Czechoslovakia only compelled a few intellectuals<sup>6</sup> to protest. And while more than one country in the bloc experienced anti-Zionist (or anti-“Zionist”) propaganda campaigns and massive Jewish exodus, neither of those occurred in Hungary. Why were there such differences in the usage of anti-Zionist propaganda between Hungary and those countries that applied it in 1968, notably the USSR, Poland and East Germany? What is the significance of these differences when it comes to the mobilization of popular antisemitism?

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<sup>3</sup> Yaacov Ro'i, 'Religion, Israel and the Development of Soviet Jewry's National Consciousness' in: Zvi Gitelman, Musya Glants and Marchall I. Goldmann (eds.), *Jewish Life After the USSR* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 16.

<sup>4</sup> Leonard Shroeter, *The Last Exodus* (Washington, D.C.: Universe Books, 1974), 340.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Five Hungarian philosophers signed the so-called Korčula Manifesto (*korcsulai nyilatkozat*) against the invasion of Czechoslovakia.



The first part of this chapter enumerates the origins and goals of the Polish anti-Zionist campaign, and explains why it did not spread to Hungary. The second part analyzes why anti-Zionist campaigns in various countries of the bloc unfolded, connected to the collapse of the Czechoslovak reform initiative and the Warsaw pact invasion. Finally, the chapter explains the lack of such propaganda in Hungary.

### **6.1. The Polish crisis of 1968 and its effects in Hungarian politics**

In early 1968, Polish authorities banned the performance of *Dziady*, a play by 19<sup>th</sup> century author Adam Mickiewicz because of its alleged anti-Russian sentiment. After the final performance at the National Theatre on January 30, about three hundred students marched through downtown Warsaw to lay flowers at the statue of Mickiewicz. They were met and beaten by the Workers' Militia. Throughout the spring, sympathetic student protests around the country were similarly suppressed. The demonstrations were a reaction against the increasing "terrorization" of intellectual life by the regime since the early 1960s,<sup>7</sup> and demanded "an end to censorship, a decentralising reform of the economy, [and] academic liberty."<sup>8</sup>

Shortly after the initial January protest two students, Adam Michnik and Henryk Szlajfer were expelled from the university. Michnik and Szlajfer (as well as a number of other students involved in the demonstrations) were Jewish. These expulsions were followed by an anti-Zionist campaign in the press. The Ministry of Internal Affairs printed leaflets and posters for wide distribution that warned students against the "instigators of the riots" who were listed by their 'real' (Jewish sounding) names and accused of being "leaders of their tribal birthright, free from financial troubles and

<sup>7</sup> For details see: Jaff Schatz, *The Generation. The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Communists of Poland* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), 294-295.

<sup>8</sup> Neal Ascherson, *The Polish August. The Self Limiting Revolution*. (New York: Viking Press, 1982), 94.

cares. Exquisitely dressed, with private cars and worldly refinement, they usually relax in Western spas when weary of their activities.”<sup>9</sup> The media campaign was accompanied by large-scale purge of Jews from Party and state organs, as well as a wave of anti-Zionist rallies.<sup>10</sup> As a result of the campaign, most of Polish Jews left the country.

### 6.1.1. Hungarian propaganda’s silence on Polish anti-Zionism

Though Hungarian media reported on the turmoil in Poland, it dutifully omitted references to the campaign’s strong anti-Zionist aspects and avoided the criticism of antisemitic excesses. *Magyar Nemzet* did mention Zionism in its July 28 issue as a device of the “divisive politics” of Western imperialists, but reassuringly noted that it had been successfully eliminated by the PUWP.<sup>11</sup> The comment in *Magyar Nemzet* signalled that the issue was to remain, for the public, one of foreign policy.

However, Hungarian press mostly avoided commenting on the anti-Zionist campaign in Poland. One reason of the reluctance to comment might have been that the campaign and the handling of the student movement was considered a Polish domestic issue. Commenting on it would have meant interference into the domestic affairs of a sovereign country, something that the Hungarian state generally tried to avoid. Moreover, the two countries had just signed a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance on May 16, 1968. This expression of close relations, however, had been preceded by a difficult period starting in 1957 which

<sup>9</sup> Michael Checinski, *Poland. Communism, Nationalism, Anti-Semitism*. (New York: Karz Cohl Publishing, 1982), 229.

<sup>10</sup> Dariusz Stola, ‘Anti-Zionism as a Multipurpose Policy Instrument: the Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland, 1967-1968’ in: *The Journal of Israeli History*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (March, 2006), 190.

<sup>11</sup> Imre Vámos, ‘A fellazítási kísérlet és a lengyel tavasz’ [Divisive attempt and the Polish Spring ] in: *Magyar Nemzet*, July 28, 1968. OSA, HU OSA 300-40-10 (Hungary), box no. 24. Hungarian Press Survey.

made criticizing the Polish leadership a particularly sensitive issue,<sup>12</sup> and might have reversed the recent improvement in relations between the two states. However, there were other, domestic issues at play as well that prevented the Hungarian regime both from commenting on Polish policies, and from using anti-Zionism in a similar way in Hungary.

One of the goals of the anti-Zionist campaign in Poland was to prevent the youth rebellion from spreading to industrial workers by compromising and discrediting student leaders.<sup>13</sup> In other words, anti-Zionism was used to reinforce the increasingly unstable regime. The failures of Gomułka's 'small stabilization' politics (such as stopping the forced collectivization in agriculture, slowing down the rapid rate of development in heavy industry) were causing substantial public unease in Poland by the mid-1960s. The public reaction to the anti-Israel stand of the Eastern bloc, as the public opinion surveys cited in the previous chapter showed, was overwhelmingly negative and most importantly, also signalled a more general opposition to communist policies. These two factors, combined, caused serious concern within the Polish leadership. According to Dariusz Stola, "[a]t least since the autumn of 1967, when a series of strikes and other industrial protests followed a rise in food prices, the party

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<sup>12</sup> In the late fifties, the opposing evaluations of the Hungarian and Polish leaderships of the 1956 October Revolution prevented the two new leaders from meeting personally. Gomułka was brought to power by and enjoyed the wide support of Polish society which took part in the unrest in 1956. Therefore, he never condemned public actions or the Poznań riots of June 1956, which he evaluated as warranted public discontent caused by Stalinist excesses. With regards to the Hungarian uprising, the Polish First Secretary refused for a while to label it a "counter-revolution" and undoubtedly had no great affection towards the Soviet-imposed Kádár. As already detailed in Chapter 2, Kádár and his leadership refused to acknowledge the popular roots of the Hungarian revolution. In the mid-1960s, the two leaderships' differing positions on the 'German Question' (i.e. relations with West Germany) cooled down again the slowly warming friendship. While Gomułka's policies were unrelentingly inimical towards West Germany which refused to ratify Poland's Western borders, the Hungarian leadership sought to establish diplomatic relations with the GFR in the hope of profitable foreign trade contracts and investments. In 1967, the Polish leader played an important role in preventing the establishment of diplomatic relations between Hungary and the GFR. The details of this difficult relationship can be found in: Miklós Mitrovits, 'Egy barátság nehéz évtizede: a lengyel-magyar viszony szakítóp próbái (1956-1968)' [The difficult decade of a friendship: the tensile tests of Polish-Hungarian relations (1956-1968)] in: *Múltunk*, 2011/3, 136-163.

<sup>13</sup> Schatz, *The Generation*, 282-312; Stola, 'Anti-Zionism as a Multipurpose Policy Instrument', 193.

leaders had been seriously concerned about the possible eruption of popular unrest.”<sup>14</sup>

With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that their worries were justified: industrial workers’ strikes indeed broke out shortly thereafter, in the winter of 1970, after the announcement of a drastic raise in the prices of consumer goods.<sup>15</sup>

The Polish anti-Zionist campaign was partly the response of the Gomułka regime’s failed attempts to adapt to the embourgeoisement of socialism, a socioeconomic trend that prevailed throughout Eastern Europe during the 1960s. Because the Polish regime did not successfully manage the public’s increasing demands for economic progress, it reverted to ideological means to pacify brewing public unrest. Anti-Zionism was an important element of propaganda in this ideological battle, and its use was inspired by the public’s negative reaction to communist policies towards Israel after the Six-Day War and Moscow’s recent anti-Zionist campaign as well.

The public mood in Hungary at this time was quite different from that in Poland. On January 1, 1968 the NEM was introduced. Philosopher Ágnes Heller recalled the thrill she felt upon discovering that already on the first day of the New Year, the price of espresso coffee differed from one café to another.<sup>16</sup> The introduction of the NEM promised a better quality of life to all Hungarians, even if the regime remained in place. More broadly, the second economy had already been formed in Hungary by 1968. Erzsébet Szalai has shown that what she calls the ‘welfare dictatorship’ of Kádár succeeded in depoliticizing the workers<sup>17</sup> and prevented the formation of any substantial workers’ opposition movement. Modern commodities (whether it be a

<sup>14</sup> Stola, ‘Anti-Zionism as a Multipurpose Policy Instrument’, 193.

<sup>15</sup> Wojciech Lamentowicz, ‘Adaptation through Political Crises in Post-War Poland’ in: *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.19, No.2. (1982) Special Issue: Poles on Poland, 117-131.

<sup>16</sup> Ágnes Heller, ‘1968’. In: *Beszélő Összes*. Available at: <http://beszelo.c3.hu/97/11/13.htm> (Retrieved on 28 December, 2012.)

<sup>17</sup> Erzsébet Szalai, ‘Tulajdonviszonyok, társadalomszerkezet és munkásság’ [Property relations, social structure and the workers’] in: *Kritika*, Vol. 33, No. 9 (2004), 2-6.

vehicle, real estate or household appliances), which had become increasingly available since the beginning of the 1960s, diverted the attention of urban industrial workers from politics and the work required to attain such luxuries captured an enormous amount of time. Such acquisitions required a relatively high amount of personal effort and sacrifice. The opportunities of the second economy for moonlighting and cultivating small plots of land for sale (as well as personal consumption) absorbed the energy of those who aspired for extra income. As early as the end of the 1960s, economic research showed that during the peak of the agricultural season, industrial workers called in sick at their regular jobs to be able to accomplish the many tasks that awaited them at their own personal plots.<sup>18</sup>

Hungarian workers were not, from the outset, less political than their Polish counterparts, but their state offered them more consumer goods at the cost of extra work outside the official workplace. This situation offered mutual, albeit short-term benefits for both the workers and the state: the former were offered the possibility of accumulation, while the stability of the Party state increased both because of the workers non-involvement in politics, and their increased satisfaction with their living standards. Poland's strategic domestic use of anti-Zionist propaganda was, therefore, unnecessary in Hungary. There was no need to restore stability to the state, because unlike in Poland, the Hungarian state's economic policies had bolstered (rather than undermined) social stability. In both the Hungarian and Polish cases, the ultimate goal of policies was to ensure the stability of the regime.

Though Hungarian propaganda was devoid of the excesses of the Polish anti-Zionist campaign, it nevertheless failed to openly distance itself from it. The Hungarian regime's general silence on Polish policies suggests that Kádár was not

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<sup>18</sup> Lajos Héthy and Csaba Makó, *Munkásmagatartások és a gazdasági szervezet* [Workers' behaviour and the economic organization] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1972), 88-92.

expressly opposed to using anti-Zionist/antisemitic rhetoric for domestic political purposes in the late 1960s – he simply had no need to use them in that particular situation.

### **6.1.2. Actively working against the usage of anti-Zionism**

However, the lack of anti-Zionism in Hungary requires further explanation. In fact, the Hungarian state actively worked to prevent the spread of the anti-Zionist campaign from Warsaw. János Kádár, speaking at the meeting of the Hungarian Writers' Union on June 6, 1968 even warned participants not to be surprised if they saw

in the near future something in Poland which they call the elimination of revisionism or the remnants of revisionism. I know that this is a complicated question and there are differences between the Polish and the Hungarian evaluations in certain areas about the present situation in Poland. We, for instance, think that there is too much mentioning of Zionism and it is simply incorrect to punish the parent for the wrong deed of the child.<sup>19</sup>

This clear policy on the part of the Hungarian regime to prevent the growth of anti-Zionist or antisemitic sentiment in Hungary can best be explained as part of Kádár's effort to minimize any threat to his political stability posed by the growth of the idea of a Hungarian national path to socialism.

In 1954, Khrushchev acknowledged the possibility of different national paths to socialism. By the 1960s, more than one state in the bloc was trying to integrate some elements of local nationalism into its rhetoric and policies. In the German Democratic Republic, the Party state attempted to establish a socialist nation which made use of

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<sup>19</sup> PTI, PIL/765/84. János Kádár's speech at the enlarged electoral meeting of the Hungarian Writers' Union, June 6, 1968.

universal symbols of Germandom.<sup>20</sup> In Romania, independent foreign policies were paired with the reconstruction of national history and an ethnically defined Romanian identity.<sup>21</sup> The Polish regime in the 1960s embarked on a “national path to socialism”, and sought to define itself by contrast to the Jews.<sup>22</sup>

The most articulate representatives of this position within the PUWP were the ‘Partisans’, an informal group of Party members who were deeply “anti-liberal, authoritarian and nationalistic.”<sup>23</sup> Not only did they harbour animosity toward Muscovites and Jewish communists, but they tended to blame Jews for all the problems in Poland’s past and present.<sup>24</sup> The Polish security apparatus was mainly under their control. Gomułka’s ‘fifth column’ speech of June 1967 was interpreted as a green light for a showdown with remaining Jews in the state and Party apparatus. By controlling information going towards the top echelons of power, the ‘Partisans’ managed to create an atmosphere within the Party of a looming threat from “revisionists” and “Zionists”, and they simultaneously mobilized broader Polish society through semi-institutional and informal networks.<sup>25</sup> In the Polish context, ever since the de-Stalinization campaign, the term “Zionist” referred to leading politicians of the Stalinist period,<sup>26</sup> many of whom were Jewish. Following the turbulence of 1956, a great number of old Muscovite Jews had, out of disillusionment or calculation, joined the reformist Puławska faction.<sup>27</sup> The ideological arguments that emerged

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<sup>20</sup> A few examples of the literature that examines East German attempts at coming to terms with nationalism are: John Rodden, *Textbook Reds: Schoolbooks, Ideology, and Eastern German Identity* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006); Anna Saunders, *Honecker’s Children. Youth and Patriotism in East(ern) Germany* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Catherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu’s Romania* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991).

<sup>22</sup> Anat Plocker, *Zionists to Dayan: The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland 1967-1968* (Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest, 2009), 3.

<sup>23</sup> Schatz, *The Generation*, 288.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 289-290.

<sup>26</sup> Stola, ‘Anti-Zionism as a Multipurpose Policy Instrument, 189-190.

<sup>27</sup> Schatz, *The Generation*, 277-278.

between this group and the Natolin faction (and later the 'Partisans') were thus increasingly interpreted by the latter as a struggle against Jews. This ever-present antisemitic undercurrent came to the surface again in 1968, in the form of anti-Zionism. The revitalization of the conflict benefitted both the 'Partisans' and Gomulka.<sup>28</sup>

Though the Hungarian Stalinist leadership was also predominantly Jewish, the main attack against them was carried out by Imre Nagy's reformists between 1953 and 1956 (even though Kádár did belong to this group for a while). After the suppression of the popular revolution, and as opposed to his Polish counterpart, Kádár suppressed these strongest Party proponents of a national road to socialism. A critique of the Stalinist leadership which pointed at their Jewishness as a determining factor of errors was nearer to the adherents of the national road than Kádár's line. Kádár did not allow the spreading of Polish-style antisemitic expressions within the HSWP because that would have strengthened Nagy's positive image as a point of reference for the reform of Communism. For that reason, an anti-Zionist campaign would have not served Kádár's interests in 1968.

However, even though Imre Nagy was long gone, nationalist groups continued to exist outside the Party. That phenomenon continuously worried the Kádár regime, especially when it came to younger generations and intellectuals. A report on the "subversive strategies of imperialists" in 1966 already showed the leadership's conviction that ideas of nationalism, anti-Sovietism and indifference to socialism were most widespread among the young, the intelligentsia and the petit bourgeoisie.<sup>29</sup> However, Kádár could not ban nationalism outright for fear of raising popular opposition to Rákosi-like policies, but allowing it to grow into an organized

<sup>28</sup> Stola, 'Anti-Zionism as a Multipurpose Policy Instrument', 194.

<sup>29</sup> MOL M-KS, 288.5/ 386. Minutes of the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo, February 1, 1966. „Report for the Politburo about the measures against the subversive strategies of imperialists”.



movement, as it had in 1956, could not be risked either. Kádár was most afraid of the anti-Soviet undertones of Hungarian nationalism and Polish-style anti-Zionism could have strengthened the appeal of nationalist groups. Though Polish nationalism was also anti-Soviet, Poland received territories after WWII from the USSR, so similar feelings there were less pronounced. Moreover, the USSR was the guarantor of Western Polish borders against West German claims for some of these territories. Therefore, it was possible to somewhat reconcile Polish nationalism and pro-Soviet rhetoric and policies, while that was not an option in Hungary.

The Hungarian Politburo received a report of the Ministry of the Interior about the implementation of its 1966 resolution with regards to “internal inimical forces” in May, 1968. This document focused on “inimical activities” among Hungary’s youth which, it was added, were inspired by the events in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Those who were caught by the vigilant authorities were, according to the report, “mostly of nationalistic and anti-Soviet predisposition. They fanatically cling to their extreme and confused political ideas. To reach their goals, they are capable of aggressive, divertive actions.”<sup>30</sup> During a trial that concerned a group of Catholic students who were arrested by the authorities in 1968, one member stated in his confession that they had thought the Polish national communist “script” would not play out in Hungary in 1968 because the Hungarian leadership’s awareness that anti-Soviet feelings were too strong.<sup>31</sup> According to Éva Ständeisky’s analysis, every single member of this group was antisemitic, and believed that in Hungary, Jews occupy disproportionately numerous positions. They envisioned a systemic change of anti-Soviet and national

<sup>30</sup> MOL M-KS, 288.11/1968/2414. “Report on the execution of the Politburo resolution of February 1, 1966 on the activities and location of internal inimical forces”, (no date)

<sup>31</sup> Éva Ständeisky, ‘Mélyrétegi metszet. Jobboldali fiatalok a hatvanas években’ [Deep cross-section. Right-wing youth in the 1960s]. In: Zsuzsanna Körösi, Éva Ständeisky, János Rainer M. (eds.) *Évkönyv IX. Magyarország a jelenkorban*. (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2001), 87–111.

character with German support.<sup>32</sup> It was exactly this interrelation between nationalism, anti-Soviet feelings and antisemitism that the Kádár regime feared. By preventing the spread of Polish ideas of national communism, so strongly linked to anti-Jewish expressions, the Hungarian leadership wanted to deprive oppositional groups from using the Polish example as inspiration for or attraction to their activities.

## **6.2. The Czechoslovak reform movement of 1968 and bloc reactions**

Antonín Novotný's situation at the head of the CPCZ became increasingly unstable by the fall of 1967. His animosity towards Slovaks irritated many in the Party, and food shortages resulting from the ailing economy of both Czech and Slovak lands did nothing to improve his situation.<sup>33</sup> Eventually, Alexander Dubček was elected on January 5 to replace him as First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Two months later, Novotný was also forced to resign his last public (though largely ceremonial) post as President. The Novotný era came to an end in Czechoslovakia.

During what came to be called the Prague Spring, Dubček and his fellow reform-minded communists sought to eliminate the most repressive features of the regime, allowing greater freedom of expression, and tolerating political and social organizations not under communist control.<sup>34</sup> The increasing momentum of the Czechoslovak reform movement became a concern not only for the orthodox communists in Prague, but also for Moscow and some of its satellites, most importantly East-Germany and Poland. Following several consultative meetings with and without the Czechoslovak leadership, the USSR and its Warsaw Pact allies

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Galia Golan, *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement: Communism in Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 275.

<sup>34</sup> Galia Golan, *Reform Rule in Czechoslovakia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), esp. 103-129.

reached the conclusion that the developments in Czechoslovakia had spun out of control and had to be stopped by military intervention.

During the night of August 20-21, the armies of five Warsaw Pact countries (USSR, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, GDR) invaded Czechoslovakia. Though Brezhnev's original plan seems to have been the complete change of the Czechoslovak leadership, it was aborted by the resistance of the President to appoint the Moscow-backed government, the Czechoslovak Party's continuous and demonstrated support for Alexander Dubček and the refusal of the press and the population to cooperate with the invaders.<sup>35</sup> Dubček and some of his supporters remained in power after the invasion, but they could not fully implement their reformist goals. In April 1969, the First Secretary was forced to resign and was succeeded by Gustáv Husák, under whose leadership the remnants of Czechoslovak reformism were eradicated.

#### **6.2.1. Polish and East German concerns about Czechoslovak reform**

Just like in the case of the Six-Day War, the leaders of Communist countries in Eastern Europe met several times during the blossoming reform movement in Czechoslovakia to discuss their views and to form a common opinion about the situation. However, two dominant positions crystallized among them early on. While the East-German and Polish leaderships represented a hard-line policy, the Hungarians displayed a more moderate stand. The Bulgarians, though initially standing nearer to the Hungarian position, eventually joined the first group. The Soviets appeared to be wavering between the two positions before deciding on using military means. The

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<sup>35</sup> Fred H. Eidlin, "Capitulation", "Resistance" and the framework of "Normali-zation": The August 1968 Invasion of Czechoslovakia and the Czechoslovak Response' in: *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (1981), 319-332.

various leaderships' stands vis-à-vis the Prague Spring strongly correlated to the use of anti-Zionist propaganda after the invasion.

At the Dresden meeting of the Warsaw pact in March 1968, Kádár argued, opposing a fuming Gomulka that the situation in Czechoslovakia was not yet “counterrevolutionary”.<sup>36</sup> During the Warsaw meeting in July 1968, while Kádár still opined that “revisionist” forces gained the upper hand in Prague, Walter Ulbricht insisted that there was no question about “counterrevolutionary forces” being on the attack.<sup>37</sup> He spoke of “forces of international imperialism” that got Czechoslovakia under control, and about “the machinations of the Kiesinger-Strauss government.”<sup>38</sup> Both Gomulka and Ulbricht feared that Czechoslovak reform ideas would spill over to their countries, thus destabilizing their political control.<sup>39</sup>

The Polish First Secretary was most concerned about the Czechoslovak reformist tendencies' domestic effects.<sup>40</sup> The fact that during the March demonstrations, some students carried a banner claiming that “All Poland awaits its Dubček,”<sup>41</sup> hinted at the unpopularity and perceived ineffectiveness of the Polish leader by public opinion in no uncertain terms. Therefore, from early on, Gomulka cast his vote and argued in favour of intervention. In April 1968, in a conversation with Soviet Ambassador to Warsaw Averki Aristov, Gomulka “expressed the need... to intervene immediately,

<sup>36</sup> ‘Stenographic Account of the Dresden Meeting, March 23, 1968’ in: Jaromír Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968. A National Security Archives Documents Reader* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998), 64-72.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Transcript of the Meeting of Five Warsaw Pact States in Warsaw, July 14-15, 1968.’ In: Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne (eds.), *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991*. (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2005), 294-301.

<sup>38</sup> Erwin Weit, *Eyewitness. The Autobiography of Gomulka's Interpreter* (London: André Deutsch, 1970), 198-209.

<sup>39</sup> Mark Kramer, ‘The Kremlin, the Prague Spring, and the Brezhnev Doctrine’ in: Vladimir Tismaneanu (ed.), *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion, Utopia* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), 307.

<sup>40</sup> Jerzy Tomaszewski, ‘From internationalism to nationalism? Poland 1944-96’ in: Kjell Goldmann, Ulf Hannerz and Charles Westin (eds.), *Nationalism and Internationalism in the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 76.

<sup>41</sup> Norman Davies, *God's Playground. A History of Poland 1795 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 590.

arguing that one cannot be an indifferent observer when counterrevolutionary plans are beginning to be implemented in Czechoslovakia.”<sup>42</sup>

Walter Ulbricht, on the other hand, was uneasy about a possible independent Czechoslovak foreign policy line, most importantly the possibility to establish diplomatic relations with the German Federal Republic (GFR). When he requested a meeting with Dubček in Karlovy Vary on August 12, this question was the most important one on his agenda. “He was interested to know if and when Prague would negotiate with Bonn and whether he would be kept fully informed of such negotiations”<sup>43</sup>, Pavel Tigrid remembered later. Ulbricht’s own notes about the Czechoslovak situation reflected his conviction that “by opposing the reforms in Czechoslovakia, he could forestall any change in Prague’s policy toward Bonn and exploit the events to head off a Soviet decision to seek diplomatic relations with the FRG.”<sup>44</sup> The fact that Romania established full diplomatic relations with West-Germany the previous year, and Yugoslavia followed in 1968 alarmed the East-German leader. If the tendency continued, the GDR could have easily been isolated even within the bloc.

The reports available about the various ‘fraternal Party meetings’ prior to the invasion show that anti-Zionism was not part of the phraseology to attack the Czechoslovak reform movement. Reform politicians František Kriegel<sup>45</sup>, Ota Šik<sup>46</sup> and Minister of Foreign Affairs Jiří Hájek had indeed been attacked by Soviet, Polish and East-German media even before the invasion. Yet as the meticulous list of

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<sup>42</sup> ‘Cable to Moscow from Soviet Ambassador to Warsaw Averki Aristov Regarding Władisław Gomułka’s Views on the Situation in Czechoslovakia, April 16, 1968.’ In: Navrátil, *The Prague Spring*, 103-104.

<sup>43</sup> Pavel Tigrid, *Why Dubcek Fell* (London: Macdonald, 1969), 95.

<sup>44</sup> Mark Kramer, ‘The Kremlin, the Prague Spring, and the Brezhnev Doctrine’ in: Vladimir Tismaneanu (ed.), *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion, Utopia* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), 310.

<sup>45</sup> Member of Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPCZ.

<sup>46</sup> Member of the Central Committee and the head of the economics institute at the Academy of Sciences where the details of the economic reform were worked out.

examples collected by the Institute of Jewish Affairs in London shows, the attacks against these men were originally aimed at their reformist political activities, but their Jewish origin and/or “Zionist ties” were seldom mentioned.<sup>47</sup> Only in Poland and East Germany did Zionism appear in the official press at this stage of the events. Zionism was nevertheless used not against Dubček’s leadership but to discredit Czechoslovak media and certain reformist members of the intelligentsia.<sup>48</sup> However, even these accusations were rare before the August invasion.

In fact, it is peculiar that at this stage, there was not any more significant anti-Zionist propaganda campaign either in Poland or the GDR. Czechoslovak reformist intellectuals raised certain Jewish issues which must have alarmed the two leaderships because they concerned the above mentioned sensitive policy areas. Czechoslovak media protested against the antisemitic campaign in Poland that followed the March student demonstrations.<sup>49</sup> On May 12, *The New York Times* reported that various contributors of a Polish Party meeting expressed their concern that “the revisionist, counterrevolutionary, and Zionist elements [were] in control of Czech media.”<sup>50</sup> Even at this early stage, Polish propaganda could have led a major attack on Czechoslovak reformist intellectuals for their “Zionism”, because the latter’s concern for Polish antisemitism and Polish Jews suggested they did not consider these issues as purely domestic matters. Israel’s Zionism was defined by Eastern European communist countries based on the denial of that country’s right to represent Jews all over the world. Then, similarly, Czechoslovak intellectuals’ claim to defend Jewish interests against the Polish state could have been labelled Zionism. The few accusations that

<sup>47</sup> *The Use of Antisemitism against Czechoslovakia. Facts, Documents, Press Reports.* (London: Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1968), 13.

<sup>48</sup> Paul Lendvai, *Anti-Semitism without Jews. Communist Eastern Europe* (New York: Doubleday and Company Inc. 1971), 275-277.

<sup>49</sup> Golan, *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement*, 315.

<sup>50</sup> Lendvai, *Anti-Semitism without Jews*, 271.

did appear in Polish media represented the Polish regime's resistance to Czechoslovak reformist intellectuals' expressing critical opinions about Warsaw's policies. Polish propaganda did not attack Czechoslovak politicians and intellectuals for their Jewish origins at this time.

East Germany could have made the case for a substantial anti-Zionist campaign before the invasion as well, based on their concerns for the emergence of independent Czechoslovak foreign policies and the establishment of diplomatic relations with West Germany. The normalization of Czechoslovak-Israeli relations became an important element of this possible new Czechoslovak line, and a representative case of the critique of Novotný's policies. Had the notion of Zionism been consistently applied in East Germany, not being critical of Israel's policies during the 1967 conflict could have earned the Zionist label for Dubček and his fellow reformists.

During the 4<sup>th</sup> Czechoslovak Writers' Congress in June, 1967 some criticised the Party's one-sided Middle East policy, asserting that "a socialist country's policy on the Middle East, to be effective and based on principle, ought to support the progressive forces on both sides."<sup>51</sup> The writer Pavel Kohout expressed that it was the wish of the whole country "to be truthfully informed without any distortions about the situation of the Middle East. A citizen, however loyal he may be in principle, can have his own private view of the matter, and...must have the right to make that view in public."<sup>52</sup> He referred to the fact that Arab pronouncements about the liquidation of Israel were not aired in Czechoslovakia. In his irritated answer at the meeting, Party Secretary Hendrych disapproved of Kohout's decision to express his "erroneous view on the question of the Middle East."<sup>53</sup> But the genie was out of the bottle, and even an

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<sup>51</sup> Pavel Kohout, *From the Diary of a Counter-revolutionary* (translated from Czech by George Theiner) (New York: McGraw Hill, 1972), 215.

<sup>52</sup> Kohout, *From the Diary*, 219.

<sup>53</sup> Navrátil, *The Prague Spring*, 11.

angry Hendrych could not stuff it back. The Writers' Manifesto issued after the Congress, signed by more than 300 Czechoslovak intellectuals, claimed that the writers' congress had "appealed against anti-Semitism and racism in the official policies of our state in its relationship to Israel."<sup>54</sup> To make matters worse for the Novotný leadership, the popular writer Ladislav Mňačko travelled to Israel in August and in an interview with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, he openly criticized Prague's policies towards the Middle Eastern country.<sup>55</sup> Mňačko, who had previously been a loyal Party member, was not Jewish, but earned himself the deprivation of his Czechoslovak citizenship and expulsion from the Party for his pro-Israeli sentiments.

After Novotný's ousting, the Dubček leadership recognized the importance of the Middle East conflict for the reform process. The Action Programme of the Communist Party, published in April 1968, hinted at a more independent Czechoslovak foreign policy line by referencing the Six-Day War. The program pointed out that a political solution to the conflict between Israel and its neighbours should be found but without condemning the Jewish State for its actions during or after the conflict.<sup>56</sup>

The most plausible explanation for the lack of a substantial anti-Zionist campaign either in the GDR or in Poland before the invasion can be found in the lack of Moscow's support for such action. The Soviet leadership was not ready to give up on Dubček at least up until July 1968. The minutes of the meetings of the Soviet Politburo testify that members of the political body were not unified on how to deal with the Czechoslovak question. While some advocated military intervention, others favoured a political solution, preferably carried out by Dubček, or were wavering

<sup>54</sup> Vojtech Mastny (ed.), *East European Dissent, Vol. 2. 1965-1970* (New York: Facts on File Inc, 1972), 57.

<sup>55</sup> Golan, *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement*, 245-246.

<sup>56</sup> A. H. Brown, 'Political Change in Czechoslovakia' in: Leonard Shapiro (ed.), *Political Opposition in One-Party States* (London: Macmillan, 1972), 117.



between the two stands.<sup>57</sup> The lack of unity within the Soviet leadership about the Czechoslovak issue was the most likely influence behind Soviet media not using anti-Zionist accusations at this point. Publications in the Soviet press did call attention to the “right wing and actually counterrevolutionary forces in Czechoslovakia”<sup>58</sup> and condemned “nationalist, revisionist and politically immature elements”<sup>59</sup> however, Zionism did not feature in the press reports.

Given this reluctance of Soviet media to use anti-Zionist propaganda, and in view of Soviet tolerance for Dubček’s policies up until the late summer of 1968, a full-scale anti-Zionist campaign to discredit the Czechoslovak reformist leadership was not yet possible in any of the bloc countries. This situation changed drastically after the invasion.

### 6.2.2. Anti-Zionism after the invasion

Shortly after the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, the propaganda of the USSR, Poland and the GDR started to use anti-Zionism against Czechoslovak reformist politicians. On September 4, 1968 *Izvestia* attacked Jiří Hájek, claiming that the “*former* Czechoslovak Foreign Minister” was of Jewish origin and changed his name from Karpeles to Hájek. In fact, not only had the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister not yet resigned, neither was he of Jewish origin, nor did he change his name.<sup>60</sup> *Zpravy*, the paper distributed by the occupying forces and printed in the GDR, provoked an official objection from the Czechoslovak Party Presidium when it

<sup>57</sup> Kramer, ‘The Kremlin, the Prague Spring’, 319.

<sup>58</sup> Jiri Valenta, *Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1968. Anatomy of a Decision*. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 50.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 100.

<sup>60</sup> Apparently, *Izvestia* confused Jiří Hájek with Bedrich Hájek, a pre-war activist who indeed had changed his name from Karpeles back in 1945. But Bedrich Hájek received a life-sentence during the Slánský-trials and, almost blinded in prison, was not holding any significant position in the Czechoslovak Party or leadership.

published an openly antisemitic attack against Kriegel on November 2.<sup>61</sup> Walter Ulbricht's propaganda machine was perhaps the quickest to bring up Zionist charges. As early as August 25, *Neues Deutschland* argued that "the workers have lost control over the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, and Zionist forces have taken over the leadership of the Party."<sup>62</sup> The next day, *Berliner Zeitung* implicated the popular reformist politician Josef Smrkovský for being part of the "Zionist plot".<sup>63</sup>

In the USSR, East-Germany and Poland, the intervention was explained by propaganda as a necessity to fight back the Zionists who prevailed in Czechoslovakia. Only two days after the invasion, *Izvestia* explained that among the members of the "counter-revolutionary underground," there were "agents of the international Zionist organisation 'Joint'".<sup>64</sup> The newspaper mentioned several members of the KAN, the Club of Non-Party Activists founded during the period of reform, by name such as Ivan Sviták and Jiřina Rybacek. The same day, Radio Warsaw chimed in claiming that the alleged "anti-Soviet" campaign in Czechoslovakia was the doing of "many counter-revolutionary writers such as Goldstuecker, Kohout or the notorious supporter of the Israeli fascists and Zionists Mnacko."<sup>65</sup> The official Party paper *Trybuna Ludu* added a few new names to the list in its September 2 issue, explaining the connections between the Polish events of March and the Prague developments. "[P]recisely the Zionist forces in Czechoslovakia have most ardently and most passionately come out during the March events with attacks against our country."<sup>66</sup> These "Zionists" were then listed by name: Arnošt Lustig, Laco Novomeský, Ladislav Mňačko, Edouard Goldstuecker, Ivan Sviták, Jan Proházka and Pavel Kohout. The East Berlin Radio

<sup>61</sup> Lendvai, *Anti-Semitism without Jews*, 288.

<sup>62</sup> William Korey, *The Soviet Cage. Anti-semitism in Russia* (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), 150.

<sup>63</sup> Lendvai, *Anti-Semitism without Jews*, 280.

<sup>64</sup> *The Use of Antisemitism against Czechoslovakia*, 4.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

stated on August 31 that “the Czechoslovak counter-revolutionaries had close relations with the imperialist circles in Israel.”<sup>67</sup> These counter-revolutionaries were, according to the program, several staff members of the literary journal *Literarni Listy*. The official “White Book” published by the Soviet Government about the invasion on September 10, 1968 “reiterated the theme that KAN was led by agents of international Zionism.”<sup>68</sup>

While before the invasion, Zionist accusations against Czechoslovak reformist intellectuals and communist politicians within the bloc were scarce, after the invasion both groups were labelled Zionists. However, at this stage anti-Zionism frequently turned into antisemitism, when an intellectual’s or politician’s Jewishness served as an explanation for (from the Warsaw Pact’s point of view) erroneous policies, or when propaganda depicted an international Zionist movement behind Czechoslovak reforms.

As opposed to Soviet, Polish and East German media, the Hungarian press did not use Zionist accusations against Czechoslovak reformers. The leadership distanced itself early on from the excesses of the press in certain countries of the bloc. At the meeting of the Politburo on September 3, Béla Biszku said with regards to this problem:

At some point, we will have to think about the coordination of the behaviour of the five [Warsaw Pact] Parties. For now, there are as many interpretations of the Czechoslovak situation as many Parties there are. I know the positions of the newspapers of the different Parties. The evaluation of the situation is not uniform. At the same time, the situation is a given for us. The political leadership [of Czechoslovakia] is the present one, there is not any other one in sight which could implement a more progressive leadership. This is what we have to consider, this is the leadership we have to work with.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>68</sup> Korey, *The Soviet Cage*, 149.

<sup>69</sup> MOL M-KS, 288.5/470. Minutes of the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo, September 3, 1968.

The official Hungarian position, also printed in the press, was strictly adhering to the official explanation for the invasion, namely that it provided “help for the brotherly Czechoslovak people to avert the counterrevolutionary danger that came into being as a result of the activities of imperialist and anti-socialist internal forces.”<sup>70</sup>

The reason for Hungarian propaganda’s distancing from anti-Zionism is manifold. First, Kádár’s relationship towards Dubček and the reform movement was more positive than that of Gomulka or Ulbricht. Labeling the Czechoslovak reformist leadership “Zionist” after months of supportive attitude and even bilateral negotiation would have made the Hungarian leadership look insincere at best, foolish at worst. Moreover, branding Czechoslovak reformists Zionist could have undermined the Hungarian economic reform as well, and would have allowed Kádár’s orthodox opposition within the Party to launch an attack against the newly introduced NEM and its architects on the same grounds. Most importantly, Kádár’s official justification for the invasion rested on different grounds than his Polish or East German counterparts. The parallels between Hungary’s 1956 and the Czechoslovak 1968 were, from the beginning of the reform attempt in Prague, acknowledged by Budapest. However, Kádár believed for months that the Czechoslovak leadership could (and should) take the events under control. During the Dresden meeting of the Warsaw Pact in March 1968, he pointed out for those convened that “this process [in Czechoslovakia] is extremely similar to the prologue of the Hungarian counterrevolution at a time it had not yet become a counterrevolution.”<sup>71</sup> When the reform was crushed, the Hungarian Party’s leaders emphasized that military intervention was necessary because of the

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. Proposal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the Politburo about Czechoslovak, Romanian and Yugoslav diplomatic steps.

<sup>71</sup> ‘Stenographic Account of the Dresden Meeting, March 23, 1968’ in: Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968*, 69.

“right wing elements” which had taken control of Czechoslovak politics.<sup>72</sup> This echoed the Party’s evaluation of 1956 which primarily blamed Imre Nagy’s “right wing course” for the popular uprising. By explicitly linking 1968 to 1956, Kádár attempted to strengthen the justification for his actions in both crises. The Hungarian leadership did not need to invent a new enemy (Zionists) to justify the invasion, for it had already worked out an ideological explanation for a parallel domestic situation in the past.

That being said, the Hungarian leadership did use Zionist accusations in the aftermath of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, only in a different form than it appeared in the USSR, Poland and East Germany. Though, as discussed in the previous chapter, the surveillance of Jewish youth gathering considered Zionist activities increased following the 1967 war, actual “political” measures, such as arrests and various forms of harassment only started in 1968, following the Polish and Czechoslovak crises.

Several students of the Rabbinical Institute were arrested and dismissed from school in 1968. Iván Beer, a student at the Seminary, had caught the attention of the authorities back in 1965 and appeared on the radars of the Ministry of the Interior in 1967 again. Beer, along with fellow Rabbinical Seminary student István Berger, set up what the authorities considered “Zionist youth organizing” in the form of regular meetings of a few Jewish youths in various Budapest cafés and restaurants. Then, in 1968 Beer “posed provocative questions with regards to the Czechoslovak events on a peace rally in August.” In October 1968, he was reported to have “organized a political provocation” with two fellow rabbinical students during a lecture about the Middle East conflict held at the Attila József Free University (*József Attila Szabadegyetem*). According to a report sent to the Office of Church Affairs, the

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<sup>72</sup> MOL M-KS, 288.5/471. Minutes of the meeting of the Hungarian Politburo, September 13, 1968. Jenő Fock’s speech.

rabbinical students “tried to outbid each other in cutting off the lecturer, not listening to his answers, held a small lecture, during which they openly and firmly supported Israel’s present policies.”<sup>73</sup> The Office of Church Affairs suggested to the responsible bureaucrats of the Ministry of the Interior to solve the problems “not with administrative, but political measures,” given the “good relationship between the state and the Israelite Church, [and] the positive behaviour of present leaders of the Church.”<sup>74</sup> This had been their position even before the meeting with the Jewish leadership and the representatives of the Office of Church Affairs exercised considerable pressure on President Géza Seifert and his peers to reach the same conclusions.<sup>75</sup> What the Jewish leadership concluded from the incident was that only full cooperation with the authorities would save them from open attacks and relented to the pressure accordingly. This meant that three Seminary students, Iván Beer, István Berger and György Landesmann were “only” fired from the Rabbinical Institute and were not allowed to be inaugurated as rabbis.

The pressing of charges against the three rabbinical students demonstrate that the Hungarian communist regime was not ideologically opposed to using “Zionist” charges. However, in this case, anti-Zionism had a different content than in the USSR, Poland and East Germany. It was not used to discredit Czechoslovak reformists, but to eliminate those individuals from within the Jewish religious community who did not agree with the regime’s policies, most importantly with regards to the 1967 Middle East crisis.

<sup>73</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-d, box no. 48, 0020.3/1969. Letter from Mrs. János Ladányi and Mrs. Tamás Bárdoly to the Office of Church Affairs, October 28, 1968.

<sup>74</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-d, box no 48, 0020.2/1969. Report on the inimical behaviour of the students of the Rabbinical Institute, April 22, 1969.

<sup>75</sup> MOL, XIX-A-21-d, box no. 48, no number. Károly Grnák’s note to József Prantner, March 27, 1969.

### **6.3. The curious case of a missing anti-Zionist propaganda**

The Kádár regime did not use anti-Zionism as a public propaganda tool in 1968 either in connection to the Polish, or the Czechoslovak crisis. Gomulka made use of anti-Zionist propaganda first and foremost to stabilize his regime during the Polish student protests in the spring. By discrediting student leaders, he hoped to prevent the protests from spreading to the general public (especially the workers), whose dissatisfaction with his aborted reforms was mounting. Using anti-Zionism in Hungary, however, would have destabilized the regime. The economic reforms introduced throughout the 1960s depoliticised Hungarian workers, while those groups among the intelligentsia and youth that worried the regime the most gravitated towards ideas of Hungarian nationalism, and were thus not immune to antisemitism. A Polish-style antisemitic anti-Zionist campaign would have strengthened precisely these groups that Kádár wanted to abate. Moreover, the Polish anti-Zionist campaign strengthened Gomulka's position within the Party, but it would not have helped Kádár's because it would have played into the hands of his leftist opposition.

During the build-up of the Czechoslovak crisis, more than one country in the bloc could have used anti-Zionist propaganda. Gomulka was afraid of Dubček's reforms echoing in Poland, and the Czechoslovak intelligentsia's criticism of Polish antisemitism during the student protests could have presented a case in point. Walter Ulbricht on the other hand was alarmed by Czechoslovak reformist currents in the area of foreign policies, for fear that this would mean the establishment of diplomatic relations with the GFR. The central importance of relations with Israel for Czechoslovak reformists could have provided an occasion for East German propaganda to attack this new foreign policy line as Zionist. However, largely because Moscow had not yet fully withdrawn its support for Dubček, these countries applied

anti-Zionist propaganda to a very limited extent up until late summer 1968. However, after the invasion, anti-Zionist propaganda did become an option as the Soviet Union launched it to justify military action, and discredit Czechoslovak reformist politicians. In this form, anti-Zionism as professed by Soviet, Polish and East German propaganda after the invasion of Czechoslovakia was antisemitic, because it attacked Czechoslovak reformers as members of an imaginary international Zionist plot, or equated their Jewish origins with Zionism. The Hungarian regime did not use anti-Zionism in this form, because the leadership had been more sympathetic and even supportive to the Czechoslovak reformist attempts from the outset, and because it justified the invasion by drawing comparisons with the right-wing deviationist threat of Imre Nagy in 1956 Hungary. Branding Czechoslovak reformists Zionists could have also undermined Kádár's own reform attempts, giving ammunition to those groups inside and outside the Party that had opposed it.

The Czechoslovak invasion and the use of anti-Zionist propaganda showcases how Moscow placed limits to the foreign policies of member states, inasmuch as neither Poland, nor East Germany could launch a significant campaign until the Soviets decided to invade. Anti-Zionism was then on the table as an option, but the Kádár regime did not use it with regards to Czechoslovakia, which in turn demonstrates that there was some room to maneuver within the limits of foreign policies that were set by Moscow.



## 7. Conclusion

The main goal of this dissertation was to give a comprehensive account and analysis of state policies regarding Jewish issues in communist Hungary during the long 1960s, while placing the study in a comparative framework with other ‘real socialist’ countries of the bloc. The study examined, in particular, the determinants of policies towards Jewish issues and antisemitism.

### 7.1. Systemic determinants of policies towards Jews and antisemitism

Systemic determinants of state policy (i.e. those that originated in the communist socio-political context) include the regime’s communist ideology, its centralized political structure, and the interstate dependence (political, economic and military) within the communist bloc both in relation to other satellites and to Moscow.

The elements of communist ideology which most influenced policies towards Jewish issues were anti-Fascism, anti-Zionism (a specific case of anti-nationalism) and atheism. Communism’s ideological opposition to both Fascism and Zionism, when translated into actual political actions, worked very effectively as devices to discredit those who opposed the establishment. In Eastern Europe, where all communist regimes were unlawfully forced onto the populations by a foreign power, the regimes’ constant assertions about various imminent threats to their people served an important legitimizing function. The term “fascist” was used in Hungary to designate the interwar political establishment of Miklós Horthy, 1956 revolutionaries, and clandestine oppositional groups in and outside of Hungary. One side-effect of the dilution of the term was the diminished possibility to truly isolate and discredit far-right racism, which remained among the Hungarian population and resurfaced after

the fall of state socialism. One important application of this ideological anti-Fascism in the Hungarian context was the Kádár regime's attempt to define itself in opposition to the interwar regime of Miklós Horthy by exaggerating its "fascism". This overemphasized fascist threat was designed to justify the Kádár regime's questionable genesis, and to argue that such dangerous elements reappeared in 1956. After the change of the political system in 1989, this ahistorical narrative of opposition was inverted in new, anti-communist neo-conservative narratives which downplayed Horthy's responsibilities for Hungarian participation in WWII and the Holocaust.

Anti-Zionism similarly served as a codeword for the communist regimes' fight against perceived enemies, and in more than one country of the bloc, this fight acquired antisemitic overtones. Compared to fellow socialist states, the Kádár regime used anti-Zionism as a propaganda tool in a very restricted manner. Anti-Zionism in Hungary was not used by the regime to intimidate the broader Jewish population (as in the USSR and Poland), to place the blame for economic failures on scapegoats (as in the USSR under Khrushchev), or to eliminate political opponents in the Party (as in Poland). It was applied as an ideological argument to attack Israeli policies (and indirectly, Israel's Western allies), and as a pretense against those members of the religious Jewish community who did not conform to the loyal stand of the lay leadership, or who advocated a different understanding of Jewish identity than what the regime was willing to acknowledge. This was partly due to Kádár's hesitancy to see the masses mobilized for any reason (closely connected to his experience of 1956 discussed below) and specifically, his earlier decision to exclude appeals to national sentiment (which probably would have been welcoming to antisemitic rhetoric) from his political toolbox. Kádár's chosen option to increase his regime's acceptability at home was to improve its image in the West, which would build his political approval

at home and help secure foreign capital. An anti-Zionist campaign would have eroded the hard fought acceptance of his regime in the West which, especially after the Eichmann trial, increasingly defined itself against those racial European traditions which led to the Holocaust.

Communist atheism brought with it the idea of a church-less future, yet the reality was that 'real socialist' states had to accept what they considered a temporary survival of religious faith. Because Kádár intended to make peace with the wider population, he allowed the rather free exercise of religion but conducted a political warfare against religious leaderships which manifested in their infiltration of loyal elements and secret informers. Though in a structural sense, the same basic principles applied to the Jewish community as to Christian Churches, there were nonetheless two marked differences which differentiated Jews from other religious communities. The official Jewish leadership had more extensive Western contacts in the form of political Jewish organizations than its Christian counterparts, but it was also bound to engage with problems that were not religious in the strict sense, but Jewish in a broader one, such as the international actions against the discrimination of Soviet Jewry or Israeli policies. As a result the Jewish community, through officially defined in a religious sense, was implicitly assigned ethnic characteristics as well.

The overlapping chains of authority, duplicated roles and hyper-regulation of socialist hierarchy created a systemic disfunctionality that was partly responsible for the erratic policy decisions with regards to certain Jewish issues. Hungarian policies towards Israel are a case in point, because the various actors involved in their formation had opposing interests. The Ministry of Interior tried to minimize the number of exit visas to Jews in order to assert its authority and fulfill its task to fight "inimical elements". The Ministry of Trade, meanwhile, tried to foster good relations

with Israel, hoping to provide the Hungarian economy with much needed foreign capital. The different territorial departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could not agree on whether Hungarian relations with Israel or with the Arab states were more important because their territorial competencies clashed. Nonetheless, the Party's bureaucratic structure permitted it to exercise monopoly over information and thus limit dissent within the Party and the population. The Kádár regime made good use of this feature during the Six-Day War, when the lower Party echelons, and even the Politburo were excluded from the decision-making process about the interpretation of the origins of the crisis and the discontinuation of diplomatic relations with Israel. Similarly, the limitation of information reaching the public about the Polish regime's excessive use of antisemitism during the 1968 student unrest ensured Hungarian political stability.

Finally, dependence on the bloc and Moscow did not mean a straightforward foreign determination of Hungarian domestic, or even foreign policies, but rather provided a set of acceptable or desirable policy elements. After the 1967 Middle East crisis, the Soviet Union strongly suggested that all communist countries break-off diplomatic relations with Israel and provide 'friendly' Arab states with aid. Hungary's decision to send only minimal aid and Romania's failure to break off relations suggests that there was room to manoeuvre even in a critical foreign policy situation. Furthermore, while Moscow's anti-Zionist campaign in the wake of the war facilitated similar developments in Poland and the German Democratic Republic, Hungary opted not to use anti-Zionist propaganda for its own purposes.

This dissertation demonstrated that an approach which overemphasizes the Eastern bloc's policy-dependence on Moscow risks overlooking the many interdependencies that existed between satellites and which frequently had significant influence on

policy decisions. Hungary's ongoing tension with Romania regarding the problem of the treatment of the Hungarian minority population in that country predisposed the Kádár leadership to take a negative stance towards Romania's decision to maintain diplomatic contacts with Israel. It was this factor, combined with Moscow's pressure, which determined Hungary's severance of diplomatic relations with Israel. The mediating role that Kádár assumed during the Czechoslovak reform experiment in the summer of 1968 played a role in preventing the Hungarian regime from adopting a Polish or Soviet-style antisemitic campaign in the wake of the invasion.

## **7.2. Local determinants of policies towards Jews and antisemitism**

The Kádár regime's constant struggle for legitimacy brought about two clear policy principles in the 1960s. The regime tried to depoliticize the public and minimize social tensions in order to avoid any possible revolutionary explosion such as the one in 1956. Furthermore, it introduced structural economic reforms to increase its popularity by offering higher living standards and economic advancement to the people. Both of these goals would impact the state's approach to Jewish issues and relating policies.

When he was installed following the 1956 revolution, Kádár tried to differentiate his regime from those of both his predecessors, Mátyás Rákosi and Imre Nagy. This resulted in a low number of Jews in the highest Party leadership (as high numbers had been a source of popular grievance against Rákosi's regime), but also in the official rejection of Hungarian nationalism (because many of its elements found their way into Nagy's political program) and its constituent elements, including antisemitism. Though communist ideology was officially anti-nationalist (internationalist), some countries of the bloc only played lip-service to that principle while in fact

incorporating elements of local nationalisms in their rhetoric to increase their popularity. If the ethnic element came to the fore, as it did in Poland for instance, this could result in the increased use of antisemitism as a policy device. Kádár's aversion to nationalism, mindful of its effects in 1956, prevented the overt use of this type of classic antisemitism by the state. Furthermore, fearful of any public unrest, the Kádár regime refrained from extensive anti-Zionist propaganda which could have incited antisemitism. However, this fear of an open expression of public discontent also meant that the regime did not confront its subjects with the question of social responsibility, including for antisemitism past and present. The general public was always acquitted. A few "Horthyite fascists" and criminals were blamed for the antisemitic incidents in the course of the 1956 "counterrevolution". In fact, most of the upheaval was blamed on the return of fascist elements. When the Eichmann trial brought the Holocaust into public discourse, the deportation of Hungary's Jews in 1944 was again blamed on a few in power. When the Six-Day War evoked antisemitic comments, these could pass largely unpunished, albeit not unnoticed by the police. These policies infantilized the public and suggested that social norms against antisemitism were relative or even inconsequential.

Kádár's administration appeared to be most unorthodox in the economic area. Despite labelling Western Jewish organizations "Zionist", the Hungarian regime cooperated with them (up until the Six-Day War) to exploit the financial aid they provided for the Hungarian Jewish community. Though diplomatic relations with Israel were kept at a low level, the regime was willing to allow Jewish emigration to Israel in exchange for financial benefits. Trade relations between the two countries during the 1960s continuously increased, and even continued after 1967. However, even these economic policies could only benefit the local Jewish community in a

limited way, as their goals clashed with those of other structural units of the Party state.

A third, specifically Hungarian determinant could be easily overlooked because it appears very implicitly as a device of policy formation. This was the history and structure of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (HSWP) which conserved antisemitic stereotyping attitudes among the political elites. The Hungarian Communist Party merged with some of the membership of its political rivals, as well as welcomed many former low-ranking members of the Arrow Cross movement after the war. The high degree of Jewish assimilation, embourgeoisement and presence in the leftist political movements during the interwar period; combined with the then dominant political culture's antisemitism was bound to produce anti-Jewish beliefs deeply ingrained within the Hungarian population, and firmly held by many of those absorbed by the HSWP. During the early years of the communist regime, Rákosi's policies and propaganda reused some of these antisemitic stereotypes (most importantly, the equation of Jews with the bourgeoisie) to get rid of their political competitors. As a result, antisemitic stereotyping not only survived within the Party but was legitimized and masked by the ideologically tainted language of Communism. Under Kádár, Party democracy increased compared to Rákosi's period and the voicing of various opinions within the Party, especially within the leading bodies, was encouraged. Even this small democratic milieu provided enough space for the political rifts of pre-communist Hungary to be recreated during situations of intraparty rivalry—though in a reduced manner. This resulted in the repeated emergence of antisemitism within the Party ranks during situations of Party reorganization such as during the reconstruction of the Party after the 1956 revolution and during de-Stalinization. Because Kádár was attempting to maintain a balance between these various proto-

factions within the Party, he variably sanctioned or tolerated these incidents of antisemitism to enhance his own position. The leadership's different reactions to these cases of antisemitism within the Party highlight Kádárism's non-commitment to fight such ideas in a consistent manner.

Though Soviet hegemony was always a factor influencing policies towards Jews and antisemitism, throughout the period under investigation, Soviet policies and principles were neither binding, nor all-encompassing for the Hungarian leadership. While Eastern European states were always required to act within the constraints of Bolshevik ideology, this was not so tightly defined as to not allow independent choices, as long as the regimes could defend their ideological commitment. Therefore, when the Kádár regime applied anti-Jewish discrimination, professed antisemitism or on the contrary, avoided the use of such policies; the responsibility and the credit are both predominantly with the Hungarians. Within Hungary, the bureaucratic structure of the state was totalitarian in that there were no organizations outside the reach of the Party (like in the case of "Zionist" youth gatherings with the Jewish community), yet this structure was able to accommodate a diversity of opinions, some of which were even contradictory to the ideological foundations of Communism (like antisemitism). This suggests that the Kádár regime is closer to Dahrendorf's and Janos' definitions of a non-ideological authoritarian state. Moreover, Kádár's unwillingness to mobilize the population with anti-Zionist propaganda fits with Dahrendorf's definition of authoritarianism. When the Hungarian state did act to prevent outbreaks of anti-Jewish sentiment, its motivation was at least partially, if not entirely, self-preservation rather than ideological opposition to antisemitism.



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### Abbreviations of Names of Archives

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- ÁSZTL: Historical Archives of the State Security Services (*Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára*), Budapest
- PTI: Institute of Political History (*Politikatörténeti Intézet*), Budapest
- OSA: Open Society Archives, Budapest
- ISA: Israel State Archives (*Ginzah HaMedinah*), Jerusalem
- CZA: Central Zionist Archives (*Archion Hatzioni Hamerkazi*), Jerusalem
- HUJI: Hebrew University of Jerusalem Israel, Jerusalem
- JDC: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives, New York

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