

THE STRONG STATE AND EMBEDDED DISSONANCE: HISTORY EDUCATION AND POPULIST POLITICS IN HUNGARY

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... the bankrupt state that has been placed upon our shoulders is a result of the suppression of our Revolution... we cannot understand that the party leaders, who made us study from books that falsified the Revolution now rush to touch the coffins as if they were charms of good luck!

Viktor Orbán speaking at the funeral of Imre Nagy, 16 June, 1989¹

Liberal values mean corruption, sex, and violence, it looks like Western Europe has forgotten about white workers. There was the national state, the liberal state, and the welfare state, and now Hungary is building a state based on labor, which as far as its character goes, is not liberal.

Viktor Orbán speaking at the 25th Tusványos Free University and Student Camp in Romania, July, 2014²

Abstract

The hopefulness that accompanied the establishment of the Republic of Hungary in 1989 was soon tempered by divided politics that seemed unable to address systemic economic woes facing the nation. Though the 1956 Revolution remains foundational, parts of the polity remain uneasy with the concept of the liberal state and instead hearken back to the Christian National politics of the interwar years to legitimize a vision of the Hungarian nation not dependent on institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), let alone the European Union (EU) which Hungary joined in 2004. The promise of economic prosperity found in EU member states such as Austria remains elusive and many Hungarians yearn for the social security system of the 1970's communist era while at the same time subscribing to a resurrection of the strong state. The populist rhetoric of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán draws sharp contrast between the EU's dream of a Europe without Borders and the localized/nativist vision of Hungarian national identity that resonates with a large part of the polity that provided his FIDESZ (Young Democrats)/KDNP (Christian Democrats) coalition with parliamentary majorities in 2010 and 2014. Further to the right, Jobbik (the better ones) excoriates both gypsies and Jews for undermining the state. The current refugee crisis has been cast by Orbán

1 H Kamm, "The funeral of Imre Nagy," *New York Times*, 17 June 1989, p. 6.

2 Magyar Nemzet Online, 27 July 2014 (available at <http://www.mno.hu/tusvanyos/orban-viktor-teljesbeszed-1239645>, as accessed on 29 July 2014), pp. 1-3.

as an Islamic tide that will reconfigure Europe into bloodless and docile societies. Orbán's decision to build a fence in summer 2015 to keep out refugees seems prescient to those subscribing to these nativist beliefs. The State forwards a public presentation of history that absolves the interwar regime of the Lord Protector Miklós Horthy, 1920-1944 of alliance with the Axis and genocide. Though there remains substantial opposition to current nationalist sentiment, the prospects for the survival of liberalism seem bleak without a unified opposition. Interestingly, there remains an embedded dissonance in History curriculum and texts that challenges the State's interpretation of History. This article studies the state's public presentation of history in contrast to that found in curriculum and textbooks to understand the contrast between Orbán's stated aim to create an illiberal state and stories found in texts that undergird the dream of a liberal republic found in the failed revolutions of 1848 and 1956. Disturbingly, previous regimes that extolled the strong state have imaginatively rearranged history so that the two strains of political desire antithetical to each other are reconciled. How does the Hungarian case help us better understand the resurrection of strong state politics that seem to have infiltrated the global stage?

Keywords: Politics; Memory; Historical Narratives; History Education; Hungary.

Introduction

The hopefulness that accompanied the establishment of the Republic of Hungary in 1989 was soon tempered by divided politics that seemed unable to address systemic economic woes facing the nation. Though the 1956 Revolution remains foundational, parts of the polity remain uneasy with the concept of the liberal state and instead hearken back to the authoritarian Christian National politics of the interwar years to legitimize a vision of the Hungarian nation not dependent on the EU which Hungary joined in 2004. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán now embraces a rhetoric far different from what he proclaimed in 1989 that draws sharp contrast to the EU's dream of a Europe without borders. Orbán's nativist vision for Hungary resonates with a large part of the polity which provided his FIDESZ (Young Democrats)/KDNP (Christian Democrats) coalition with parliamentary majorities in 2010 and 2014. Currently, the state forwards a presentation of history that absolves the interwar regime of Lord Protector Miklós Horthy, 1920-1944 of alliance with the Axis and genocide that took the lives of over 560,000 Hungarian Jews.

This article studies the state's presentation of Hungary's interwar history in contrast to that found in curriculum and textbooks to understand the contrast between Orbán's stated aim to create an illiberal state and stories that create

an embedded dissonance found in texts that undergird the dream of a liberal republic found in the failed revolutions of 1848 and 1956. Disturbingly, previous regimes that extolled the strong state have imaginatively rearranged history so that the two strains of political desire antithetical to each other are reconciled. The Hungarian past remains unsettled and political parties in the contemporary state utilize selective segments of this history to legitimize their respective platforms. As political scientist Katherine Verdery states, “Nationalism is a kind of ancestor worship... the work of contesting national histories...challenges the genealogy”.³ In this light, the bitter twentieth century history of Hungary marked by successive defeats and occupations looms large, understating Charles Lemert’s assessment of contested history in politics where, “ghosts continue to trouble the living”.⁴ How do the contradictions found in Hungarian history texts, curriculum, and the state’s presentation of history help us to better understand strong state politics in the twenty first century?

Historical political context

Hungary’s long history goes back to its founding as a Christian Kingdom by King Stephen the First (Saint Stephen) at the beginning of the eleventh century. The Magyars were a warlike steppe people who entered the Carpathian Basin in the ninth century. The feudal kingdom encompassed a large portion of eastern central Europe and acted as an effective block to Ottoman expansion into central Europe, especially after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The feudal kingdom reached its apex under Mátyás Corvinus 1458-1490 who not only captured the Hapsburg stronghold in Vienna, but had the largest library in Europe at that time.⁵ Tragedy struck with Hungary’s defeat at the Battle of Mohács in 1526 by the Ottoman Empire. In 1699 Ottoman suzerainty was replaced by that of the Hapsburgs who had driven them out. The Crown of St. Stephen then came into the hands of the Hapsburgs until 1867. Hungarian rebellions and intrigues all ended in disaster with perhaps the most notable being the liberal 1848 Revolution.⁶

3 K Verdery, *The political lives of dead bodies: Reburial and post socialist change* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 41.

4 C Lemert, *Durkheim’s ghosts: Cultural logics and social things* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 26-27.

5 L Makkai, “The Hungarian’s prehistory, their conquest of Hungary, and their raids to the West to 955”; “The foundation of the Hungarian christian state, 950-1196; J Buk, “The late medieval period, 1382-1526”; P Sugar, P Hanák & T Frank, *A History of Hungary* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press), pp. 8-22, 69-73.

6 Ferenc Ráckóczy II led a failed War of Independence against the Hapsburgs 1704-1711. K Péter, “The later Ottoman period and Royal Hungary 1606-1711”, *A history of Hungary* (London, I.B.Tauris, 1990), pp. 117-120.

Hungary's misfortune seemed to be reversed in 1867. The establishment of Austria Hungary encouraged a baroque political culture, in part because though Hungarians controlled their domestic policy, foreign policy and the treasury was controlled by Vienna. Hungarians were undeterred by this and reimagined the Hungarian Kingdom reborn.⁷ As historian Paul A. Hanebrink points out, "themes of national death and rebirth" have a long tradition in Hungary going back to their defeat and occupation by the Ottoman Turks.⁸ The public mood could be found in this rebirth that trumpeted a past in which the Hungarian state and culture triumphed in Central Europe. This narrative was reflected in buildings such as the Mátyás Templom, a gothic church that was rebuilt during this period and in monuments prepared for the millennial celebrations of the Hungarian Kingdom in 1896 such as the Fisherman's Bastion and the central monument at Heroes Square depicting the arrival of the Hungarian tribes into the Carpathian Basin.⁹ Spectacular funerals of once defeated heroes further emphasized the perception that Hungary had finally reemerged from a past marked by multiple defeats. The return of the remains of the 1848 revolutionary Lajos Kossuth in 1894 from Turin, Italy included three days of mourning.¹⁰ This sentiment was fueled by burgeoning industrial and urban development that encouraged a more liberal politics that promoted an inclusionary narrative as indicated by the enfranchisement of Hungarian Jews.¹¹

At the same time however, this trend was pulled towards an exclusionary narrative by the intense nationalism that this rebirth unleashed. In spite of the diverse ethnicities found in the Kingdom, Hungary embarked on a policy of *magyarization* in which non-Hungarians were forced to assimilate into Hungarian culture and society. As historian Alice Freifeld notes, the millennial celebrations in Budapest included ethnographic exhibitions that demonstrated a hierarchy that placed Hungarians at the top stoking deep resentments among Serbs, Romanians, and Germans among others.¹² A

7 Baroque political culture refers to calculated artificiality through spectacle, monumentality and what R Wolin refers to as the "seduction of unreason" in *The seduction of unreason: The intellectual romance with fascism: From Nietzsche to postmodernism* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004); K Benziger & R Weiner, "The tragedy of Orbánism: Budapest Baroque extended" (Paper, 24th Annual Conference of Europeanists, University of Glasgow, July 2017), p. 17.

8 P Hanebrink, *In defense of christian Hungary: Religion, nationalism, and anti-semitism, 1890-1944* (Cornell, Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 67-68. Hungary was defeated by the Ottoman Turks in 1526 at the Battle of Mohacs.

9 J Lukacs, *Budapest 1900: A historical portrait of a city and its culture* (New York, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988), pp. 32, 44, 71-72.

10 J Lukacs, *Budapest 1900...*, p. 120.

11 V Ranki, *The politics of inclusion and exclusion: Jews and nationalism in Hungary* (New York, Holmes and Meir, 1999), pp. 30-32, 34, 53.

12 A Freifeld, *Liberalism and the crowd in liberal Hungary, 1848-1914* (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), pp. 275-276; B Anderson, *Imagined communities* (London, Verso, 1983), pp. 104-106.

cyclorama painted in 1895 by Árpád Feszty and displayed at the millennial celebrations depicts a mythical battle between Hungarians and Moravians for possession of the Carpathian Plain captures this sense of militant Hungarian triumphalism.

The dream of the restored kingdom was shattered by World War I. The defeat of the Central Powers at the end of the war resulted in Hungary losing two thirds of its territory at the Treaty of Trianon, 1920. A Bolshevik Revolution in 1919 ended with Budapest being occupied by the Romanians who benefitted from Hungary's partition gaining Transylvania and the close to 1.7 million Hungarians living there. This helped stoke a counterrevolution that was fueled by a deep-set populist narrative that celebrated catholic nationalism and scapegoated outsiders, notably Jews as being responsible for the nation's woes. Jews had largely backed liberal reform that fueled modernization in opposition to the conservatism of the Catholic Church and its loyalty to monarchical rule. After the Bolshevik revolution Jews were conflated with communists. At the helm of this project was Miklós Horthy who helped re-establish the Hungarian kingdom. His near fanatic anti-Bolshevism was matched only by his desire for territorial revision and included a banning of the communist party, strong anti-union positions, and the first anti-Semitic laws in post-World War I Europe.¹³

Horthy attempted to steer clear of Europe's treacherous waters during the 1930s, but the opportunity to regain large tracts of land lost in 1920 proved too tempting for Hungary to resist alliance with the Axis powers. Hungary gained large portions of its' old kingdom at the expense of Czechoslovakia and Romania through the two Vienna Awards, 1938 and 1940. Germany's request for Hungarian assistance against Yugoslavia enabled Hungary to regain parts of its southern realm and seemed to dangle the possibility of recouping parts of southern Romania.¹⁴ Importantly, Hungary's relationship with the Axis was aided by a powerful pro-German faction that strongly favored both alliance and adherence to policies carried out in Germany, which included genocide. Under the leadership of Prime Minister László Bárdossy, Hungarians deported nearly 18,000 Hungarian Jews from the lands acquired in the second Vienna award to the Ukraine where they were murdered by German Einsatzgruppen and their accomplices at Kamenets-Podolski August 27-28, 1941. This was followed in January 1942 by a massacre in Újvidék,

13 P Hanebrink, *In defense of christian Hungary...*, pp. 82-83, 106-107; T Sakmyster, *Hungary's admiral on horseback: Miklós Horthy, 1918-1944* (Boulder, East European Monographs, 1994), pp. 162-165.

14 D Cornelius, *Hungary in World War II: Caught in the cauldron* (New York, Fordham University Press, 2011), pp. 140-141; I Kershaw, *Hitler: 1936-1945 Nemesis* (New York, W.W. Norton and Company, 2000), pp. 362, 366.

located in present day Serbia, that killed 1,200 Jews and Serbs. Public outcry over these events coupled with Axis reversals led to the diminution of the pro-German faction in the government and Hungary's first attempt to negotiate a way out of the war. Between 1942-1944, Jews living within the borders of the Hungarian Kingdom were relatively safe.¹⁵

The Germans aware of Hungary's negotiation attempts, occupied Hungary on March 19, 1944. The fortunes of the Hungarian pro-German faction and fascists were reversed as Horthy approved the German's choice for Prime Minister. Hungarians kept fighting with their ally and their bureaucracy and Gendarmes became the primary agents of the genocide that took the lives of over 420,000 Hungarian Jews. Historian Krisztián Ungváry claims that at least 200,000 Hungarians participated in the process. Responding to pressure brought against him by the likes of President Franklin Roosevelt, Horthy acted to stop the deportations of the Budapest Jews on July 6. Finally, though it led to a German staged coup against Horthy he came close to pulling off an armistice on October 15, 1944. German occupation re-opened the door closed to the German faction in 1942, but without active Hungarian cooperation this stage of the Holocaust could not have unfolded as it did.¹⁶ Hungary's continued attempt to extricate itself from the war ultimately led to a *coup d'état* in October 1944 and Horthy was replaced the Hungarian fascist Ferenc Szálasi who continued the genocide until Hungary collapsed in April 1945.

Hungary was occupied by the Soviet Union and paid a heavy price for going to war. The Republic that came into being at the end of the war was replaced by a Stalinist State in 1948. The brutality of the Stalinists ultimately led to the 1956 Revolution that echoed the liberal demands of 1848 and it was the communist prime minister Imre Nagy who established multi-party governance. The Revolution was crushed and Nagy was hanged on June 16, 1958. Hungarians lived under the Soviet yoke, albeit a more comfortable one, until 1989 when the velvet revolution that included the funeral and reburial

15 R Braham, *The politics of genocide: The holocaust in Hungary*, I (New York, Columbia University Press, 1981), pp. 154-157; K Ungváry, *A Horthy Rendszer, Mérlege: Diszkrimináció, Szociálpolitika és Antiszemitizmus Magyarországon* (Sizing up the Horthy Era, discrimination, social politics, anti-semitism in Hungary) (Pécs-Budapest, Jelenkor Kiadó, OSzK, 2013), pp. 502-503; P Hanebrink, *In defense of christian Hungary...*, pp. 193-195; K Benziger, "The trial of László Bárdossy: The second world war and factional politics in Hungary", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40(3), 2005.

16 Z Vági, L Csösz, & G Kádár, *The holocaust in Hungary: Evolution of a genocide* (Lanham, Alta Mira Press, 2013), pp. 71-73, 103, 134-135, 147; K Ungváry, *A Horthy Rendszer...*, p. 544; P Hanebrink, *In defense of christian Hungary...*, p. 198.

of Imre Nagy ushered in the Hungarian Republic on October 23, the day the 1956 Revolution began thirty- three years earlier.¹⁷

The Republic and discontent after 1989

The establishment of the Republic of Hungary in 1990 brought liberal reforms, but without the economic take off for which many Hungarians had yearned. Hungary seemed like a poor cousin in comparison with its neighbor Austria. Neo liberal economic policies led to over one million jobs being lost under the government led by the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) leaving many Hungarians yearning for the system of social security under the second communist regime. The Hungarian polity rejected the MDF in 1994 and the Socialist Party (MSZP) whose forerunners, the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party (MSZMP) had been toppled only four years previous were elected. The Socialists embarked on a series of austerity measures demanded by the IMF and World Bank. Hungary's debt was lowered and lured investment, but at the expense of many Hungarians who seemed left out of this new prosperity.¹⁸

Hungarian dissatisfaction with the economy provided an opening for Orbán and FIDESZ who now positioned themselves as a center right nationalist party posed against the travails brought on by the IMF and a series of corruption scandals that plagued the MSZP coalition. FIDESZ had initially been founded as a liberal party but in the years following the establishment of the Republic, were unable to gain traction with the electorate and remained a small party. Orbán, eager for power and fervently anti-communist, skillfully utilized Hungarian dissatisfaction with the economy and explained their problems framed in a nationalist narrative that provided scapegoats and legitimized Hungary's interwar years under the suzerainty of Miklós Horthy in a bid to destroy the Socialist Party and their ideas.¹⁹

Hungary's alliance with the Axis resulted in genocide, a country in ruins, and an occupation by the Soviet Union that would last until 1991, but as the historian Tony Judt points out many Hungarians view the two longer lasting communist regimes as having done more damage to Hungary than was done

17 K Benziger, *Imre Nagy, martyr of the nation: Contested History, legitimacy, and popular memory in Hungary* (Lanham, Lexington Books, 2008), pp. 35-36, 42-43, 48, 64.

18 L Szamuely, "The costs of transformation in central and eastern Europe", *The Hungarian Quarterly*, 37, 1996, p. 67. According to P Lendvai, Hungary's indebtedness fell from 21 to 8.7 billion dollars and yet the value of the Hungarian Forint continued to decline in *Hungary: Between democracy and authoritarianism* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 68.

19 C Gati, "Backsliding in Budapest", *The American interest*, January/February 2012 (Available at <http://www.the-american-interest.com/articles>, as accessed on 2 March, 2012), pp. 1-3; P Lendvai, *Between democracy and authoritarianism*, pp. 77-78.

under the brief suzerainty of the Nazis. In this light, many Hungarians see themselves as the victims.²⁰ In this light, Horthy's alliance with the Axis had allowed the nation to remain sovereign until March 1944. His attempt to gather the Hungarian nation was noble and his anti-Bolshevism prescient. The interwar years provide a bridge to the past glory of the Hungarian Kingdom. This interpretation of history, consigned to oblivion during the two communist regimes forcefully resurfaced with the founding of the Republic in 1990. The reburial of Miklós Horthy in his hometown in 1993 is emblematic of this revision.²¹

Viktor Orbán and his FIDESZ/KDNP coalition now embrace illiberal democracy more in line with that described by Fritz Stern in which obedience, strength and heroism are the virtues to be most admired.²² Majoritarian politics following the 2010 election helped usher in this "state of mind" that poses the opposition and the EU as exogenous entities. No wonder then that the FIDESZ/KDNP coalition look to the authoritarian politics of the interwar years as a source of legitimacy.

The resurgence of this localized nationalist rhetoric has given rise to several right-wing parties, the most notable being Jobbik (the better ones) who received 14.56% of the mandates in the 2014 election making them the second largest party in Hungary.²³ They compete with the Fidesz coalition to set the national agenda helping to pull politics further to the right. Jobbik are great admirers of the Hungarian fascist Ferenc Szálasi and believe that Jews and Gypsies are outside of the national polity. Jobbik's unconstrained rhetoric resonates with a sizeable portion of the electorate including a younger generation who have adopted these views.²⁴

Viktor Orbán's promise of a new constitution came to fruition in 2011 and could set the stage for transforming Hungary from a Republic to the illiberal state he has promised. Not only does the constitution provide a means for stacking the courts through early retirements, it creates "detailed rules" for the media that the National Media and Telecommunications Agency uses to

20 T Judt, *Postwar: A history of Europe since 1945* (New York, Penguin Books, 2005), pp. 827-828.

21 T Ungvári, "Culture and crisis: The pains of transition", B Király & A Bozoki, *Lawful revolution in Hungary, 1989-94* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 285. K Verdery asserts that post socialist legitimacy is based on rejection of the immediate past, making reburials part of this process in *The political lives of dead bodies...*, p. 52.

22 F Stern, *The failure of illiberalism: Essays on the political culture of modern Germany* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf), pp. xvii-xviii.

23 "Marad a Kormány", *Népszabadság*, 7 April, 2014, p. 1.

24 J Kirchick, "Meet Hungary's new fascists", *Tablet Magazine*, 24 April, 2012 (available at <http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/96716/meet-europes-new-fascists>, as accessed on 29 April, 2012), pp. 1-4; Z Vági, L Csösz, G Kádár, *The holocaust in Hungary...*, p. 362.

impose fines and issue licenses.²⁵ Importantly it enshrines a version of history that legitimizes the Christian National politics of the interwar years. The National Avowal states, "... Saint Stephen... made our country a part of Christian Europe one thousand years ago... We date the restoration of our country's self-determination, lost on the nineteenth day of March 1944, from the second day of May 1990, when the first freely elected body of popular representatives was formed".²⁶ In one stroke the constitution legislated history by separating the Horthy regime from its collaboration with the German occupation and separates itself from Hungary's two communist regimes. How does this revision play out in the construction of public history, curriculum and textbook production?

Curriculum, textbooks, and the strong state

Centralizing public education is key to this process and like regimes of the past, both communist and authoritarian, controlling the historical narrative is intimately linked to political legitimacy. While the Council of Europe's recommendations for History curriculum argue against ideological manipulation of history, the States' public presentation of history attempts to cover up troubling parts of its twentieth century past, including genocide.²⁷ History education is a critical component in the development of civil society. Interestingly, textbooks continue to provide contrast, or an embedded dissonance to the State's public presentation of history. An examination of the contemporary presentation of history, education policy, curriculum, and text set against the past practice of Hungary's post World War I regimes helps us understand how the current regime walks a fine line between democratic and authoritarian practice.

Between 1990-2010 the National Curriculum provided a frame for what needed to be taught in the schools, leaving a fair amount of flexibility to teachers and local communities, reflecting a trust in liberal values seemingly promised with the establishment of the Republic. This was a reaction to the highly centralized curriculum found under the two communist regimes in which control of the historical narrative was of paramount importance.²⁸ With Orban's promise of an illiberal state, control of curriculum is again

25 Magyarország Alaptörvénye (hereafter Fundamental Law of Hungary) Magyarország Alaptörvényét az Országgyűlés a 2011 Április 18-I ülésnapján fogadta el. Article IX, 15. According to P Lendvai, pro-government pronouncements dominate 75% of political programming. See P Lendvai, *Between democracy and authoritarianism...*, pp. 218-220.

26 Fundamental law of Hungary, 10656.

27 History teaching: Council of Europe recommendations (Council of Europe, 2013), pp. 24-30.

28 Hungary, Ministry of Culture and Education, National Core Curriculum, 1996, p. 15.

deemed critical and has been re-centralized. The Ministry of Education is now a subsidiary unit of the Ministry of Human Resources. The National Curriculum sets out a series of standards and outcomes meant to ensure that Hungarian children are competitive globally and well prepared for the *érettségi* (school leaving exam). The *Alaptanterv* (The National Core Curriculum) explains what must be taught at a given grade level and provides benchmarks for student achievement, whereas the *Kerettanterv* (The National Core Curriculum Framework) explains what must be taught including themes and number of hours the teacher must spend on each theme. Textbook choice and distribution has been centralized under the newly created Oktatáskutató Fejlesztő Intézet (Institute for Educational Research and Development). Teachers can select from two textbooks, but Guilds such as the Hungarian History Teachers Association (TTE) worry that this would sharply reduce teacher's freedom, given their previous freedom to select from a much wider array of texts. According to TTE President, László Miklósi, the main goal of the new national common core is to promote the government's nationalist agenda.²⁹ Hungary's long history provides both opportunities and obstacles for a politicized historical narrative given its history that glorifies both monarchy and liberal revolution. It is this contested history that creates an embedded dissonance which can act as a stumbling block for the State's goal of political socialization.

Liberal revolution

The new National Core Curriculum mandates that students understand the significance of the Hungarian migration into the Carpathian Basin to set the stage for an ascendant national narrative.³⁰ In accord with the National Avowal previously reviewed, students learn about the Kingdom of St. Stephen that reaches its apex in the construct of the Renaissance kingdom of Matyás Corvinus 1458-1490, that was counted among the great European powers of the time.³¹ This is a story found not only in curriculum, but in the public presentation of history on holidays. For example, St. Stephen's Day is a national holiday that connects the past greatness of the Hungarian Kingdom to the present through fairs that include folk dancing and performers dressed

29 D Varga, "Állmosított tankönyvellátás" (State controlled textbook distribution), *Népszabadság Online*, 18 December 2013 (available at <http://nol.hu/belfold/20131218-allmosított-tankönyvellátás?ref+sso>, as accessed on 20 December 2013), pp. 1-2; Kormányrendelet jelöli ki tankönyvekért felelősöket (The government will name who is responsible for textbooks) *Népszabadság Online*, 30 December 2013 (available at http://nol.hu/belfold/ujabb_vizfej_itt_a_nemseti_tankönyvtanács?ref+sso, as accessed on 2 January 2014), pp. 1-2.

30 4.1 Problems of origin, Nemzeti Alaptanterv (NAT) 2012 final, pp. 80-81, 86, 91.

31 9-12 Kerettanterv, Történelem, Társadalmi, és Állampolgári Ismeretek, pp. 14-17.

in traditional garb along with a dramatic procession of St. Stephen's hand through the streets of Pest. The glory of the Hungarian Kingdom is on full display for all to see. Equally as important however, is the celebration of the failed 1848 Hungarian Revolution against the Hapsburgs. The heroic narratives found in commemorative ceremonies and textbooks emphasize not only the intense nationalism brought out by the event, but in the liberal ideals found in Sándor Petöfi's *Nemzeti Dal* (national verse) and the twelve student demands that included freedom of the press and a multiparty system.³² All regimes since the establishment of the Dual Kingdom in 1867 have celebrated 1848. What follows is a brief sampling of the ways this liberal revolution has been presented in textbooks under authoritarian rule.

In the wake of the World War I defeat students were told to persevere. A map in one textbook from the Horthy era not so subtly detailed the events of the 1848 Revolution over an outline in the shape of the great medieval kingdom. Publicly the values of nationalism were connected to the Hungarian medieval kingdom. In this light, the valiant fight of the 1848 Revolutionaries embodied a continuation of this quest to return Hungary to its rightful place as a European power not as a liberal Republic, but Constitutional Monarchy under the guidance of its Lord Protector, Miklós Horthy.³³ The re-annexation of lands regained through deals brokered by the Axis figured prominently in texts verifying earlier admonitions for Hungarian students to persevere.³⁴ After WW II and the communist accession it was Joseph Stalin who completed the work of Lajos Kossuth.³⁵ Interestingly, the textbooks continued to highlight the liberal themes embodied in the national verse and the student demands of 1848. The danger of politicizing history was revealed in 1956 when students resurrected these demands found in their textbooks.³⁶ And yet, the story continued to be highlighted during the

32 Petöfi's stirring poem memorized by children begins Talpra Magyar, hi a haz! (Rise Hungarians, the homeland is calling) was written on 13 March, 1848. For a discussion of the student demands see I Deák, *The lawful revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1979), pp. 69-73.

33 I Havas & L Lóránd, *A Magyar Nemzet Története-A Mohácsi Vésztől Napjainkig Világtörténeti Kapcsolatokkal*, A Polgári Fiúiskolák IV Osztálya Számára (Budapest, Franklin-Társulat, 1928), pp. 105, 131-137; E Varády, *A Magyar Nemzet Története*, A Leánygimnázium, Leány Liceumok, Leány Kollegiumok (Budapest, Athanaeum Irodalmi és Nyomdai RT Kiadása, 1934), pp. 77-78, 86.

34 F Marczinkó, JP Vitéz, E Varády, *Magyarország Története A Szatmári Békétől Napjainkig* (Budapest, Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1942), pp. 82-85.

35 A Freifield, "The cult of March 15: Sustaining the Hungarian myth of revolution, 1849-1999", M Burcur & N Wingfield, *Staging the past: The politics of commemoration in Hapsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the present* (West Lafayette, Purdue University Press, 2001), pp. 264-276.

36 G Heckenast & G Spira, Munkája, *Magyarország Története II Rész, 1526-1849* (Budapest, A Tankönyvkiadó Nemzeti Vállalat, 1950), pp. 111-114. The sixth edition of the text published in 1955 includes three detailed maps, a timeline, and over 33 plates of personages, battles, concluding with pictures of Marx and Engels, pp. 167-211: Appendices includes a full page reserved for the national verse.

second communist regime as an event pivotal to creating national solidarity.³⁷ In 1989 the unofficial public celebration of the 1848 Revolution on 15 March foreshadowed the public outpouring at the funeral of Imre Nagy Prime Minister of Hungary on 16 June 1989. It was this event that publicly delegitimized the communist regime and made plain the Hungarian demand for liberal democracy, a point underscored by Viktor Orbán who was one of the featured speakers at the funeral.³⁸ In spite of the current political turn in Hungary, 15 March and 23 October, that commemorate the 1848 and 1956 Revolutions, remain national holidays that are memorialized across Hungary through public monuments, literature, and as part of the national curriculum.

Genocide

Portrayal of the Hungarian genocide is more problematic and avoidance was one way of coping with this history. In the immediate wake of World War II during the short-lived Republic, 1945-1947 textbooks claim that it was the desire for territorial revision resulting from Trianon that led to disaster. A Roman Catholic secondary history text from 1947 claims that, though the Hungarian elite wanted the lost territory back, “they never learned how Hungarians lived across the border”. The concept of *Faj Magyar* (Pure Hungarian) trumpeted by the Arrow Cross is denounced stating that they “denied the assimilation of the past 100 years”. A Reform Church text claims that Revisionism took Hungary on “a tragic path that led to disaster”. Though the horror of the Szálasi regime is mentioned in the Reform text, neither text refers to genocide.³⁹

Downplaying Hungarian complicity in the Holocaust provided cover for the little Nazis in Stalinist Hungary and fortified the narrative of avoidance. Creating solidarity within the communist party became paramount after World War II and so many lower level functionaries who had cooperated with the fascists or the pro-German factions during World War II avoided prosecution and found work through the party.⁴⁰ Responsibility for genocide is laid at the feet of the Germans and their fascist allies, thus absolving the

37 In spite of the Soviet presence in Hungary textbooks and curriculum highlighted Imperial Russia's role in suppressing the Revolution features Russian military officers announcing to the Czar, “Hungary is at your feet”, M Unger, *Történelem a gimnáziumok III* (Budapest, Tankönyvkiadó, 1971), p. 197.

38 K Benziger, *Imre Nagy martyr of the nation...*, pp. 21-24, 27-28, 108.

39 I János, *Magyarország Története: A Sztálmári Békétől Napjainkig – A Katolikus Gimnáziumok és Leány Gimnáziumok VIII* (Budapest, St. István Társulat, 1947), pp. 111-112, 114-115; Z Varga, *Magyarország Története II A Sztálmári Békétől* (Debrecen, Országos Református Tanáregylet Könyvnyomda – vállalata, 1946), pp. 223-224.

40 P Kenez, *Hungary from the Nazis to the Soviets: The establishment of the communist regime in Hungary, 1944-1948* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 46-47.

Hungarian proletariat. The Horthy regime is blamed for the rise of fascism and claims that many fascist organizations were influenced by the Church. *Munkaszolgálat* are mentioned, but the Jewish origins of the forced laborer battalions remain unexplained. Later we learn that the “fascists killed off the cream of the community” that included tens of thousands of Hungarians who died at the hands of the Gestapo or in death camps, and hundreds of thousands of Jews who were also murdered.⁴¹ A 1952 text asserts that Horthy stopped deportations and attempted to come to terms with the allies in 1944 only to remain viable in politics after the war; whereas a 1955 text asserts that the First anti-Semitic law was designed to “deter attention from class warfare”. Though the details of how the deportations of the Hungarian Jews was carried out remains absent, the text briefly discusses the establishment of Ghettos, the yellow star, and the deportation of 450,000 Jews during the German occupation.⁴² All texts refer specifically to the horror of the Szálasi regime.

The same pattern of narrative continued during the second communist regime under János Kádár, 1956-1988. Hitler’s aim to destroy European Jewry is made explicit as is the means to achieve this end with a description of concentration camps and gas chambers and include pictures such as the selection of those Hungarian Jews at Auschwitz. Ribentrop’s testimony at Nuremberg is used to damn the Horthy regime in which he claimed that Hungarians were the first to want to join the Axis and participate in the Soviet invasion. The *Népbíróság* (People’s Tribunals) dissolved the Gendarmes and other fascist organizations, but no details are given.⁴³ The massacre at Kamnets- Podolski is left out.

After 1989 the narrative was slowly altered. Textbooks proliferated as teachers and schools were allowed the freedom to choose and create curriculum. Although choice was tempered by the national school leaving exam set by the State called the *érettségi*, critical in determining placement in higher education. Many texts included changes only to reflect the current change of regime in 1989, leaving many parts of texts untouched. This in turn, left many within the academic community urging for substantial curriculum

41 L Lukács, *Magyarország Története III Rész, 1849-1950* (Budapest, Ideiglenes Tankönyv, 1950), pp. 152-154, 163-164, 173, 176.

42 L Lukács, *A Magyar Nép Története III Rész, 1849-1948* (Budapest, Tankönyvkiadó, 1952), p. 253; I Nagy et. al., *A Magyar Nép Története III Rész 1849-1948* (Budapest, Tankönyvkiadó, 1955), pp. 185, 258.

43 E Balogh, *Történelem a gimnáziumok IV. osztály számára* (Budapest, Tankönyvkiadó, 1969), pp. 223-224, 241-242, 248; E Balogh, *Történelem IV Gimnázium* (Budapest, Tankönyvkiadó), pp. 253-258, 264, 302.

change.⁴⁴ On the other hand some texts began addressing issues such as the connection between Nuremburg and People's Tribunals.⁴⁵ Among the texts I had the opportunity to review, the most detailed coverage is provided by the Műszaki Kiadó and attempts to get at the much more complicated story of the interwar years. The consequences of the anti-Semitic laws and the ascendance of the German faction in Hungarian politics are explained including the massacre at Kamnets-Podolski. The Nuremburg trials receive attention as do the Hungarian War Crimes trials, though separated from one another.⁴⁶ According to László Miklósi, what is evident and different from other texts are the questions and exercises provided in the text that force students to think critically about not only legal, but moral responsibility. He believes this is critical to the development of Hungarian civil society.⁴⁷

The current Fundamental Law addresses the affront to the nation caused by Trianon. The new National Core states that students must understand the plight of Hungarian minorities living in areas that had been "ripped away" from Hungary. But there is a certain disjuncture between the national core and history as students must understand the consequences of the two Vienna Awards that resulted from its alliance with the Axis.⁴⁸ If Trianon was illegitimate and the nation remains torn asunder, how is a teacher supposed to teach about the relationship between the Anschluss, Munich, 1938, and the Vienna Awards? In addition, students are required to understand the consequences of Hungary's anti-Semitic Laws and the Holocaust including the genocides perpetrated prior to the German occupation at Kamenets-Podolski, 1941 and Újvidék, 1942. Finally, students must know about People's Tribunals, although the connection between Nuremburg and international law remains unclear.⁴⁹ A review of three textbooks used in the 2013-2014 school year provide a clue as to how the narrative is manipulated by the current regime.

One text for the twelfth year favored by history teachers who believe that it provides the best preparation for the *érettségi* was published by the Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó. In it the injustice of Trianon is certainly presented, but

44 Professor of History and History didactics Marion Nagy interview by author, 14 May 2014; G Gyapay, "Some current issues in Hungarian History teaching", History teaching in central and eastern European countries, 2 (April-June, 1996), pp. 39-40.

45 B Dürr, *Történelem 8, Az általános iskola 8. osztálya számára* (Debrecen, Korona Kiadó, 1993), pp. 55-56, 101-102, 112-113, 134-135.

46 CS Dupcsik & I Repárszky, *Történelem IV, Középiskola Részére* (Műszaki Kiadó, 2011), pp. 148-149, 152, 187.

47 L Miklósi (President of the Hungarian History Teachers Association), interview, K Benziger (Author), 5 March and 15 May 2014.

48 Kerettanterv – OFI, 6/2014.(1.29).számú EMMI rendelet az egyes köznevelési tárgyú Miniszter rendeletek módosításáról (Ministerial directives about the modification of public education), pp. 40-48.

49 Kerettanterv – OFI, 6/2014, pp. 48-55.

after the Second Vienna Award, 1940 Prime Minister Pál Teleki worries that “Germany would ask too high a price”, foreshadowing the disaster that befalls Hungary. The issue of Hungarian anti-Semitism and collaboration in the genocide is also highlighted, as is the fact that Horthy stopped deportations only after being pressured by the international community. Though there are descriptions of the Újvidék massacre, the Kamanets-Podolski massacre appears unnamed on a chart.⁵⁰ The *Mozaik* and *Nemzedékek Tudása* editions for eighth grade follow the same story line and the *Mozaik* edition includes several interesting exercises in which students explain what territories Hungary might regain, but also how they might be gotten. Another asks students to write a letter protesting the anti-Semitic laws.⁵¹ The horror of the Szálasi regime appears in all texts, and all texts provide pictures and graphic information regarding both the war and the Holocaust. German occupation sets off the endgame in all three texts, and though Hungarian collaboration in the genocide is clearly mentioned, the problems of war crimes and crimes against humanity are given uneven treatment.

Instead of providing narrative and analysis the gimnázium text has students engage in an independent study. Students are told that what seems simple is actually more complex, and it asks students to evaluate some of the same questions asked at Nuremburg. For example: Are leaders of the economy collaborators? Is one guilty for following a command? The questions themselves are good, but more coverage centered on the development of international law needs to be addressed in the text to fully engage the student in the momentous legal and moral issues raised by the tribunal. The *Nemzedékek Tudása* publication asks students: What was Bárdossy’s questionable crime? What was Szálasi’s unquestionable crime? Here the text provides a deliberate distortion of history by clearly damning the German backed Prime Minister Ferenc Szálasi while prevaricating about the Horthy government’s role in the first stages of the Hungarian genocide and its open collaboration with Germany in 1944. The *Mozaik* text asserts that “The people’s courts and judges named by the government had no legal knowledge,” and so political vengeance played a role, “but many who were tried were guilty”.⁵² The student needs more information about the People’s Court’s. There were indeed legal blunders, but the spirit of

50 M Száray & J Kaposi, *Történelem IV középiskolák, 12. évfolyam* (Budapest, Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 2012), pp. 110, 132-143.

51 P Bencsik & A Horváth, *Történelem: A huszadik század története Állampolgári ismeretek 8* (Szeged, Mozaik Kiadó), pp. 63, 96-98; P Horváth, *Történelem 8, az Általános iskolások számára* (Budapest, Nemzedékek Tudása Tankönyvkiadó, 2011), pp. 85-92.

52 M Száray & J Kaposi, *Történelem IV középiskolák...*, p. 154; P Bencsik & A Horváth, *Történelem: A huszadik század...*, p. 101; P Horváth, *Történelem 8...*, p. 130.

the Nuremberg principle and the demands placed on Hungary through the Armistice agreement with the United Nations was carried out.

Though these three texts address this bitter history there is clear discomfort confronting international law head on which seems to conform with the government's distrust of international institutions. The 2014 purchase by the government of the publisher Apáczai Kiadó includes a text by Ferenc Bánhegyi that was included as one of the choices for the 2014 - 2015 school year. Though the text covers much of the same material, it lacks clear analysis. For example, a short biography of Adolph Hitler describes him as a shy, simple soldier, and a good organizer. According to László Miklósi, he is not glorified, but because of the lack of comment, the wording might suggest that "he wasn't such a bad guy". Instead, the text states that had the terms of Versailles not been so "damning," Hitler might not have been successful. In another section concerning Hungary's Nobel Prize winners, it is stated that "scientists [such as Leo Szilard and Edward Teller who are pictured in the text] in the 1930's began leaving Hungary by the dozens" without explaining why.⁵³ The lack of analysis provides the reader with a superficial understanding of the interwar years and skips over significant questions regarding ethical and legal responsibility of the Horthy government. The State's public presentation of Hungary's interwar history goes even further in its attempt to absolve the Horthy government of its relationship with the Axis and genocide.

Public history in Orbán's Hungary

Contradictory memorialization of heroes and events are familiar features of the political landscape as exemplified by a short walk from the Hungarian Parliament to Szabadság Tér (Freedom Square). The liberal Republic is celebrated through a statue of Imre Nagy erected on the fiftieth anniversary of the 1956 Revolution. He gazes back at the Parliament where a statue of the 1848 Revolutionary Lajos Kossuth presides over a square named for him. Further along one encounters Ronald Reagan, a stalwart supporter of neo liberal economics that stands in the shadows of a monument celebrating the liberation of Hungary in World War II by the Soviet Union. Each monument sets off its own narrative as to its place in Hungarian history, but it is the next set of monuments that provide the viewer with the revised history enshrined in Orbán's new Constitution.

⁵³ F Bánhegyi, *Történelem 8. Évfolyam* (Celldömölk, Apáczai Kiadó, 2013), pp. 35, 73; László Miklósi, interview by author, 15 May 2014; L Miklósi, *A Zsidóság helye a Magyar tankönyvekben* (Hungarian Jewry's place in Textbooks); A Tanulmány, "Sorsok Háza-Európai Oktatási Központ", szakmai tartalmáért felelős közép és kelet-Európai Történelem és Társadalom Kutatásért Közalapítvány megbízásából készült, December 2013.

On 21 July, 2015, a new monument was completed on Szabadság Tér commemorating the occupation of Hungary on 19 March, 1944 by Germany during World War II. The statue depicts a German eagle swooping down on the Archangel Gabriel, who symbolizes the Christian Hungarian Kingdom. From its inception the monument stimulated protest not only from the *Mazsibisz* (The Federation of Jewish Hungarian Communities) but from the center left, and historians. For example, on February 1, 2014 a small crowd of between 250 and 300 persons braved the frigid Hungarian winter on Szabadság Tér in Budapest to protest against the proposed monument. Construction began on 8 April, 2014. Protesters from the Liberal and Democratic Coalition (DK) initiated a protest in which the worker's scaffolding was carefully taken down at the end of each workday which ultimately led to arrests. For them, the monument portrays a narrative of World War II in which Hungary lies helplessly at the mercy of the Third Reich and unable to effect agency during the German occupation, resurrecting a highly charged debate regarding the responsibility of the interwar regime for this stage of the Holocaust.⁵⁴ Those opposed to the monument saw a deliberate attempt by the state to appropriate history, especially as the monument was completed under the cover of darkness.

The location of the new monument seems to underscore the government's continued attempt to court the right wing. Less than a year before, on 3 November, 2013 a statue to Horthy was dedicated at the Reform Church of the Homecoming located on the same square. Horthy's founding of the Church coincided with the First Vienna Award in 1938 in which the Axis gave back a substantial part of Slovakia to Hungary. The pastor of the church, Loránt Hegedüs, claimed that it was natural to pay tribute to Horthy because he was a "true reform believer". Reminiscent of the interwar period, Hegedüs called those protesting the statue the "army of yellow stars" who were part of a "cult of suffering".⁵⁵ Significantly, the event was attended by Jobbik.

At the same time the narrative of avoidance stimulates contest as evidenced by a counter-memorial erected in front of the government's March 19, 1944 memorial at Szabadság Square. Arrayed in front of the official memorial are artifacts from the victims of the Holocaust that include shoes, suitcases,

54 "Nem avatják fel a nemzet megszállási emlékművet (The nation's occupation monument is not going to be unveiled)", ATV, 21 July, 2015 (available at <http://www.atv.hu/belfold/2104021-nem-avatjak-fel-a-nemzet-megszallasi-emlekmuvet>, as accessed on 22 July, 2015), pp. 1-3.

55 The Reform Church did not agree with Hegedüs and considered whether he should be defrocked. T Lengyel, "Zsidóva védekezett Hegedüs Loránt (Loránt Hegedüs blames the Jews while defending himself)", *Népszava*, 31 January 2014, p. 10.

photographs, and letters. The memorial attracts a large number of tourists and onlookers. Condemnation of the official memorial is explicit. For example, one of the messages on the counter-memorial reads “My mother died at Auschwitz, thank you Gabriel”.

The power of images to shape and manipulate the history of the Holocaust has been well discussed. For example, Soviet presentation of the holocaust shifted according to need. A photograph by Dmitrii Baltermant entitled “Grief” displayed in 1942 was presented to the Soviet public as Jewish victims murdered by the Germans to rouse outrage about the barbarity of the occupiers, whereas by 1965 the picture was used to memorialize “human tragedy”.⁵⁶ Following the war Soviet ideology celebrated the triumph of the proletariat over fascist oppression and so the Holocaust was conflated with the great struggle of the proletariat and ignored.⁵⁷

In Hungary too, presentation of the Holocaust has shifted according to political need. In 2004 the state funded Holocaust Memorial Center was opened in Budapest that includes a permanent exhibition entitled “From Deprivation of Rights to Genocide”. Indicating that in many ways at least at the national level Hungary was willing to confront its past. The ascendance of Christian Nationalist politics has reversed this trend.⁵⁸ Obscuring the history of genocide is of paramount importance to the government. They are aided in this attempt by an exogenous agency called the Veritas Institute created to adjudicate questions of history for the government. The institute has been placed in between the government and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. At a conference held on 13 May, 2014 at the Academy of Sciences historian Gábor Gyáni claimed that the Veritas Institute was enabling the government to “use history education to legitimize their power”. According to historian Mária Ormos, though Germany had occupied Hungary in 1944, the active participation in the genocide that followed made it impossible to view Hungarians as victims especially since the “majority including the intellectuals helped build an altar for the victims”.⁵⁹ More recently, the Director of the Veritas Institute, Sándor Szakaly claimed that Hungary’s Numerus Clausus Law 1920, that limited the number of Jews who could attend university, had not denied access to Jews but instead had “opened doors for others”. In the

56 D Schneer, “Picturing grief: Soviet holocaust photography at the intersection of history and memory”, S Farmer, “going visual: Holocaust representation and historical method”, *The American Historical Review*, 115, 1 February 2010, pp. 42-45, 116-120.

57 JE Young, *The texture of memory* (New Haven, 1993).

58 Z Vági, L Csösz, & G Kádár, *The holocaust in Hungary*, pp. 359-361.

59 G Miklós, “Gőzerővel retusálják a múltat (They very diligently retouched the past)”, *Népszabadság*, 14 May 2014, pp. 4-5.

same interview he said that he could not rule out a statue for Horthy's Minister of Culture, Balint Homan. His comments brought quick denunciation from the opposition who called for his resignation. According to Szabolcs Szita, Director of the Budapest Holocaust Museum, Homan was an ardent supporter of the German faction within the Horthy government and that the Numerus Clausus law, Europe's first twentieth century anti-Semitic law, most certainly denied access to Jews. Though FIDESZ distanced itself from Szakaly's remarks they continue to rely on the institute for guidance.⁶⁰ It is a narrative of avoidance that enables right populist narratives to thrive.⁶¹

Conclusion

Leaving out unsavory parts of a nation's history is certainly not new. The current debate over the monuments at Szabadság Tér and the interwar years only underscore the contradictions created by majoritarian interpretations of the past. Appealing to a more chauvinistic narrative resonates with a significant number of Hungarians. Saul Friedländer claims that in times of crisis, whether perceived or real one searches for the vestige of the past from communal memory that represents what is permanent and lasting.⁶² Hungary's inability to right its economy since the establishment of the 1989 Republic has helped stimulate a populist strain of Christian National politics that at once appeals to those yearning for the social security of Hungary's second communist regime under János Kadar, 1956-1988 and at the same time pines for a past connected to the Hungarian Kingdom last reimagined by Admiral Miklós Horthy, 1920-1944. These two strands of yearning, which would otherwise be anathema to each other demonstrates a rearrangement of historical memory that has been carefully manipulated by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his FIDESZ/KDMP coalition to forward a vision of an illiberal state that highlights national values in contrast to the E.U.

Hungary is dependent on the EU for the modernization projects it needs to attract investment. For example, infrastructure projects that include Budapest's new number four subway line and new trams have been largely

60 Hírek (News), "Numerus Clausus", *168ora*, 30 Junius, 2016, p. 5.

61 One is reminded of Primo Levy's essay, "The memory of offense", *Bitburg in moral and political perspective*, GA Harmon, ed. (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 135-137.

62 S Friedländer, *When memory comes* (Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), p. 69.

funded by the EU.⁶³ And yet, in a speech given on 15 March 2016 Orbán blamed the EU for a “mass migration” that would threaten Christianity and Europe’s nation states, and then in a not too subtle tip to eugenics, alluded to the danger of blending cultures and populations.⁶⁴ The nativist sentiment that is intimately intertwined with the intense nationalism evoked by both Orbán and Jobbik was fortified by the passage of close to 400,000 largely Muslim refugees through Hungary during the summer of 2015. A fence built that year was erected to staunch the flow.⁶⁵

Many Hungarians perceive being left behind economically in the EU and this is not just perception. *Magyar Nemzet* recently reported that 30% of Hungarians live below the poverty line.⁶⁶ In this light, the promise of a strong state offers a promise to control Hungarian destiny, whereas globalism forwarded by the EU seems naive. Cosmopolitans both outside and inside the borders are dangerous. The terrorist attacks in France and Spain only seem to reinforce the notion that the enemy is at the gate providing justification for the wall that was built to keep them out. Horthy’s interwar politics promised to right the wrongs done to Hungary, but ultimately failed to produce the imagined great European kingdom he had promised. What we are left with is a lost cause populist narrative that at once explains defeat and dangles the possibility of redemption through the return of the strong state.

Hungarians have long been accustomed to illusion in politics and the Orbán regime follows a pattern that began in the nineteenth century. White washing the history of the interwar years is critical to Orbán’s project because it is rewritten to provide an easily digested story that enables the polity to view itself as a victim while avoiding uncomfortable questions of genocide and war

63 Between 2007-2013 EU contributed over 720 million Euros to the Metro 4 project. Between 2014 and 2016 the EU will spend 34 billion Euros on projects projects that will further enhance Hungarian infrastructure and quality of life in order to make Hungary more attractive for investment. A Ambrus & H Miklos, “Huxit vagy amit akartok: EU nélkül csak a sokk biztos (Huxit or whatever you want: Without the EU only [economic] shock is sure)”, *Népszabadság*, 5 July, 2016, pp. 1, 6. This article was written in response to an almost casual suggestion that Hungary should consider following the U.K.’s lead.

64 March 15 is a national holiday that commemorates the failed Hungarian Revolution of 1848. “Glory to the heroes, honor to the brave: Viktor Orbán, 15 March, *Hungary Today*, 18 March 2016 (available at Hungarytoday.hu/news/museum-glory-heroes-honour-brave-prime-minister-viktor-orbans-march-15-speech-full-47458, as accessed on 19 March, 2016).

65 G Sarnyai, Nagyön drága less és lehet, hogy semmit sem ér a hatázar ([The fence] along the border will be very expensive and may not work at all), *Magyar Nemzet Online*, 18 June, 2015 (available at <http://mno.hu/belfold/nagyon-draga-less-es-lehet-hogy-semmit-sem-er-a-hatazar>, as assessed on 19 June 2015).

66 T Wiedemann, “Lét minimum alatt éla magyarok harmada (One third of Hungarians live below the poverty level)”, *Magyar Nemzet Online*, 15 May, 2017 (available at <https://mno.hu/belfold/letminimum-alatt-el-a-magyarok-harmada-2398975>, as accessed on 16 May 2017), pp. 1-2.

crimes.⁶⁷ The story of the resurrection of the Hungarian Kingdom is a familiar one that has its origins in the nineteenth century, reinterpreted and repeated in the twentieth and now twenty-first centuries. Never mind that these stories bear little resemblance to an historical narrative.⁶⁸

As we have discussed, the success of Orbán's revised narrative of the interwar years is thwarted by an embedded dissonance found within the triumphal story of Hungary presented in curriculum and in text. There is unquestionably a disjuncture between the ideals of liberal revolution and the idea of the strong state. Orbán's promise to create a vibrant strong state continues to resonate with around 24% of the voters leaving Jobbik to compete with the MSZP for second place, each polling around 13% of the polity. The big problem remains with the close to 38% of Hungarian voters who have no party or are undecided.⁶⁹ In this light one wonders how carefully Hungarians are paying attention to this debate over the history of Horthy's Hungary and its role in genocide. Large scale demonstrations opposing the government have taken place, but have not resulted in a unified opposition movement leaving state interpretation to be crafted by a minority. Both Fritz Stern and Erik Fromm warned that illiberal narratives had to be challenged in order to sustain the liberal state.⁷⁰ Have a majority of the polity adopted the illiberal "state of mind" in which decision making, that includes the political socialization of their children, is left only to those in authority?

67 R Braham has repeatedly called attention to this problem since 1989 warning, "History is a formidable weapon... particularly... dangerous in the hands of chauvinistic nationalists bent on shaping history". "An assault on historical memory: Hungarian nationalists and the holocaust", *East European Quarterly*, 33(4), 1999, p. 421.

68 E Hobsbawm notes, "National identity is above all a device for defining the community of the innocent and identifying the guilty who are responsible for our predicament" and that "Nationalism requires too much belief in what is patently not so". *Nations and nationalism since 1790: Programme, myth, meality* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 12, 174.

69 "The summer break is the voters" (available at www.zavecze.hu/nyar-pihenon-valsztok, as accessed on 21 August 2017).

70 F Stern, *The failure of illiberalism*, E Fromm, *Escape from freedom* (New York, Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1968).