

Hungarian Jewish Identity After the Six-Day War

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Contents

1. Introduction
2. Theoretical Framework
 - 2.1 A Comparative Perspective: Hungary, Poland and the Soviet Union
 - 2.2 Written Media in 1967, an Overview
 - 2.2.1 Hungarian dailies, May, June, July 1967
 - 2.2.2 *Új Élet*, January-December
 - 2.3 Some Thoughts on Oral History and Memory
 - 2.4 The Interviewees
3. Hungarian Jewry in the Twentieth Century, an Overview
 - 3.1 Reconstructing Lives
 - 3.2 The Revolution of 1956 and What Followed
4. Jewish Identity in Hungary
 - 4.1 Religious Identity
 - 4.2 Hidden Identities
 - 4.3 Clandestine Gatherings
 - 4.4 Antisemitism: Identified by Others
 - 4.5 June 1967: A New Sense of Pride?
 - 4.6 Memory and Myth
5. Conclusion

1. Introduction

Since the fall of Communism in Hungary in 1989, twenty years ago, save a few months, there has been extensive research into Judaism in Hungary and into the difficulties and changes the Jewish community went through since the Holocaust, by a variety of historians and sociologists, such as Viktor Karády, András Kovács, as well as Randolph A. Braham, András Gerő, Mária Kovács, Paul Lendvai and Tamás Stark, to name but a few. They have described the period of return to daily life, after years of displacement, with many members of the family murdered, in an often less than welcoming society. Many Jews found Communism attractive and were active in its implementation in Hungary, as described by Karády, among others. This caused tensions both with non-Jewish Hungarians, who often accepted Communism reluctantly and felt they were suppressed yet again, this time by another foreign regime, but also with Soviet leaders, among whom there were many outspoken antisemites. During the revolution of 1956 these tensions accumulated: while tens of thousands of Jews left the country for America, Israel and many other countries, many of the revolutionaries gave an antisemitic twist to their anti-Communist sentiments.

This thesis will research the effects of the 1967 Israeli Six-Day war on Hungarian Jewry and especially on Jewish Hungarian identity. Sentiments were complex once again; the official Party line was absolutely against “Israel the aggressor,” and this was widely published in the different media, as will be discussed below. At the same time everyday non-Jewish people were cheering for Israel, something remembered with pleasure by some of

interviewees, both in the Erős-Kovács interviews conducted in the 1980's, which I have used quite extensively, as well as in the interviews I conducted in 2008. As the Soviet forces supported the Arabs, there was a sense of 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend'; non-Jewish Hungarians were often supportive of Israel.

My research project meant to show, supported with oral histories by Hungarian Jews who were (young) adults in 1967, that for many of them the Six-Day War brought a positive change in how they saw themselves, a sense of pride and belonging they had not felt before. While some of these effects have been discussed by, among others, Viktor Karády, András Kovács and Richard Papp, it was always only as an additional point, described in a few lines. Papp's is a good example to indicate the lack of availability of research into this phenomenon. In his book he mentions the Six-Day War in a footnote and to support his statement that it was an important event in the life of not only Israeli Jewry, he chooses to quote rabbi Donin's book on how to be a religious Jew, where this phenomenon is mentioned in the introductory chapter in two lines.

The Six-Day War will have had a comparatively minor effect on Hungarian Jewry, compared to such traumas as the Holocaust and the revolution of 1956. Nevertheless it does seem its significance has been overlooked. At the same time its significance probably does not lie so much in the historical event itself, but rather in the way it is remembered by many Jews in Hungary. To them the victory of the Six-Day War was not only a new chapter in the life of Israeli Jewry, but also of those in the diaspora who had been more than careful not to identify as Jewish, let alone feel proud.

To begin with, there will be a comparative perspective, which will detail the rather

significant differences between official policies initiated by the Soviet Union in relation to its Jewry, and the Polish and the Hungarian response. Poland and Hungary were both satellite countries to the Soviet Union and while Hungary officially adhered to the policies of the “mother country”, in practice it responded rather differently than Poland, which forced out most of its Second World War-surviving Jews. There is a section on written media that will detail some of these differences, focusing mostly on Hungary. Furthermore, the publications of the official representatives of Hungarian Jewry will be detailed by a description of the articles found in the Hungarian Jewish community’s official organ, *Új Élet*. This is followed by a historical framework, which briefly describes the years leading up to the summer of 1967, to give the reader an understanding of the circumstances in which many Jews in Hungary found themselves. In this section, extensive use will be made of existing sources collected over the years.

Further on, the thesis will discuss the official stance the Hungarian government took in line with the Soviet government and how the Party view was manifested in different media, such as newspapers and radio. Some of the interviewees' stories will complete this part, in that they are likely to convey opposite opinions at times, but will also offer a glance at families that were convinced Communists and therefore condemned the Israelis despite the fact that many had family members who had emigrated to Israel.

From the seventeen interviews conducted by me, representative conclusions cannot be made as the sample is not representative, partially due to its small size. There are thousands of Jewish Hungarians alive today who were between the ages of fifteen and forty during the Six-Day War and not all of them live in Budapest, unlike my interviewees. The interviewees are also all parents or other close relatives of friends of mine, which would imply

that they may have been more willing to speak to me and share information than others would have. The interviewees were asked to share their memories and thoughts with a friend of their child, grandchild, niece, or nephew, to help her research on Hungarian Jewish identity. While it is doubtful that this knowledge influenced their memories significantly, it did prepare the interviewees and may have brought certain memories into focus, which perhaps would not have happened had they not been asked by a loved one and had not known what I was going to ask.

However, as mentioned earlier, I made extensive use of over half of the full Erős-Kovács interview material: sixty-six interview transcripts, which Mr. Erős and Mr. Kovács were kind enough to provide. With professor Kovács, we prepared the questions for my own interviews, to ensure they would match the questions that were asked over twenty years earlier. The only difference between the sets of questions is that while the Erős-Kovács interviews did not ask specifically about the events of 1967, mine did by an additional four questions:

What was your life like during the summer of 1967? What did you do?

1. [If interviewee does not recall the war by him/herself:] What did you read or hear about the conflict in the Middle East?
2. What was your opinion about the events in the Middle East?
3. What was the response in your surroundings to the conflict, the Six-Day War and Israel's victory?

For the full list of questions, please see Appendix 1.

In this work the term *Jewish Hungarians* and *Jewish Hungarian identity* are preferable

to *Hungarian Jewish*, since my research concerns only Hungarians, some Jewish and some not. If my research had consisted of, say, research on Hungarian Jews and Polish Jews, I would have used a different word order. The people interviewed by Erős-Kovács and myself all consider themselves Hungarians with a Jewish element, rather than Jewish with a Hungarian element, which is another good reason to use the said word order. There is also a practical advantage in using *Jewish Hungarian*, over *Hungarian Jewish* in that when it comes to non-Jewish Hungarians, it is easier to add on non- where necessary, than to speak of *Hungarian non-Jews*, a strange creation. It seems to ask, if non-Jews, then what?

Most importantly, I refuse to divide the people in my research into Hungarians and Jews, as the first prime minister of Hungary after Communism, József Antall did so unfortunately when he inaugurated the national memorial for the deported, where he said: “You must know ... we remember your martyrs as if they were our own, because we consider them our own,”¹ as if there are two different peoples living parallel lives in the same country, where they meet at times.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 A Comparative Perspective: Hungary, Poland and the Soviet Union

While some similarities can be found between the Jews of Russia, Poland and Hungary and the respective government views of and actions against them from the 1920s to the overthrow of communism, the differences are more significant. Here I will compare especially the period surrounding the Six-Day War in 1967 and responses by those in power in relation to Jewry in the above mentioned countries. When trying to understand the reasons for these differences, Lendvai offers several general suggestions as to possible reasons: political and social crisis as the breeding ground for political antisemitism in a totalitarian system, the ruling group should be willing to use covert or open Jew-baiting as a demagogic weapon.²

Russia had known ferocious violence in the form of organised pogroms, both before and after the tsarists were overthrown. Since Bolshevism seemed a certain escape from the White forces' attempt to take over with their antisemitic anti-Bolshevism, it attracted a fair amount of educated Jews, who, as Lenin himself stated, 'filled a vacuum' left by those from the old regime.³ Also, as Gitelman describes: "The only armed force that did not systematically terrorise the Jews was the Red Army of the Bolsheviks."⁴ When the Soviet Union took over power in Hungary and Poland after the end of the Second World War similar events took

2" Ibid., 23

3" Zvi Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence*, 96

4" Ibid., 106

place in both countries. The Soviet Union was “the mother of political antisemitism,” it had known a long history of antisemitism, which was often used to allow the general population to vent its dissatisfaction with the regime. Poland had been the place of the worst massacre in human history only 20 years before the events of 1967 and 1968, when it forced most of its remaining Jewry out of the country. Here, antisemitism also trickled down from the top unlike in Hungary, where since Kádár there was no political antisemitism to speak of.

Responding to Stalin’s aggressive antisemitism, Hungary’s communist leader Rákosi, himself born Jewish, attempted to save his position by ridding his government of most of its high-positioned Jewish members. This turned out to be insufficient. In June 1953 Rákosi was summoned to Moscow, where he was told by the chief of the Soviet security and secret police apparatus Beria: “Listen to me, Rákosi. We know that there have been in Hungary, apart from its own rulers, Turkish sultans, Austrian emperors, Tartar khans, and Polish princes. But, as far as we know, Hungary has never had a Jewish king. Apparently, this is what you have become. Well, you can be sure that we won’t allow it.”⁵ Rákosi was replaced by Imre Nagy, who was a Muscovite and not a Jew.

In Poland, where the first secretary of the Polish Communist Party Wladyslaw Gomulka, and mouthpiece of the Communist government, stated in his speech that “We cannot remain indifferent towards people... who support the aggressor,” and added that “those who feel that these words are addressed to them” should emigrate.⁶ As Van Gastel states, the events in the Middle East were an excellent excuse for Gomulka to heighten his anti-Jewish propaganda,⁷

5 Aczél-Méray, pp 159-60 in Lendvai 313

6" http://web.ceu.hu/jewishstudies/pdf/02_stola.pdf, last accessed on 16 November 2008

7" http://www.euroculturemaster.org/pdf/groep9_2/VanGastel.pdf, last accessed on 16 November 2008

quite unlike Kádár, who, as will be indicated below, separated the actions of the state of Israel from the people of Israel and the Jews in Hungary. It comes as no surprise that in Poland Jewish party members were attacked openly in parliament, something that did not occur in Hungary during those years.⁸

In the Soviet Union, mostly the Zionists had instigated anti-Judaism campaigns in the 1920s, but these were almost exclusively by Jews in the Yiddish language. To a considerable extent this seemed to be an “internal Jewish affair”⁹ In the 1950s and 1960s however “the anti-Judaism campaigns included non-Jews and were carried out in languages accessible to the general public (Russian, Ukrainian). The messages were carried in the pages of popular magazines, thus exposing a large non-Jewish audience to anti-Judaism propaganda.”¹⁰

Quite similar to the situation in Hungary in the 1950s, the 1930s in the Soviet Union were a time of purges and terror during which especially Jews were more vulnerable. Gitelman writes: “a postcard from abroad could serve a 'proof' that the recipient was a foreign agent. In fact, even having relatives abroad could be adduced as evidence. A visible interest in Jewish culture, even in its purely Soviet version, could lay one open to charges of 'petit bourgeois nationalism' or worse.”¹¹ As mentioned before, life became less frightful for Jewish Hungarians even before 1956, but especially after, while the situation remained fairly unchanged in the Soviet Union. As Lendvai describes: ‘The general public understood very well that an official campaign against the Jews had originated at the very top and that it was open season on the

8" http://www.euroculturemaster.org/pdf/groep9_2/VanGastel.pdf, last accessed on 16 November 2008

9" Gitelman, 116

10" Ibid., 121

11" Ibid., 170-171

“rootless cosmopolitans.”¹²

When after Stalin's death the doctors convicted for having medically murdered leading Soviet politicians and intending to murder several others¹³ were exonerated, Khurshev criticised Stalin for his cruel policies, but yet no mention was made of his antisemitic policies.¹⁴ Although since Stalin's death it had become easier for Jews to be admitted to university, there was still an, unspoken, numerus clausus, especially in ideologically sensitive studies, such as “the humanities and social sciences generally, and fields related to security and foreign affairs in particular. ... In 1958-1961 there was not a single Jew among the many government ministers.”¹⁵

During 'the thaw' there was a “tremendous increase in the [Catholic] church's ideological influence, in deeply rooted anti-communism and in a nationalism that under Polish conditions was bound to reinforce antisemitism. In the party, it also included the Natolinian attempt to explain the political past by blaming Jewish Communists and the demands for a numerus clausus in the party and state administration.”¹⁶ “It was no accident that ... in 1956 in Poland ... the Kremlin consciously played the Jewish card. On both occasions the element of antisemitism was introduced into the political debates by a besieged and embattled Soviet leadership. On both occasions hatred for Soviet domination was to be channelled into hatred for an insignificant minority - the Jews.”¹⁷ Gomulka's nationalism that came to surface during

12" Ibid., 237

13" Ibid., 238

14" Ibid., 243

15" Ibid., 246-247

16" Schatz, 276

17" Ibid., 20

the thaw “was to become a forceful weapon for the heirs of the Natolinians in their thrust for power. It was also used for settling old accounts rooted in the not so long forgotten political past.”¹⁸ As Arendt relates on the “objective enemy”: “He is never an individual whose dangerous thoughts must be provoked or whose past justifies suspicion, but a 'carrier of tendencies' like the carrier of a disease.”¹⁹

In Poland, the anti-Jewish campaign was a response to the peaceful rally initiated by mostly non-Jewish Polish students to have two expelled (Jewish) students reinstated, since they were forced out of university for protesting against the ban on some plays.²⁰ The government feared students’ and other intellectuals’ dissent would destabilise the country, especially if workers were to join the protests. There were grounds for dissatisfaction: food prices had risen and Gomulka’s weakness was felt. Thus the government used political antisemitism as a tool to alienate the dissident students and intellectuals from the masses “by portraying them as 'the Alien': as Poland-hating Jews, Stalinists attempting to return to power, allies of German expansionists ... [and] channelled a part of popular frustration against 'Zionist-revisionist' scapegoats.” At the same time it allowed Gomulka to force his adversaries into defending themselves, thus weakening their power.²¹

During the student unrest in Poland it shocked the participating students who were questioned by the police that “they were no longer described as students of the different faculties but as Jews,”²² since unlike in the Soviet Union, Polish Jews had not been identified

18" Schatz, 284

19" Arendt, Hannah, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 423-424

20" Lendvai, 96

21" Stola in *Jewish Studies*, 2-3

22" Lendvai, 102

separately as Jews by the regime. For some time there had been the illusion that Communism would bring what many Jews had hoped for after the war: a melting pot, an opportunity to finally assimilate.

The Kádár regime's position on Israel was considerably less anti-Zionist and thereby less antisemitic than that of other Eastern Bloc regimes. Kádár condemned Israel's "illegal war moves as imperialist aggression"²³ that threatened Israeli and Arab workers alike. He acknowledged the thousands of Hungarian Jews that had immigrated to Israel as Hungarian nationals, but noted that this factor was insufficient reason to support Israel. Additionally, the tone of the Hungarian press was uncharacteristically moderate compared to articles published in other communist states. Indeed, Kádár appears dutifully to have followed the foreign policy agenda of the Soviet Union, but steered clear of the concurrent public anti-Zionist frenzy in other states.²⁴

On the second of July, all the dailies published the complete speech of prime minister János Kádár, which dealt not only with the war in Vietnam, and rising fascism in Western Germany, but also with the recently ended war in the Middle East. Here, once again it becomes clear that Hungary held one of the least hostile views in regard to Israel while still remaining loyal to the official Soviet opinion. While Kádár concedes that the war was initiated by Israel with its attack on the United Arab Republic - as Egypt was known between 1961-1971 - Syria and Jordan, which was "unquestionably and undoubtedly aggression." The speech informs listeners and later readers, that Hungary is "against Israeli aggression and stands on the side of the attacked Arab countries." It continues by stating that Israel should not benefit from its

²³ *Magyar Nemzet*, 2 July 1967, XXIII/154, p. 1

²⁴ Paul Lendvai, *Antisemitism in Eastern Europe*, p. 322

behaviour and should return its recently gained territories to the Arabs immediately.

Yet at the same time, Kádár reminds listeners of Hitler-fascism and its barbarism and continues by stating that the Communist point of view refuses all differentiation on the basis of race. He is even sensitive enough to acknowledge Jewish feelings of solidarity for their kin in Israel, and says to understand that this makes it harder to take a critical stance towards the country's recent behaviour. Still, he says, one cannot confuse love and worry for certain individuals with the unacceptable steps Israel has taken in the recent past. Then he states that instead it must be realised that the people of Israel, its workers can only live well when they go against their government's imperialist aggression and look for peace and friendship with the Arab peoples living there.²⁵ An essential separation is made between the Jewish people and the state of Israel and the imperialist politics thereof. It is only the latter that Kádár is opposed to.

Post Six-Day War, there were a few articles that condemned Israeli aggression in the Hungarian media, as will be seen below, but in regards to the Six-Day War, that was largely the extent of it. In fact Hungary was the first among the countries of the Eastern Bloc to extend a hand towards the state of Israel. Its reason may not have been unselfish: Hungary was receiving fair amounts of money from the West and may have felt this step would give them credit. Also, while Zionism was officially opposed, the system did not seriously interfere with anyone opting to emigrate to Israel.²⁶ At the same time in Poland, the events of the Six-Day War were a good excuse to initiate an elaborate campaign to expel Poland's remaining Jews. All emigrants had to renounce their Polish citizenship, as well as to state their

25 *Magyar Nemzet*, 2 July 1967, XXIII/154, p. 1 *Népszabadság*, 2 July 1967, XXV/154, p. 4, *Népszava*, 2 July 1967, 95/154, p. 1

26 Karády, *Önazonosulás*, p. 63

allegiance to Israel, although many of those who left never meant to live in Israel and turned to America and Western-Europe as stateless refugees. Furthermore, in order to receive a travel document at all, they had to “disavow all claims to pensions or compensation of any kind, and pay to the state treasury the estimated costs of their children’s studies. ... Most probably, nearly 20,000 Jewish refugees left Poland, leaving some 5,000, mostly aged, behind.”²⁷

2.2 Written Media in 1967, an Overview

Új Élet, or *New Life*, was published first in November 1945, not long after the Soviet troops liberated Hungary. When it was first published, *Új Élet* was called *Periodical of the Hungarian Israelites*, today it is called *Periodical of the Association of Hungarian Jewish Communities*. There had been no “Old Life” before “New Life”. The title refers to post-Holocaust life for Hungarian Jewry.

The Hungarian dailies from the period – *Esti Hírlap*, *Népszabadság*, *Népszava* - were under the direct influence of the Communist government and usually copied any news items coming from the Soviet Union without additional editing. Furthermore, they had trusted reporters who would inform readers on more regional, or local events. The papers were not particularly preoccupied with the state of Israel and its affairs until the conflict preceding the Six-Day War. As far as foreign news is concerned, the Vietnam war took up much of their attention in 1967. Unsurprisingly much good news was published on the great Soviet Union and its achievements, as well as some smaller articles on ‘friendly states’ China, the Democratic Republic of Germany and Cuba.

²⁷ Schatz, 311

2.2.1 Hungarian dailies, May, June, July 1967

By the end of May the major Hungarian newspapers, *Népszava*, *Népszabadság* and *Esti Hírlap*, started to inform the public on the situation in the Middle East, but these were still short articles on the inner pages of the newspaper. Israel was already identified as the wrongdoer, but foreign minister Abba Eban was quoted fairly, as having said that Israel needs to be able to pass the Gulf of Aqaba. There were no vicious implications there. As the tensions unfolded and it turned out that Israel was not going to surrender, despite the attacks upon it, the portrayal of Israel in Hungarian newspapers grew increasingly negative. Especially in the news items with headings such as “Article from the Novoje Vremja” and “The Soviet government’s statement on the situation in the Middle East” Israel was portrayed as violent, suppressive, aggressive and imperialistic, in addition supported by the eternal enemy: the United States of America.

Yet the article published in the Soviet Union in the Literary Gazette, which basically equates then defence minister Moshe Dayan with Hitler, by calling him the organiser of genocide and fascist terror while he plunders Arab territories²⁸ was not published in the Hungarian papers.

The Hungarian newspapers frequently consulted the Middle East News Agency (MENA) for news in those days, and less often the AFP. In articles throughout May and June, leading up to the Six-Day War and in articles succeeding it, the aforementioned Hungarian papers only used one source from Israel. Reuters’ Tel-Aviv based representative was quoted once and

²⁸ *Literaturnaya Gazeta* 27, 1967 found on <http://www.lechaim.ru/ARHIV/159/zavesa.htm>, last accessed on 15 November, 2008

only to the extent that he mentioned bombs having reached Syria.

Magyar Nemzet, or *Hungarian Nation*, “paper of the patriotic people’s front,” first wrote on the “Middle-East situation” on May 21. In October there were still some smaller articles detailing Israel’s threatening Syria with war,²⁹ but by November Israel only deserved an article of a few lines on the relief funds it had offered the Palestinian refugees.³⁰ By December no mention of Israel was made. *Népszava*, or *Word of the People*, “central paper of the Hungarian trade unions,” carried significantly less foreign news and for them the Israel-issue had died down entirely by September 1967.

On the second of July all the dailies published the complete speech of prime minister János Kádár, which, as mentioned above, dealt not only with the war in Vietnam and the rising fascism in Western Germany, but also with the recently ended war in the Middle East. Here once again it becomes clear that Hungary had one of the least hostile views in regard to Israel while still remaining loyal to the official Soviet opinion. Kádár concedes that the war was initiated by Israel with its attack on the United Arab Republic - as Egypt was known between 1961-1971 - Syria and Jordan, which was “unquestionably and undoubtedly aggression.” The speech informs listeners and later readers, that Hungary is “against Israeli aggression and stands on the side of the attacked Arab countries.” It continues by stating that Israel should not benefit from its behaviour and should return its recently gained territories to the Arabs immediately.

Yet, at the same time Kádár reminds listeners of Hitler-fascism and its barbarism and

29" *Magyar Nemzet*, 1 October 1967, XXIII/232, p. 1

30" *Magyar Nemzet*, 1 November 1967, XXIII/258, p. 2

continues by stating that the Communist point of view refuses all differentiation on the basis of race. He is even sensitive enough to acknowledge Jewish feelings of solidarity for their kin in Israel, and says to understand that this makes it harder to take a critical stance towards the country's recent behaviour. Still, he says, one cannot confuse love and worry for certain individuals with the unacceptable steps Israel has taken in the recent past and states that instead it must be realised that the people of Israel, its workers can only live well when they go against their government's imperialist aggression and look for peace and friendship with the Arab peoples living there. An essential separation is made between the Jewish people and the state of Israel and the imperialist politics thereof. It is only the latter that Kádár is opposed to.³¹

2.2.2 *Új Élet*, June-December

The first mention *Új Élet* makes of the conflict in the Middle East is in its June issue. *Új Élet* appears bi-monthly and is slower to respond to new news items than the dailies, so apparently there was still little 'in the air' by May fifteenth. In the first June issue however, the first page's main article is titled "The Hungarian Union of Rabbis Call for Peace."³² In it, the authors express their worries about the newly developed conflict in Israel where "the prophets first advertised peace," while at the same time remembering the united liberating forces that freed Europe from Hitler-fascism.

In the next issue, dated June 15, the main article details Dr. Géza Seifert's, the National Agency of the Hungarian Israelites', MIOK president's suggestion for "the Middle East's

31 *Magyar Nemzet*, 2 July 1967, XXIII/154, p. 1 *Népszabadság*, 2 July 1967, XXV/154, p. 4, *Népszava*, 2 July 1967, 95/154, p. 1

32 *Új Élet*, 1 June 1967, XXII/11, p. 1

peoples' leaders to find the way to a common peace,"³³ albeit without any suggestions as to how. In the same article however, the "600.000 Hungarian Jewish martyrs" are remembered.

By the first of July the importance of the recent events in the Middle East is reduced to a smaller column on the first page, also written by the editors, where once again the importance of peace is stressed. Interestingly there is no mention of what prime minister Janos Kádár kept insisting on, in line with the Soviet media: the territories gained by Israel must be immediately returned to their Arab neighbours, since Israel must not be allowed to benefit from its warring in any way.³⁴ Apparently the otherwise state-controlled MIOK was allowed to 'forget' about the official outlook on the events and limit itself to insisting on peace.

In later issues the Middle East conflict seems all but forgotten, *Új Élet*'s editors deal extensively with Holocaust-related subjects and sometimes add articles in how well the Communist regime is taking care of them, for good measure, to please the authorities that were always reading over their shoulders. There is a repetition of the wish for peace, which will benefit "the people of Israel, just as much as the other people of the Middle East,"³⁵ and the continued worry for "the people of Israel, world Jewry and the whole of humanity."³⁶

33 *Új Élet*, 1 June 1957, XIII/3

34 *Magyar Nemzet*, 2 July 1967, XXIII/154, p. 1 *Népszabadság*, 2 July 1967, XXV/154, p. 4, *Népszava*, 2 July 1967, 95/154, p. 1

35 *Új Élet*, 1 August, 1967, XXII/15, p. 1

36" *Ibid.*

2.3 Some Thoughts on Oral History and Memory

When recording oral history, some distinctive problems must be identified, primarily concerned with the fact that oral history is told, listened to, recorded, transcribed, edited, and finally published. The oral historian Alessandro Portelli identifies many of these problems in his essays³⁷ and suggests a means to diminish, if not disable, at least one of them. Portelli suggests that by identifying the person who conducts the interview the reader will have a truer framework within which to read the narrative.

While Portelli may have a point, I hardly think my character and background are that important when it comes to the interviews I made. Naturally it is important to state, as I have in the introduction, that I was introduced to my interviewees by friends of mine, whose parents, grandparents and in one case an aunt I interviewed. From the dialogue in the Erős-Kovács interviews it also often turns out that those interviewers too did not ‘cold call’ the interviewees, but more often knew them rather well. This is apparent from a variety of expressions by both interviewers and interviewees. For example, in one interview the interviewer asks the interviewee about whether his divorce may have anything to do with the fact that his ex-wife is not Jewish, although the interviewee did not mention his ex-wife earlier in the transcript.³⁸

Naturally one speaks differently to friends or friends of family members than to strangers, but I still do not see how this would interfere with the ‘truth’ in the interviews. Additionally, I was interested in exactly those memories that make oral histories useful: the bits and bobs

37" Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valla Guila and The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* pp 1-28

38 Erős-Kovács interview 85

remembered that people create into full-circle memories for themselves. At times they will make themselves look better as did the lady who left her son behind during the revolution of 1956, only to return to him the same evening, for she and her husband were unable to cross the border. She 'forgot' that she had left her baby son behind, because it is more comfortable for her to remember she did not wish to leave the country at all.³⁹

Among the problematic elements, Portelli considers the fact that the Narrator was invited to speak, that the choice to bring the Narrator's story into the public realm lies rather with the Interviewer-Historian than with the Narrator, unlike, as Portelli mentions, in autobiographies.⁴⁰ Portelli is convinced that this fact results in the Narrator wanting to please the Interviewer-Historian, because the latter gives the Narrator the validity to speak.⁴¹ There is also the unnatural presence of a tape recorder, the awareness of which will make the narrator reconsider how they tell their story.⁴² It should not be forgotten that a narrative becomes a transcript and the transcript is edited into a story, or history, of its own. This point is not unrelated to the last, but perhaps most important problem in Portelli's view: the presence of the Interviewer-Historian. Here, Portelli has a very valid point, it is something I had to realise as I compared my own materials with the Erős-Kovács interviews. I, as the Interviewer-Historian had asked about the Six-Day War specifically and the Narrator may have well wanted to please me by 'remembering better'. In the more general Erős-Kovács interviews hardly anyone spoke of the Six-Day War, because they had not been asked to and apparently did not remember it by themselves or found it relevant.

39" Interview VIII, January 2008

40" Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valla Guila. Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* p. 9

41" Ibid., p. 9

42" Ibid., p. 4

As Portelli points out, both the Narrator and the Interviewer-Historian come to the table with their own agenda.⁴³ The Interviewer-Historian is clearly looking for certain information and has based their choice of Narrator on that. The Narrator has agreed on giving the interview for reasons of their own. Portelli continues this line of thought, by stating it would be preferable to identify the Interviewer-Historian in as much detail as possible to both the Narrator and the Reader, thereby, or so he claims, aiding the Narrator to give their best – meaning involved and non-superficial narrative⁴⁴, as well as enabling the Reader to read the narrative as objectively as possible. As I have mentioned before, I have no wish to hide the fact that I had my ‘own agenda’ in that I was interested in their memories of the Six-Day War period in Hungary and I should also add that I was at times asked by the interviewees whether I was Jewish, which I truthfully confirmed.

Portelli wishes to show in the transcript which questions were asked and, for example, to clarify at the onset where the political preferences of the Interviewer-Historian lie⁴⁵, as he claims this will improve the quality of the interview, as well as ensure a better understanding of the given transcript for the Reader. While there seems to be a certain rationale for this desire and it is no doubt heartfelt, uncovering information about the Interviewer-Historian does not necessarily bring the Narrator closer to a storytelling free of testimonies couched “in the broadest and safest terms,”⁴⁶ and will not stop making the narrator “stick to the more superficial layers of their conscience and the more public and official aspects of their culture,” as Portelli claims. A Narrator’s wish to share their story and with it their view and culture with the Interviewer-Historian, or any other listener for that matter, will be stronger when this

43" Ibid., p. 10

44" Ibid.

45" Ibid., p. 10

46" Ibid., p. 12

listener is open to their narrative. It could well be true that my interviewees were more comfortable talking to me knowing I was 'one of them', rather than a total stranger.

Apparently, the reader of such oral histories is able to understand that the agenda of a Narrator is implied, then why would they not be aware that the Interviewer-Historian too has an agenda of their own? And in the case the Reader must be informed about the Interviewer-Historian's agenda and background, then they should also be informed about the Narrator in such detail.

Problematic here is that the one to inform the Reader is the Interviewer-Historian with an agenda of their own. It would not help the Reader to know more about the Interviewer-Historian, if it is this subjective person supplying the data about themselves and the narrator(s), since it would in- rather than decrease subjectivity. Perhaps it would be more constructive to be an inquisitive reader who reads between the lines and interprets the given incomplete data, instead of relying on still incomplete data that is at the same time largely provided by the Interviewer-Historian. It seems to me the level of subjectivity does not change if the Interviewer-Historian provides data on themselves and/or on the Narrator. Actually, I have argued that the level of subjectivity increases if the Interviewer-Historian is allowed to add additional information, for it is the Interviewer-Historian to choose the information added, and how it is added. To speak with Hayden White, narrative is "a process of decodation and recodation".⁴⁷ It is not the Interviewer-Historian's task to present the Reader with additional information to de- and recode, for that could easily become a manipulative endeavour. It is very likely that the additional information provided and the way the Interviewer-Historian presents that information about themselves manipulates the readers' de- and recoding

⁴⁷ Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse*, p. 92

process.

The Interviewer-Historian can never tell enough about themselves to help either Narrator or Reader. By claiming a certain objectivity, through the openness with which Portelli would share information with the Narrator and the Reader, it is implied to the Reader that there is no unknown influence of the Interviewer-Historian over the Narrator while I wish to insist that this is exactly the kind of influence that is to be critically assessed.

It is not so much the Interviewer-Historian and the Narrator's relationship that is problematic, but rather the issue of how mere reminiscences, "the recollections of past events or situations given by participants long after the events" that are "essential to a notion of personality and identity" become "part of an organised whole of memories that tend to project a consistent image of the narrator and, in many cases a justification of his or her life"⁴⁸ as Jan Vansina phrased so succinctly. I have done my best to remain aware of these effects and have pointed to them at several stages where I go more deeply into the information I gathered from my interviews. While I know little of the circumstances under which the Erős-Kovács interviews took place and nothing of the people that were interviewed other than what I read in the transcripts, I am convinced the same care must be taken when reading and analysing their data.

As Passerini and Peneff also recognise, "the mythical element in life stories is the pre-established framework within which individuals explain their personal history: the mental construct which, starting from the memory of individual facts which would otherwise appear incoherent and arbitrary, goes onto arrange and interpret them and so turn them into

⁴⁸ Jan Vansina in *Oral Tradition and History* p. 8

biographical events.”⁴⁹ They both determine that it is essential to separate “imagination” and “observation.” As I have said in the introduction, there was little to nothing in the established literature that dealt with the events in June 1967 and its (supposed) influence on Jewish Hungarian identity, that is why it is hard to determine where “the narrator will show him or herself to be a good source, and where the facts will be fudged”⁵⁰ and therefore difficult to find the origins of the historicised myth and study its trajectories as Passerini (1990) suggests.⁵¹

John Byn-Hall also has an interesting point, related directly to my own interviews, when he states that a parent or grandparent wishes to pass on particular information about the past and consider it important for the next generation to know about it. These family stories “become legends, which are closest to myths in the strict sense of the term.”⁵² Later on it can be seen that this seems to be true for the events of 1967.

2.4 The Interviewees

The seventeen people I interviewed were all born between 1923 and 1950 and raised in Budapest. All of them pursued higher education although some at a significantly older age than others. This depended on the family’s status: if the family was communist the children could attend university easily, if they were not, and were, at worst, considered upper class, they not only had to wait for later, more lenient times, before they were allowed to pursue higher education, but were also disadvantaged in many other ways⁵³.

49" Jean Peneff, in *The Myths We Live By* p. 36

50" Ibid.

51" Luisa Passerini in Samuel and Thompson, p. 52

52" John Byn-Hall (interviewed by Paul Thompson) in Samuel and Thompson, p. 216

53" Ibid..

Save one, they are or were all established families in Budapest. Eight of the interviewees are men and nine are women. Of the women, not one became a member of the Communist Party, but except for one all were supportive of the regime, seeing communist rule as the only protection against renewing fascism. Two were affiliated with KISZ, the Hungarian Communist Youth League. Of the men all but for one was a member of the communist party, of the seven former members only one said it was because he “believed in it,”⁵⁴ the other six said it was because “everyone was, you simply had to be.”⁵⁵ In the interviewees’ parents’ case it seemed to be a matter of age, whether they became members of the communist party. The younger interviewees’ parents were born around the same time as the older interviewees. Among the older ones none of the parents became communists. From the interviews it seems that for these older survivors there was a feeling of post-war apathy, with the desire to let the younger generation take care of things.

Depending on their date of birth the interviewees are either ‘first generation’ or ‘second generation’⁵⁶ in relation to the Holocaust. Six of the interviewees were born before the Second World War and early enough for them to have very vivid memories of the War. Three of the men were taken to forced labour, one of them is an Auschwitz survivor. Some were taken into hiding with false identities, others survived in the Budapest ghetto.

Over twenty years ago three Hungarian sociologists - Ferenc Erős, András Kovács and Katalin Lévai - interviewed members of ‘the second generation’; the children of Holocaust

54" Interview XIII, March 2008

55" Interview III, February 2008

56 András Kovács, *A modern antiszemitizmus*.

survivors. This collection of interviews was published with the title *How I found out that I am Jewish* and the life histories much resemble the ones my interviewees told. The sociologists conceived of asking the interviewees how they had found out that they are Jewish. As the interviewers themselves very well realised:

[I]n most countries of the world this question would be met with bewilderment or at least incomprehension by the interviewee. Whether Jewishness means... ethnic consciousness, or religion, or cultural traditions for that matter, family customs or any combination of the above, those who are Jewish in whichever meaning of the word do not 'find out' in most parts of the world. Jewishness is handed down naturally by the family, by the cultural and everyday environment and it is accepted just as naturally by the society in which they live.⁵⁷

Since this was not the case in Hungary, it comes as no surprise that, as the sociologists state "the manner in which the 'second generation' came to know their descent necessarily disturbed their relation to their Jewishness, and burdens it with complexes."⁵⁸

From the above mentioned oral histories as well as from my otherwise non-representative interviews, it turns out quite clearly that Jewishness was not something spoken about, let alone something to be proud of. The three youngest interviewees, all women, were still in secondary school during the events of 1967 and two sets of parents were convinced communists. One of these children is Judit and like her, the other also had no idea about what later turned out to be the 'true' course of events. Their only source of information was Hungarian state news, via radio and newspapers and their parents' opinion.

⁵⁷ Ferenc Erős, András Kovács, Katalin Lévai in *Medvetánc*, pp 130-145, English translation of quotation by Sara Zorandy

⁵⁸ Ibid., p 131

Those who were older tended to receive news from more varied sources. For one it took a friend from university who took her to a clandestine student meeting where they listened to Radio Free Europe and everyone “turned out to be Jewish, we were elated.”⁵⁹ It seems that as soon as the interviewees had an alternative source of information to follow the Israeli events, the fight and the proceeding victory added a sense of pride to their Jewish identity, which had often been considered with mixed feelings before then.

During the interviews I was interested in the memories of Jewish Hungarians in relation to the Six-Day War and what changed it brought to their lives, if at all. This project was begun with the hypothesis that, as I had heard from conversations unrelated to my thesis, Jewish Hungarians were positively changed by the victory of the Six-Day War.

Perhaps the most rewarding of oral histories is their human and emotional depth. I was quite honoured by the trust the interviewees put in me, by how honestly they spoke about bad patches in their marriage, leaving children behind, or adapting to the new political system, about their bad relationship with their mother, the lies they told at work, or the fear and despair they felt during the Second World War.

The absurdity of some of the stories I much appreciated: György, the Jewish boy who had been sent to the country-side by his mother and had to say he was catholic and had been bombed out of his apartment and was told he should pretend he could not swim (to avoid anyone noticing he was circumcised) who ended up carving wooden figures with German soldiers who were stationed in the country-side: "They were very nice, we had a great time,

⁵⁹ Interview IX, february 2008

they were much nicer than the Russians.”⁶⁰ Or Katalin, who was taken to forced labour, escaped with two friends by paying off a soldier to ‘forget them’ near a farm house. The farmer's wife let them bathe and change their clothes, while she went to the station to purchase their railway tickets (with the escaped girls' hidden money), they got on the train and at the next stop German officers boarded. The girls were so frightened that they were literally shivering and the German officers graciously gave the girls their coats: they thought the ladies must be cold.⁶¹

One fact I had to face early on is that the Israeli events of 1967 only seem to have left a trace in some of the people, as one of my interviewees said, it really was more in hindsight that people realised how important the events were. After all, this was the first time non-Jewish Hungarians were supportive of Israel, because, as one of my sources laughed: “They hated the Arabs even more.”⁶² And they hated the Soviets more and the Soviets supported the Arabs. However, the people who do have clear recollections on more than their private life - or so it seems - of the late spring of 1967 all did remember a feeling of pride and some “added value” to their Jewish identity as well as a sense of joy shared with the non-Jewish population. Below I will detail if these are merely a few individuals, or whether we can speak of a phenomenon.

60" Interview I, December 2007

61" Interview VIII, February 2008

62" Interview III, February 2008

3. *Hungarian Jewry in the Twentieth Century, an Overview*

In the early 1920s the assimilatory union between the Jews of Hungary and the Magyars of revolutionary Lajos Kossuth's vision of an independent Hungary from the late nineteenth century fell apart. Many of the non-Magyars living on Hungarian soil during the Habsburg years had rather attached themselves to other independent nation states, such as the Yugoslav kingdom and Czechoslovakia. Since the assimilation of Jews into Magyar society was a success⁶³ it was exactly because of its success, that when they were no longer needed, Magyars felt they were over-represented in the higher ranks of society and too involved in the decision-making processes. The *numerus clausus* was installed, to prevent Jewish Hungarians from studying especially law and medicine in 'excessive' numbers.⁶⁴

The white terror years witnessed strong anti-Jewish tendencies, including murders, until the commencement of the Horthy system, when the situation was somewhat consolidated.⁶⁵ Historian Gyula Szekfű wrote in the early twenties, in a work that legitimised Horthy's course, republished in 1989, that one of the reasons for Trianon was the overly liberal immigration policy and the merely superficial assimilation of Jews.⁶⁶ During the reign of prime-minister Gabor Bethlen Jewish money was needed to ensure the financial consolidation, thus the situation of Jewish Hungarians temporarily improved and the *numerus clausus* was cancelled in 1928.

When the Hungarian population next votes for prime-minister Gyula Gömbös to take over

63 András Gerő, *The Jewish Criterion in Hungary*

64 Viktor Karády, *Túlélők es újrakezdők*

65 János Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon*

66 Gyula Szekfű, *Három nemzedék*

from Gábor Bethlen, whose popularity suffered greatly from the global financial crisis and in Germany Adolf Hitler comes to power, the situation deteriorates badly for Hungarian Jewry. The Hungarian government is increasingly supportive of Hitler Germany, and several outspokenly antisemitic works appear, amongst others that of author László Németh, who calls his author-colleague Dezső Szabó's call to refuse further cooperation with Jews the most outstanding concept in recent years.⁶⁷

When the *Nyilas*, or *Arrow Cross Party* ran in the elections of 1939, they gained a large number of seats. Prime-minister Miklós Kállay avoids the deportation of Jews and manages until 1944, when the Germans take over power in Hungary. Even before, Kállay's predecessor, László Bárdossy's reign was less protective and around 18.000 Jews are transported to Kamieniec Podolsk, where they are killed by Germans.

These years of restlessness and terror are also the last period of Hungarian Jewish renaissance, during which the great question of how Hungarian Jews are and how they should deal with the upcoming threat. Aladár Komlós, editor of the *Hungarian Jewish Yearbook*,⁶⁸ a publication for Jewish writing in Hungarian, details the history of Jewish Hungarian intellectuals while Károly Pap writes on the need to refuse both assimilation and Zionism and to instead opt for a national minority status.⁶⁹ However, Germany invades Hungary and with the help of the highly organised and enthusiastic *Arrow Cross* members, the end of Hungarian Jewry as it was known had arrived.

In 1944, from the around 800.000 Jews still surviving in Hungary as many as 437.000 were

67 László Németh in *A minőség forradalma*, p. 855

68 *Ararat. Magyar Zsidó Evkönyv*

69 Károly Pap, *Zsidó Sebek és Bűnök*

deported from the country and many others put into ghettos. Most of the deported were killed in the gas chambers and of those sent to labour camps only some 20.000 returned. Less than a quarter of the Jewish population survived. Of the survivors many thousands moved to Israel, America and other countries.

3.1 Reconstructing Lives

For many non-Jewish Hungarians there was an obvious relationship between the Soviets, at once liberators and conquerors and the surviving Jews in Hungary. The latter was considered “alien hearted” and was not to be trusted.⁷⁰ Difficult situations occurred in some Jewish families where certain members were convinced Communists, while others remained despised members of the bourgeoisie who were to be punished by having their homes and all they could not carry taken away from them as they were forced to move to the most backward parts of the country and placed in manual labor jobs. On both sides there were Holocaust survivors.⁷¹

For very well definable reasons Jewish Hungarians were often more attracted to the new regime than their non-Jewish peers. First of all, the fear of fascism remained strong in the Holocaust survivors and they were willing to pay a high price if it meant another Shoah could be avoided. Unsurprisingly the anti-Fascist rhetoric of the Communist agenda seemed the most promising for the future. Furthermore, Communism opened new career opportunities for Jews, since not only did the new powers not discriminate on the basis of race, at least not on the every day level, they also needed cadres that could be trusted and had not sided with the

70 Viktor Karády, *Önazonosítás, sorsválasztás* p. 51

71" Ibid.

fascists during the war.⁷² Jews were thought to have a certain gratitude towards the liberators. Last but not least, many Jewish Hungarians were well-educated and had administrative experience, these made them even more suitable as cadres.⁷³

As described before, within the same family one could find convinced Communists and distraught bourgeoisie. There were indeed a few good reasons to question whether the Communist regime would be best for Hungarian Jewry. After all, the Communist stand was hostile toward Israel as well as against religion. Furthermore, the nationalisation of family property was highly discomfoting to say the least, especially for a people traumatised by the Second World War during which Nazi property confiscations took place on a daily basis. According to the available data there were two to three thousand Jews among those who were titled 'the former ruling classes' and thereby forced to live in the country-side. This means that there were hardly any Jewish families who were not affected in one way or another by these decisions.⁷⁴

While both Karády⁷⁵ and Kovács⁷⁶ concede that Hungarian Jewry also suffered the brunt of the Communist regime, it is likely that Jewish Hungarians felt this was a price worth paying, especially compared to the horrors they had experienced only a few years earlier and most certainly would not want to go through again.

72 Karády, *Zsidóság Európában a Modern Korban*, p. 459

73 Karády, *Önazonosítás, sorsválasztás*, p. 52

74 Kovács, *Magyar zsidó politika a háboru végétől* in *Múlt és Jövő*, 2003/3

75 Karády, *Önazonosítás, sorsválasztás*, p. 53

76 Kovács, *Magyar zsidó politika a háboru végétől*

3.2 The Revolution of 1956 and What Followed

Many Jewish Hungarians who returned from the war left the country shortly after: there was a large emigration wave immediately after the war. During the revolution of 1956 there was another. In its first post-revolution publication in April 1957, the editors of *Új Élet*, or *New Life*, the newspaper of the Jewish community - for more information please see also section 4. on the written media - write of smaller communities in little towns that simply disappeared, because all its surviving members had left Hungary. All in all around 20.000 Hungarian Jews left the country during the revolution. In roughly fifteen years, the whole of Hungarian Jewry was reduced to a fragment of its original size and heavily traumatised.

Looking at the reasons so many left, it is no surprise that holocaust survivors became unnerved when they saw antisemitism on the rise yet again, although *Új Élet* also writes of the effect of what it calls “mass hysteria,”⁷⁷ which has “its individual laws”⁷⁸ and, apparently, mass hysteria always leads to “folk migratory style, panic-like escape.”⁷⁹ No doubt the editors at *Új Élet* had a point when they stated that Mátyás Rákosi and his cronies’ “stiff and careless”⁸⁰ economic regulations were a cause, since those took away the livelihood of several thousand artisans and, not entirely unrelated, the fourth reason is said to have been that religious Jews had been prevented from joining agricultural work, because of the difficulties of “keeping the Saturday.”⁸¹ Karády mentions an additional point, which is likely even more valid than the ones mentioned by a newspaper whose members were closely

77 *Új Élet*, 1 April 1957, XIII/1, p. 1

78" Ibid..

79" Ibid..

80" Ibid..

81" Ibid..

monitored by the regime. He writes that many of the people who left the country were disappointed cadres who had come to realise what had become of their ideal and had wanted to escape it.⁸²

János Kádár became Hungary's prime minister immediately after the revolution was put down. His reign, which lasted from 1956 to 1988, was not in the least as cold hearted and fanatical Rákosi's Stalinist regime. Kádár created something of a paternal regime that subordinated individual opinion to government policy in exchange for little social conflict and a relatively high standard of living compared to the other countries behind the Iron Curtain.⁸³

The attitude of the Kádár regime to Jewish assimilation was unequivocal. The Minister of Culture under Kádár, Imre Pozsgay asserted, "Those who choose assimilation choose a nation for themselves. They will become sons of the Hungarian nation in Hungary because they accept its political system and identify with its history and program."⁸⁴ Those Jews that accepted the Kádár regime's interpretation of the assimilation paradigm were protected from persecution. In terms of the activities of Jewish communal institutions, this situation meant a relatively high level of activities and autonomy in comparison to the rest of the eastern bloc states, in exchange for loyalty to the communist state by denouncing Zionism. Still, the regime maintained a careful eye on Jewish organisations via a network of informants within the Jewish community that collaborated with the secret police.⁸⁵

From *Új Élet* it becomes clear that being a Hungarian at least as much as a Jew must have

82 Karády, *Őnazonosítás, sorsválasztás*, p. 65

83 András Bozóki in *Post-Communist Transition: Emerging Pluralism in Hungary*, p. 13

84 András Kovács in *Jewish Studies and the Central European University: Public Lectures, 1996-1999*, p 114

85" Ibid.

been something to hold on to for those who were left behind. From the articles it seems “Hungarianness” was also displayed for the sake of the Hungarian authorities. In the first post-1956 issue the lead article speaks of those Hungarian Jews who do not wish to be “torn from the graves of the ancestry resting in Hungarian soil, from the Hungarian Jewish houses, from the land by the Danube and the Tisza [rivers] and from the beauty of the prayers rising from the Hungarian soul.”⁸⁶ It does not stop there, in July the first page states that „Hungary is home, it is the land where we want to live” and during the general assembly of the National Representatives of the Hungarian Israelite Community and the Budapest Israelite Community it was agreed that „Hungarian Jewry ... will be called confessing Jews living by Hungarian patriotic principles” and that the „Hungarian homeland is where we want to live, we call ourselves one with its people.”

In July 1957, *Új Élet* informs about another implicit invitation to return home, in the editorial column on the main page among jubilant news of peace and (re)building the nation it states that the authorities announce forgiveness for those sinners who did not commit a capital offence against “the whole of the people and society’s peace.” Unfortunately for some who returned home after these claims, opinions differed over what was to be considered a capital offence and several of those who had felt they could safely return were put to death.⁸⁷

86 *Új Élet*, 1 April 1957, XIII/1, p. 1

87 From conversations with sociologist Judit Takács, September 2000

4. Jewish Identity in Hungary

From the Erős-Kovács interviews, it becomes clear that most interviewees described Jewishness as “belonging to some kind of secondary or virtual community, based not so much on common interaction as on allusive identification.”⁸⁸ Religion was usually not part of this identity at all, although often people would take part in certain (religious) events to be part of the community.

Even *Új Élet*, edited, written and run by rabbis, spoke of the wish to “create and work out friendly and brotherly relationships with the world’s Jewry for the benefit of religious life, cultural life, science, social work as well as for peace and humanity,”⁸⁹ already in 1957. Although “religious life”⁹⁰ is mentioned first, it seems clear that the way to overcome and keep the remaining Jews in Hungary participating, it had become important to clearly mention “cultural life,”⁹¹ both in the title and second to religious life.

4.1 Religious Identity

As Hoffman describes, after the Communist government took power, it forbade Zionists from gathering and even imprisoned several leaders. The remaining Jewish institutions came under the central rule of the religious Jewish Community: MIOK. “The government tolerated the continued existence of the Rabbinical Seminary, which, after the closure of traditional

88 Ferenc Erős in *A Quest for Identity: Post-War Jewish Biographies*, p. 62

89 *Új Élet*, June 1967, XIII/3, p. 1

90" Ibid.

91" Ibid.

Talmudic academies in other countries, became the only institution of its kind in the East Bloc.”⁹² Yet, the remaining institutions were used to extend the regime’s control over Jewish life and Jewish communal property, and became part of the regime’s propaganda campaign to convince the West that Jews behind the Iron Curtain were allowed to live a “full religious life.”⁹³

It comes as no surprise then that people in high positions within the community, such as Endre Sós, as president of the National Agency of the Hungarian Israelites had to be party members. At the same time Péter Kardos, who has been editor-in-chief at the community’s newspaper: *Új Élet*, for the last 15 years, assured me that party membership was not mandatory for those who worked at *Új Élet*. It is unknown whether Rezső Roóz, who was editor-in-chief in 1957 was a party member, but his successor, György Kecskeméti was.

Some rabbis were also party members, such as Imre Benoschofsky. Interestingly his sister, Ilona Benoschofsky, who was a regular contributor to *Új Élet*, had previously been secretary general of the Zionist Alliance, which apparently did not prevent her from publishing in *Új Élet* and later becoming director of the Jewish Museum, a position held for party members. Even as late as the 1970s, then chief rabbi László Salgó was regarded as “a timid tool of the regime.”⁹⁴

To many, this awkward communist-religious Jewish identity was not very attractive. As was described earlier, many Jews hoped for Communism to finally allow them to assimilate,

92" Hoffman, 63

93" Hoffman, 9

94" Hoffman, 67

to forget the horrors of what it had meant to be Jewish. They did not wish to be identified with a religious minority, as it already seemed problematic enough to be a reluctant member of a minority without the religious part.

4.2 Hidden Identities

As was mentioned before, after the Holocaust especially, many Jewish Hungarians wanted to rid themselves of the Jewish part of their identity. At the same time, from 1967 on there was an increase in informal Jewish organizations that looked at Jewish identity rather as an ethnic, than as a religious identity.

In this period Jewish Hungarians continued not to advertise their minority identity towards non-Jewish Hungarians, while at the same time they had a 'secret identity', which they shared with other Jews, based on their shared history, shared socio-economic status, and of course the shared secret itself.

4.3 Clandestine Gatherings

Under Kádár life became easier. Outspoken antisemitism was not tolerated and anti-Jewish sentiments only existed on a popular level and not in official policy.⁹⁵ At the same time the regime kept an eye on so called Jewish circles just as much as on gatherings of a non-Jewish nature that may have taken place to subvert the system.⁹⁶ Among these Jewish circles there was that of Rabbi Tamás Raj, who helped many young Jewish people (re-)discover their

95" Paul Lendvai, *Antisemitism in Eastern Europe*, pp. 321-322

96 Karády, *Őnazonosulás*, p. 63

Jewish identity and not only through the reading of religious texts. As one of my interviewees said: “Suddenly I was there surrounded by people whom I felt so much at home with although I had never met them before. We were just chatting, sometimes about the torah, but mostly about life, just like that. I was always so happy to be there.”⁹⁷

Yet, most Jewish Hungarians were not part of organised Hungarian Jewry. They usually had mixed feelings about these types of gatherings, partially out of fear of being caught taking part in a clandestine organisation. The so-called ‘first-’ and ‘second-generation’ Jews felt it was safest to simply hide the stigma of being Jewish, rather than participate in any gathering based on ethnic descent. To them Jewishness was purely a stigma, a disadvantage.⁹⁸

4.4 Antisemitism: Identified by Others

Answering the question whether he is Jewish, one of the interviewees answered: “Yes, I'm not religious, but I'm Jewish in three ways: in the halachic way - which is to say his mother is Jewish and he is therefore Jewish as determined by Jewish religion, I self-identify as a Jew and I am seen as a Jew by others.”⁹⁹ As I have mentioned earlier, after the Holocaust many Jews felt Communism was their best bet against the Fascists. For Jews the arrival of the Soviets had truly been a liberation, but for non-Jewish Hungarians the red terror that followed was often confused for Jewish. Communism was Jewish and since Communism was against Christianity it was once again the Jews who were against Christianity. Nevertheless, during

97" Interview XI, February 2008

98 András Kovács in *New Jewish Identities*, pp. 218-219, 236-237

99" Interview I, December 2007

Communism Antisemitism was not as outspoken as it is today. In Hungary, anti-semitic discourse has been very public and accepted by many people since the fall of Communism. A number of Jewish Hungarians have actually left the country for Israel precisely because anti-semitic taunts and harassment had become part of their everyday experience.

From the earlier mentioned Erős-Kovács interviews, as well as from my own, it has become clear though, that there was still outspoken antisemitism during the Communist era and that some of the people born around the Holocaust were identified as Jewish first by others. These identifications were not always unpleasant or anti-semitic, sometimes rather philo-semitic: there are cases of teachers who seemed to have favoured their co-Jewish students, children who happened to like each other and one of them told the other about their common background. However, this Jewish preferentialism appears to be influenced greatly by wider society and a form of exclusion therefrom.

Stories abound and they can largely be divided into the work and private sphere. The majority of the interviewees mentions not having experienced antisemitism directed at them personally, it was rather expressed in a general way, during “one colleague to the other during a cigarette break” conversations. The majority of anti-Semitic expressions was described by the interviewees as generic: “just your average slurs,” “probably what they heard at home,” “the usual about Jews being shrewd with money,” “nothing personal,” and “just the usual talk.”

Three responses can be identified to these kinds of encounters, the most common is keeping quiet, not identifying oneself as Jewish, but also not participating in the comments, letting the mood go by. There is also mention of people trying to remove themselves from the situation, to leave the room if they can. Last and most actively, used more often when the antisemitic

words went beyond a certain 'acceptable' point, the swearing took too long, or it was too aggressive, some interviewees would respond by identifying themselves as Jewish. "Next time you say such things, I want you to remember that I am Jewish too," or "You're talking about me too."

Interviewees' opinion of the speakers was most often not very negative, just as the first remarks suggest. At the same time the words, considered in bad taste were remembered and several people mention making efforts to meet that person less often. When looking at these results one must remember that the majority of interviewees were born post-Holocaust and reached working age after the commencement of *Goulash Communism* when it was both easier to identify as Jewish as it was to speak out negatively about Jews. As philosopher Ágnes Heller mentions, "until 1953 we didn't meet with anyone, Hermann [her husband] and I lived in our own cocoon, there was no social life, everyone was afraid to talk to anyone."¹⁰⁰

There is surprisingly little variety in the responses, out of some 65 interviewees, there are only a few mentions of deep hurt. It seems that the majority of the interviewees look at the phenomenon of occasional anti-Semitic outbursts as a natural side effect of their otherness: something they are aware of and cannot but accept. One of the less often described feelings is surprise. Interesting is the story of the young boy who goes into the bomb shelter with his mother in 1944 and some neighbour demands that they sit somewhere else "with the other Jews," because "this is all because of you anyway."¹⁰¹ When I asked him if that is when he realised he is Jewish, he answered: "That is when I realised there is something else than Jewish. I knew I was Jewish, but I didn't know other people weren't until that day and

100 Heller, *Bicikliző Majom*

101" Interview III, January 2008

especially not that being Jewish was not a nice thing.” Or there is the memory of the woman who had recently begun work as a doctor and when she had finished her shift sometime in the evening and left the hospital, someone on the street shouted at her: “Stinking Jew!” She remembers feeling stunned: “How did he know, and why did he say that?”¹⁰²

4.5 June 1967: A New Sense of Pride?

Although I had been aware of the problems that are inherent to oral histories, as I have described in the Theoretical Framework chapter, when I was interviewing people, it struck me again and again how unreliable oral histories can be. Memories change through time and certain things are forgotten completely.

When one of my interviewees was asked about the events of the late spring of 1967, when she was graduating from secondary school: “Yes, I know in hindsight I should have paid attention, important things were going on then, but you know, I was writing my A levels and that's really all I was concerned about. Now, if you ask me about 1956, I remember the fear and the noise and the bombings, like I told you, but 1967, it's really only later that I realised how important that had been.”¹⁰³

György, a filmmaker, was himself very aware of contaminating his memory by making documentaries and stylised biographies of the period. He said things such as: “Wait, let me think back whether what I have just told you now really happened to me, or whether I

102" Interview IV, January 2008

103" Interview IV, January 2008

remember it from one of the films.”¹⁰⁴

More shockingly, I interviewed a couple who had had two small children in 1956. In the case of couples the interviews were done separately, to avoid 'contamination' of each other's memory, or interruptions of the other with their own memories. First I interviewed the husband and, among other things, asked him about 1956, whether they had not had thoughts of leaving the country: “Of course we did and we set off too. We left X (their one and a half-year old son) with my parents and took Y (their five-year old daughter) with us. You can't take such a small baby with you, just imagine it! It was winter too, very cold and of course you can not tell him to keep quiet now. We thought we would pick him up later.”¹⁰⁵ He looked doubtful, but this is apparently how he had dealt with having left his small son behind. They were turned back at the border by “a young man, really rather a boy, a soldier of eighteen years old or so, who said, 'please turn back, I don't want to shoot you', so we did.”¹⁰⁶

Then I interviewed his wife and asked her, almost pro forma, whether they had had thoughts about leaving the country in 1956: “No, not at all, we were, I must say, not unhappy here. You know, I never bothered with politics, I had two small children and I worked, I had enough to busy myself with, so no.”¹⁰⁷ When I asked her whether they hadn't even talked about it with her husband, since her brother had already left early in the revolution, she said: “Yes, I suppose we did talk about it because Péter – the brother – had said his good-byes and asked us to come with him, but we didn't want to.”¹⁰⁸

104" Interview III, January 2008

105" Interview VII, January 2008

106" Ibid.

107" Interview VIII, January 2008

108' Ibid.

From the data discussed earlier, it is easily discerned that non-religious Jewish Hungarians did not find much pride in their background. The generation born shortly before, during, or after the Second World War was most often raised not knowing about their Jewish identity. What they did know was often considered a family secret, a blemish. However, as the events preceding the Six-Day War were unfolding, some of the interviewees started paying attention. Since this was a conflict-cum-war that the Soviet Union was involved in, news coverage in the Hungarian newspapers was plentiful, as has been discussed earlier in chapter four.

Many people were aware that it was wise to take much of the available news with a pinch of salt. As one of the interviewees said: “Everyone learnt to read between the lines, everyone. There was one thing in the paper and you could figure out just about what it really meant, that's just how it was.”¹⁰⁹ When it became undeniable that Israel would not be “swept from the face of the earth”¹¹⁰ quite so easily as had been promised, not only Jewish Hungarians started paying attention. According to several interviewees, non-Jewish Hungarians started sympathising with Israel for several reasons.

First of all Israel was a small country always having to fight for itself, with a possibly tragic future. When one looks at Hungarian history, it is not hard to see why Hungarians would empathise. More importantly, the surrounding Arab countries were supported by the Soviet Union, which made for an even more pronounced reason to support ‘our enemy’s enemy is our friend’ Israel. Several of the interviewees mention a general cheerfulness, a giddiness in cheering for that little country that it is standing up against the Russians.

109" Interview VIII, January 2008

110" Interview III, January 2008

It still holds true today that many non-Jewish Hungarians consider there to be a direct relationship between Jews and Israel. Jewish Hungarians are held responsible to a certain extent for decisions the Israeli government makes. As Communism became less uncomfortable for the Hungarian population at large, the animosity towards Jews, identified as Communists was also less virulent. Except for a vague feeling of belonging, quite a few Jewish Hungarians had stronger ties to Israel by way of family that had emigrated either before the Second World War, or shortly after, or otherwise around the Revolution of 1956. In the strict Communist years after the war it had not been advisable to keep in touch with family members who had moved to 'imperialist countries,' but family ties are not severed that easily.

From among the interviewees, only my own were asked directly about the memories of the period of June 1967, the Erős-Kovács interviewers asked about how interviewees felt about Israel and at times this results in memories about the war, but there was a much larger focus on family backgrounds, the Holocaust, antisemitism and how it is experienced and on how the interviewee defines his or her Jewish identity. Of course it is well-known from ethnographies that the researcher must ask the right question to receive the answer they are looking for¹¹¹ and the Erős-Kovács interviewers were not looking for the same answers I was. It is not surprising therefore that in my seventeen interviews to date the interviewees speak much more lengthily about the events surrounding the Six-Day War.

Out of the over one hundred Erős-Kovács interviews I had access to sixty-six of the transcribed files from the archives. Among those, the Israeli-Arab conflicts are mentioned in only a fifth and there is merely a handful where the Six-Day War itself is mentioned. In my

111 Peter Tomlinson, "Having it both ways"

interviews, there are several interviewees who do not have any specific memories of June 1967 in relation to the Israeli situation. Their reasons are varied, but all of them pointed out they did not particularly care for politics.

One was the daughter of a communist cadre who was studying for her A-levels at the time and read nothing but the daily her father brought home. To her, the conflict was something happening far away, having nothing to do with her.¹¹² Another mentioned she was raising two children, had a job and an ill mother-in-law to take care of, what did she care? Her husband was always more aware of “all these things” and she listened to his summaries, but was not very interested.¹¹³

The question then becomes, can one speak of a phenomenon at all, or is this sense of renewed pride just a feeling enjoyed by several individuals, but not at all a phenomenon experienced by the general Jewish Hungarian population. If even to the direct question “What do you remember of the Six-Day War?” so many of the interviewees seem to shrug their shoulders and say, “Not much” then it seems to become clear that the Six-Day War’s effect on Jewish Hungarian identity is much smaller than I had hypothesised, or at least that it would be important to ask a much greater number of people about their experience.

4.6 Memory and Myth

In June 1967, Judit’s aunt came to visit from Australia. She had left Hungary in the revolution of 1956, with approximately twenty thousand other Hungarian Jews. Judit

112" Interview IV, January 2008

113" Interview VIII, January 2008

remembers her father and his sister sitting at the dinner table shouting at each other about the events of the Israeli Six-Day War. Judit, who was eighteen years old and just about to graduate from secondary school was very happy to have her aunt over; she had come bearing gifts such as blue jeans and perfume in a beautiful bottle. On the other hand she could not understand how her aunt could be so mistaken about the events in Israel. Judit's father held a high position in one of the ministries and no doubt he knew much better than his sister how unfairly the aggressor Israel treated its Arab neighbours.

Judit's state of, as it has become clear since then, misinformation is not surprising. Her father was a convinced communist cadre, who had renounced his Jewish background to the extent that Judit had never heard him speak about it. Her paternal grandparents had died in the holocaust and her father had had to survive forced labor, but these issues were done away with as their having been victims of fascist aggression. Judit's mother was also a cadre, although less pronounced and she had mentioned her life in the Budapest ghetto in a few words, but this almost insignificant story did not give Judit a Jewish identity.

Judit's parents had not been the only Hungarian Jews finding comfort in communism. Especially to holocaust survivors communism could easily seem the only route away from fascism and a means to rid oneself of a Jewish identity that had indirectly caused this recent trauma. An identity that had, for many, been forced upon them, since the majority of Hungarian Jewry had been assimilated and had not held religious beliefs. Some of the most enthusiastic supporters of the new regime were Jewish.

Because Judit and her family adhered to the party line, they would not have looked for alternative sources of information. The state-published dailies were what they read. The

contemporary Hungarian newspapers' opinion was clearly anti-Israel, following the Hungarian governments' views, which followed the Soviet governments' stance. Israel was the aggressor, an imperialist country that wanted to suppress and colonize the peace-minded Arab countries. In the early days of the conflict in the Middle East the criticism on Israel had not been as outspoken yet. After all, it was a very small country that would soon be "swept off the map," according to a military official.¹¹⁴

It comes as no surprise then that Judit, at eighteen, or even her parents as convinced cadres, could or would have wanted to grasp the events in any other way than as they had been described by the contemporary papers. As soon as people had access to other sources of information, such as Radio Free Europe or the BBC World Service, their knowledge of the events unfolded in quite a different manner.

With the help of oral histories, I wanted to see how the Six-Day War in Israel influenced contemporary young Hungarian Jews' sense of identity. It makes sense that the identities of those who, like Judit, grew up with only some obscure remnants of Jewish identity and no access to informational sources but the official Hungarian governmentally influenced newspapers would not be influenced by the events. However, the case is very different for those who were conscious of their Jewish identity at the time of the Six-Day War, had access to alternative sources of information such as Radio Free Europe, or news that came from relatives who were either in Israel, or lived beyond the Iron Curtain, as will be seen from data below.

György was thirty-one years old when the Six-Day War broke out and was working for

114" Interview III, January 2008

Hungarian national television. His family background is somewhat similar to that of Judit: during the second world war his father had been in a forced labour camp in the Ukraine and his mother was put to work in a metal factory that was adapted to produce bullet cases. After the war both parents joined the communist party, where his father proceeded to rise in the ranks. Nevertheless, György did have a clearly defined Jewish identity from his early childhood, which was no doubt influenced by his religious grandparents who had a part in raising him.

Kovács et al also make mention of this. When “the families lived together with, or had a close relationship to the grandparents, who naturally were more attached to traditions, special tactics had to be worked out in order to prevent these traditions from being passed on.”¹¹⁵ It seems natural that when the parents were at times absent for longer periods of time due to work, they would be less successful in their strategies. However, there remained some misconceptions. As one of the interviewees describes: “I knew the man with the beard will come to bring the kosher chicken and this is because [my grandmother and he] are Jewish. And we don’t eat such chicken because we are not.”¹¹⁶

However, the fact that György's Jewishness had been defined for him at age four in a bomb shelter by neighbours not wanting him and his mother to sit near is probably a much more likely reason for György to have an instilled Jewish identity. His grandfather took him to synagogue and the family did not celebrate Christmas, but as a young boy attending a Jewish kindergarten, these things did not seem other than ordinary. As György phrases it: “I didn’t pay attention to the fact that I was Jewish, because I didn’t know there was something other

115 Erős, Kovács, Lévai, “Hogyan Tudtam Meg”

116" Ibid.

than Jewish.”¹¹⁷ When the air raids hit Budapest though, this changed: “We had to hide in the cellar and ours was a mixed house and they separated the Jews from the non-Jews. The Jews were to huddle in a different corner than the non-Jews and they would make remarks, about how if it hadn’t been for us... That is when I somehow understood that we were different and that this was not considered good.”¹¹⁸ The distinction became all the more clear as events unfolded and György and his mother began wearing the yellow star on their clothes, shortly after which his mother whisked him away to a Catholic lady who took him to the country-side posing as a family member who had been bombed out of his house, with his mother in hospital.

When I asked György what his memories of the Six-Day War were, he diligently listed all the events chronologically. He used to listen to Radio Free Europe and seemed to have memorised their narrative. It is more likely that György later read about the events and could therefore remember them better.

He remembered feeling proud that “such a tiny country, full of Jews, the haunted, the terrorised, the victims – they stood up for themselves, they fought, and there was all this pressure from the Arab countries, from all directions, but they didn’t care, they shot those airplanes down even before they left the ground.”¹¹⁹ Pride and enthusiasm returned, with the memories of the news reports. György relayed that he had spoken about it with “everyone” - with colleagues, friends and family – and that everyone had been elated. When I asked him whether “everyone” was Jewish, he responded: “No, of course not, but they [the non-Jewish

117" Interview III, January 2008

118" Ibid.

119" Interview III, January 2008

among his friends and colleagues] hated the Arabs even more than the Jews.”

The feeling of pride that György mentioned is a common feeling with all of my interviewees who were already aware of their Jewish background to the extent that they had a sense of Jewishness. It turns out that earlier in their lives this had been something of a burden to most of them. It was related to their parents’ and grandparents’ Holocaust past, which was not discussed at home. The Jewish Hungarians born towards the end of and after the war often had to piece together their family history from half-sentences and documents found by accident.

Their parents had usually embraced communism and had concentrated on creating a new future. Even before this secular choice, they had lived assimilated and secular lives, in each case it was at best the interviewees’ grandparents’ generation that had kept (traces of) religious tradition. Even among them only a few were religious to the extent that they went to synagogue regularly and kept a kosher kitchen. As a Kovács interviewee recalls: “Grandmother and grandfather gave up Jewishness.”¹²⁰

As one of the victims of the Kunmadaras blood libel, which took place in Hungary in 1946, says in a dignified manner from his terrace in Israel: “We were still different then. If anyone was to hit us over the head today, we would beat his head in, no question.” This was the kind of dignity the Israeli victory in the Six-Day War brought for Hungarian Jews in June 1967. As György said: “After that nothing changed, in my life I mean, in my work, or with my friends, but somehow I was a little bit differently Jewish. I stayed a little proud.”¹²¹

120 Erős-Kovács interview nr. 35

121" Interview III, January 2008

5. Conclusion

At the outset of my research project I was convinced that the Israeli Six-Day War of 1967 had had a significant impact on the identity of Jewish Hungarians and was sure that it would be remembered by everyone who had been old enough to have some insight into worldly affairs at the time of the events. I came to the project with these preconceptions because of my own environment, where several people of said age had told me the stories of the glorious Israeli victory with a clearly discernible pride.

Therefore my hypothesis was that the Six-Day War had instilled a new sense of pride in Hungarian Jewry, after the disastrous and to many shameful victimization of Jews before and during the Holocaust. I had felt that Jews in Hungary had become more open about their Jewishness and had stopped seeing it as a blemish, that there had been an increased sense of belonging to the Jewish community and not only an acceptance of one's background, but a straightforward feeling of comfort with that background.

The original hypothesis had to be corrected almost as soon as I commenced my interviews. Although I tried to get the 'right answers' from my interviewees, many of them had no recollection whatsoever about the Six-Day War and those who did remember did so in a variety of ways. While I did find some who remembered the period as I had thought they would: as a time of joy where non-Jewish Hungarians united with Jewish Hungarians in their support of Israel, despite the official government stance that was in line with the Soviet

Union's, they were the minority.

When I started looking deeper into the archival material that I was given by Ferenc Erős and András Kovács, I came to realise that this so-called new pride I had perceived was only there in the memories of a handful of individuals and that Hungarian Jewry was much more preoccupied with the memory of the Holocaust and the difficult post-war era, when some became convinced communists and others pragmatic communists, than with those few days in early June 1967.

If there was a newfound pride, it had often come later, during the years of *Goulash Communism* when it became less unattractive to be Jewish and a number of, first clandestine then openly accepted, Jewish organisations and small groups began meeting and sharing their experiences. It may well be that this so-called Jewish renaissance is entirely unrelated to the events in the Middle East in 1967 and were simply a result of the healing quality of time.

Those individuals who remembered the Six-Day War so well and spoke of it with pride and happiness all had a well-defined Jewish identity. They had read much about their history, some had done serious research, others worked in a job that was somehow related to their Jewish background: one was a film maker, another worked for the Jewish community in Budapest.¹²² Those who had no significant memories had been busy with other things: graduation from secondary school, work, children, in short: life in Hungary in the second half of the 1960s with all its ups and downs.

It seems that the influence of the Six-Day War on Hungarian Jewish identity is marginal and limited to some individuals, who seem to have mythicised the events to fit their personal

122" I will not identify which interviewees they were for reasons of privacy: they would be too easily recognised.

histories and Hungarian Jewish history more generally. This is an effect that has been described by quite a few oral historians as something to look out for and take into account when working with oral histories, as I have described above.

To be frank, it was somewhat of a disappointment to me to realise I could not uncover one of the last undiscovered 'truths' in Hungarian Jewish history, that there was no grand history to be found, only a history created by some, for some, that has come to live a life of its own in family stories, that is passed on to the next generation as one of the wonderful things that 'we' the Jewish people did.

On the other hand there seems to be no need to worry whether Hungarian Jewry has re-found its pride. I do not wish to get into the question of whether Hungarian Jewry is living a renaissance or not, since it is not my topic and it has been and is dealt with extensively by others. However, reading the Erős-Kovács interviews from the late eighties and talking to my interviewees, who spoke to me so openly and honestly, for which I would like to thank them once again, it is clear to see that there is little or no shame about one's Jewishness. People identify as Jews fairly easily, they have found a way to fit their Jewish background and their Jewish identity into their lives, into their Hungarian lives.

Interview Questions

1. What do you know about your grandparents' and parents' background, who are they, where did they come from?
2. What were their social circumstances, what was their position in society?
3. Were they from a rich/poor background?
4. What was their level of education?
5. What happened with your family during the Second World War?
6. Were they willing to talk about it post-War?
7. What role did/does religion play in your grandparents' and parents' lives?
8. How did your family's life change after the Second World War?
9. Did your grandparents and parents become members of the Communist Party?
10. How did you find out you are Jewish?
11. If not from your family, how did you ask them about it when you found out and what was their response?
12. How did your family show any curiosity towards things Jewish (books, magazines, the Jewish community)?
13. How would you define yourself?
14. What does it mean to you, to be a Jew?
15. How has the fact that you're Jewish influenced your friendships and/or choice of partner, either consciously, or unconsciously?
16. What sorts of antisemitism have you experienced, either against yourself, or against others?
17. Did any of your family members move abroad?
18. If family members went abroad, where did they go to?
19. How did you and your parents/grandparents stay in touch with them?
20. How do you feel about the state of Israel?
21. What was your life like during the summer of 1967? What did you do?
22. [If interviewee does not recall the war by him/herself:] What did you read or hear about the conflict in the Middle East?
23. What was your opinion about the events in the Middle East?
24. What was the response in your surroundings to the conflict, the Six-Day War and Israel's victory?

The Interviewees

For reasons of privacy first names have been changed and interview codes were used, which give the date the interview was taken and indicate in which order the interviews took place: they are numbered very straightforwardly. The sex of the interviewees is also indicated.

András	M	Interview I	December 2007
Brigitta	F	Interview II	December 2007
István	M	Interview III	December 2007
György	M	Interview IV	January 2008
Judit	F	Interview V	January 2008
László	M	Interview VI	January 2008
Eszter	F	Interview VII	January 2008
Dániel	M	Interview VIII	January 2008
Katalin	F	Interview IX	January 2008
Attila	M	Interview X	February 2008
Liza	F	Interview XI	February 2008
Klára	F	Interview XII	February 2008
József	M	Interview XIII	February 2008
Kálmán	M	Interview XIV	February 2008
Zsuzsanna	F	Interview XV	February 2008
Vera	F	Interview XVI	February 2008
Barbara	F	Interview XVII	March 2008

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