

Nationalism and Internationalism

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Conducted between 1992 and 1995, COST-A2, a research project dedicated to 'Migration: Europe's Integration and the Labour Force', was part of the European Commission's programme for 'European Co-Operation in the Field of Scientific and Technical Research (COST)'. With twenty European countries participating, COST-A2 was one of the first social sciences projects ever to be carried out in the context of the COST programme, which is otherwise dominated by issues of technology and the natural sciences. The project's pioneering role was reflected in the difficulties faced by the Management Committee of COST-A2 – of which the editor himself was a member – in its efforts to conceive, design, co-ordinate, and implement the project. Concepts, channels of information, and trans-national research networks had to be developed from scratch before the actual project could be launched successfully.

Despite certain difficulties of implementation, the research policy impulse provided by the European Commission eventually produced a considerable range of interesting results. The most visible sign of the success of COST-A2 were the various interdisciplinary workshops and conferences organized in many European countries, during which a wide range of research findings were exchanged, discussed, and finalized for publication. One of these conferences took place from 2-4 March 1995, at the University of Berne. The very broad theme of the conference – 'Nationalism and Ethnicity' – was broken down into the following three sub-topics: 'Ethnicity and the Construction of Identity', 'Ethnicity and the Nation-State', and 'Ethnicity and Nationalism in Eastern Europe'. Thirty speakers presented their papers, and their findings were deepened in the lively discussions that ensued. With the publication of the present volume, some of these papers are now available to a wider audience. Considering the highly topical nature of the articles in this collection with respect to both politics and the social sciences, we feel quite certain that this book will

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Re-Imagining the Jew in Hungary: The Reconstruction of Ethnicity through Political Affiliation¹

Donna Meryl Goldstein

Introduction

Why are Hungarians of Jewish background still culturally constructed as foreigners in Hungary despite their attempts, during the last forty years, to assimilate and self-censor any revitalization of Jewish identity either in religious or ethnic terms? Why has contemporary nationalism in Hungary accelerated both the rise of democratic institutions and a publicly legitimized form of anti-Semitism? Also, why are Hungarianness and Jewishness, in popular definitions of Hungarian citizenship, mutually exclusive? In order to come to a better understanding of these questions, there is the need to come to grips with the Hungarian concept of citizenship, how it has shifted at various historical moments, and, specifically for this case, how it has been used and applied to Hungarians of Jewish background. In the following sections, I explore the changing concepts of cultural citizenship in Hungary in recent manifestations of right-wing and popular discourse, despite the accommodating behaviour of a large proportion of urban assimilated Hungarians of Jewish background. For many Hungarians, Jews are still assumed to be entirely culturally different than the 'real

1. An early version of this chapter was presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington D. C. 1993, on a panel titled, 'Citizenship Contested: Cultural Difference, Belonging and Not Belonging in Nation-States'. I would like to thank Anna Werner and her family for their insights and support, Eric Hirsch for early conversations on this topic, and Gita Steiner-Khamsi for her comments. I also thank Vera H. and her network in Budapest for research and translation support of all kinds. I take responsibility for all interpretations made here.

Hungarians', and on these grounds are discriminated against.²

In 1993, approximately three years after the radical economic changes from a centrally planned economy to a free market economy, and in the midst of a political rhetoric of anti-communism and democracy, Hungary seemed to be experiencing a rebirth of anti-Semitic discourse. The leader of the ruling government's party (Hungarian Democratic Forum), Istvan Csorba, announced that there was an international, Zionist-inspired conspiracy against Hungary that included the International Monetary Fund.³ During that year, I interviewed twenty middle- and upper-class citizens of ages varying from fourteen to eighty-four, most of whom felt some connection to a Jewish past or a Jewish background. I hoped that an understanding of this particular group's subject position, that is how they viewed themselves and their own identity as Hungarian citizens, would somehow provide a clue to understanding the resurgent nationalism and anti-Semitic discourse which seemed to characterize the changing notions of citizenship accompanying the Hungarian political and economic transitions. It seemed that the image of the Jew as 'foreigner' and 'outsider' in Hungary was historically persistent despite changing circumstances.

The Hungarian construction of alterity, for example, seems to have changed drastically in the post-Communist era. Jewish Hungarians in the post-1989 period, it seems, are seen as the generalized 'Others' on the grounds of their location in metropolitan areas as well as their past political alliances with the Communist Party. These characteristics ought to be examined not simply as chance happenings, but rather as a 'defining' feature for many of those Jews who reconstituted their lives in Budapest at the end of the Second World War and who opted to stay in Hungary after the events of 1956 (where an attempt was made to reform Communist politics by a broad spectrum of alliances from the political left and right). Additionally, their metropolitanism, which connects them to westernization/modernization processes and new joint-venture capitalism projects, characterize them as 'new' enemies within a developing post-communist society which is experiencing new levels of unemployment and capitalist forms of insecurity.

2. The rhetoric of exclusion which uses cultural difference rather than racial difference has been noted recently in the literature on European integration and immigration, most recently and cogently in anthropology by Stolcke (1995). This chapter offers a preliminary investigation of one case concerning one particular group which has already passed through various exclusionary moments based on shifting conceptualizations of 'foreignness' and 'otherness'.

3. 'Hungarian Steps Up Attack on Rightist Opponent', *New York Times*, 9 March, 1993, p. A7.

In the Hungarian case, Jews are simultaneously re-imagined as both 'new capitalists' and 'old communists', both potential enemies within the new Hungary.

Cultural Citizenship Along Religious, Linguistic and Political Lines

Rosaldo (1994: 402) has used the notion of 'cultural citizenship' to refer to 'the right to be different and to belong in a participatory democratic sense'. According to Rosaldo, the idea of cultural citizenship assumes that, 'in a democracy, social justice calls for equity among all citizens, even when such differences as race, religion, class, gender, or sexual orientation potentially could be used to make certain people less equal or inferior to others'. Rosaldo uses the term to speak about the North American context and the lines of exclusion that have been historically drawn in cases which excluded women from voting and, more recently, excluded polyglot citizens from standard citizenship by imagining a 'one language-one nation' model as the prototype of the nation-state. I find this construction of cultural citizenship useful in tracking the shifting case of Hungarian notions of belonging with regard to Hungarians of Jewish background. In this case, notions of citizenship have moved from religious to linguistic markers, and in the contemporary case, towards political lines of demarcation, each time reconstructing notions of citizenship in a manner that made dual identity, or in Rosaldo's terms, 'polyglot' citizenship a conceptual and real impossibility.

Jews in the Age of Linguistic Nationalism

In the mid-1800s, Jews that found themselves living within the boundaries of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were able to choose an identity as Hungarian citizens. According to Deák (1983: 1), the Habsburg Monarchy, and its army, although German-speaking, 'showed no preference for any one nationality during the entire period of its existence'. Rather, in the Compromise Agreement of 1867, which divided the territory into the Austrian Empire and the Hungarian Kingdom, what counted was that Magyar became the official language for the Hungarian Kingdom and, hence, linguistic commitment became the sole prerequisite to claim citizenship. In this period, what could be called the 'nationalization' of the Jews of East Central Europe occurred. By 1880, 58.5 per cent of all Jews (within the borders of

Hungary at that time) indicated Magyar as their mother tongue, and by 1910, 77.8 per cent (Deák, 1983: 7). Deák (1983) estimates that between the 1780s and 1914, over 700,000 Jews became Magyars and thus citizens on the basis of language choice. Another important feature of the construction of alterity concerning Jews in Hungarian history is that Jews who came to Budapest in the nineteenth century were not identified as a separate ethnic group, but were usually counted as Germans (Deák, 1983: 11). The situation could be described in the following manner:

Prior to 1848, Jews were forbidden, at least theoretically, to settle in most Hungarian cities. Then came emancipation, thanks to the efforts of Magyar liberal nationalists, and within a few decades the situation had changed fundamentally. By 1900, one out of every four inhabitants of Budapest, a metropolis of close to one million inhabitants, was Jewish, and so was every other voter. (Deák, 1983: 14)

Historians have noted that many of the Jews in this context willingly gave up religious practice and spoke Magyar as a sign of loyalty to the Hungarian nation-state and as a sign of their willingness to become Hungarian citizens. We don't have a set of documents to tell us exactly what these subjects in this particular position felt in these times. However, part of the standard interpretation by my contemporary elderly informants concerning their own ancestors was that Jews in the Austro-Hungarian Empire were already highly assimilated and never very religious. They were always, to borrow Rosaldo's notion, 'polyglot citizens'. Many of the elderly Jews I interviewed spoke with pride about parents who spoke German and Magyar equally well. According to Deák (1983), because of the numerical decline via assimilation, the representation of both Germans and Jews as separate ethnic groups in Hungary occurred long before the 1940s:

The Jewish communities in the Habsburg Monarchy flourished as much as the German, thanks to the successful urbanization of the Jewish rural population and the influx of immigrants from Russia. But parallel emigration to the West, a declining birth rate, and the total assimilation of many into the Gentile world caused the Jewish population to diminish in some parts of East Central Europe even before the end of the Habsburg Monarchy. (Deák, 1983: 2-3)

It is important to consider this early assimilation mode of Hungarian Jews via language choice and the promise of Hungarian citizenship. In this first round of becoming Hungarian in the mid-1800s, Jews in

urban settings gave up any vestiges of religious identity and made Magyar their language of choice in order to belong. In this particular 'social contract' between the liberal ruling class and assimilating Jews, the categories declared Jews to be Magyars in *nationality* and *Israelites* in *denomination* (Várdy, 1986: 137). According to Várdy, this construction gave rise to a long-term identity crisis among assimilated Jews in Hungary:

The distortions of assimilation gave rise to examples of grossly overdoing 'Magyarism', to abject conformity or a feeling of hopeless outsiderhood. The gentrified Jew, the Jewish contractor raised to the peerage, the rancorous internationalist, the bourgeois closet-Bolshevik, the international celebrity writing in several languages at once, the Habsburg partisan, irredentist, Stalinist, and anti-Zionist Jew – not to speak of the secretly observing high Party functionary – have all been conspicuous examples of a crisis of identity of the whole Hungarian society which has especially been dogging assimilating Jews for more than a century. (Várdy, 1986: 137)

Várdy also views 'modern' anti-Semitism as having emerged in Hungary by about 1880 and as having been based on the idea of 'race', which in its particular Hungarian form culminated with the vision of Arrow Cross fascists in 1944.

Jews as Capitalists

As the new Hungary turns toward the capitalist West for economic aid, it is the urban and educated middle class who are in the position to enter into the joint-venture craze. To some Hungarians, this group looks overwhelmingly Jewish. So much of the literature analysing the Holocaust has explored this dimension of anti-Semitism and the accompanying representation of Jews, which promoted the imagery of the 'Jew as capitalist' in pre-war Europe, and how this imagery helped to flame the anti-Semitic programme of the time. In Hungary, the statistics concerning the class position of Jews before the war have been analysed as part of an ethnicity/class model for explaining anti-Semitism. According to Karady (1986), in 1945 only about a third of the Jews of Budapest were working class, and this despite the 1920 *numerus clausus*⁴ which forced many Jews to emigrate or to take menial jobs. An institutionalized selection process beginning in 1920 and

4. *Numerus clausus* officially limited the number of Jews permitted to enter the University system.

continuing through to the anti-Jewish Laws of the 1930s, in varying degrees restricted the employment of Jews in certain professions and limited their access to university education.

One of the recurring 'self-descriptors' used by informants of Jewish background to describe their ancestors was that of being 'talented' and 'clever'. Given the many institutionalized barriers to Jewish survivorship and mobility in Budapest since 1920, it makes sense as to why these words so frequently emerge in oral history reports. If there is any common thread of identification among these individuals, it lies in the great deal of pride each of them express about some 'clever and talented' relative that persevered in spite of difficult historical circumstances, including the events of 1944-45, where Hungarians of Jewish origin were forced into ghettos and over 500,000 perished in labour and Nazi concentration camps.

Jews as Communists

It is of interest to note that although the great majority of Hungarian Jews perished in the last months of the Second World War, some did survive and, rather than emigrating, re-established their lives in Hungary and more specifically in Budapest. Várdy (1986) estimates that 60 per cent of Jews within the area of present-day Hungary perished and almost 80 per cent of provincial Jewry was exterminated (Várdy, 1986: 134-135). Since there have been no separate census figures since 1949 indicating religious or racial origin, the numbers suggest that approximately 80,000-100,000 Jews have survived and most are in Budapest. Karady (1986: 87) argues that Jews who survived the Holocaust and returned to Hungary after the war were, in some cases, seeking 'compensatory' education for their situation before the war, and many of the new institutions were Party schools which produced a new power elite.

The children of survivors, who were either very young during the war years or born immediately after the war, generally celebrate Christmas, are atheists, and are thoroughly urban - and most of them claim they did not know they were Jewish or of Jewish origin until they were adolescents. Their parents, many of whom became Communist Party members after the war, hoped that the question of Jewish identity would be erased by complete devotion to the Party, and they shrouded their Jewish origins in self-censorship and vague references to the past, especially with regard to the war years. That second generation of adults, who are today in their forties and fifties, explain almost ritualistically the surprise that they felt as teenagers when they

found out that they were 'of Jewish origin'. Many of them replicated this strategy with their own children, delaying the mention of a Jewish past to this next generation. The consistency of these stories of 'closeted identities' is interesting to consider. It highlights the extent to which, in many cases, Jewish identity was and continues to be a label maintained externally rather than by the subjects themselves. Hence, as Magyar was the marker for citizenship within the nation-state, in the Communist era, political allegiance to the Party became the marker and the guarantor of citizenship. For many Jews of this generation, claiming devotion to the Communist Party was not only a form of claiming citizenship as it was constructed at the time, but was also a final assimilatory note into an ideological stance which made Party affiliation and Jewish identity incompatible. From the subject of Jewish background's position, the definition of assimilation shifted in these different contexts, and compliance rather than simple existence meant access to social mobility and the rights of citizenship.

One particularly compelling explanation for why Jews were successful Communists in the aftermath of the war had to do simply with how they collectively experienced the war. One must remember the role of Russian soldiers in liberating Budapest from the Germans and from Hungary's own Arrow Cross fascists. Likewise, in terms of 'political reliability', as far as the Soviets were concerned, 'by virtue of their past harassments and thus, indirectly, of their origins, surviving Jews became the possessors of this new kind of inherited social capital' (Karady, 1986: 79). Since so many of these survivors felt no particular religious feelings, having been assimilated and given up religious identity in an earlier round of citizenship politics, they felt that there was no reason to make any specific claim of a Jewish identity. For my informants it was clear that claiming a Jewish identity necessitates a religious faith, one that these informants did not share. They were more comfortable describing themselves in terms of having 'a Jewish background'. At the same time, however, they had seen labour and concentration camps or been forced into the ghetto during the war years and their lives were forever transformed by these collective experiences. In this context, the collective biography of suffering and the political choice to support Communist Party politics led to a new level of erasure of Jewish identity in any overtly ethnic or religious sense. An important aspect of Communist Party politics, it ought to be remembered, was that they were anti-nationalist and, for the most part, prohibited overt manifestations of anti-Semitism. The formal meritocratic language which sought to abolish class and status privileges as well as anti-Jewish restrictions was an attractive ideology to this surviving cohort (Karady, 1986: 77).

Communist Party doctrine itself strictly forbade anti-Semitism as well as nationalisms of any kind, substituting nationalist discourse with a discourse of 'Communist brotherhood' with neighbouring nations and thereby suppressing particularistic religious sentiments or national identity questions concerning Hungarianness. In practice, religious and ethnic affiliations were supplanted by Communist Party activities. Jews in the Communist Party willingly accepted the unofficial form of anti-Semitism within the Party which they say 'kept anyone with a Jewish face outside of the public view'. They also accepted the Party's attempt to promote members from non-bourgeois roots, and, in this construction, urban bourgeois survivors of Jewish origin were perhaps hindered from mainstream advancement within the Party. Religious and ethnic affiliations were explicitly discouraged and replaced. In this non-religious, non-ethnic world, Jews in the Hungarian Communist Party could feel as Hungarian as anybody else and would swallow what they considered rather muted anti-Semitism in exchange for full citizenship. The elimination of the religious question in the form of 'We are all Communists' for once allowed Jew and non-Jew to claim equal rights of citizenship, although not necessarily to Hungarianness.

The discourse of assimilated Jews in Budapest in 1993 partially reflects this early history: informants mention the participation of their ancestors in the founding of the Hungarian nation, and especially of the glory of ancestors who served in the military as proof of their Hungarianness. This, in turn, is usually cited as proof of their own personal distance from any Jewish cultural or religious identity.

For assimilated Jews in Budapest who became Communists (and Hungarian from their own perspective), the 'Others' were the Orthodox Jews who remained isolated from mainstream Hungarian life, spoke Yiddish and not Magyar, and whose religious life, it was believed, made it impossible for them to be 'true' Magyars. From this perspective, one could not be a religious Jew and a secular Hungarian at the same time, and this dichotomy still exists in the minds of most Hungarians today. The ambivalence about the Budapest Jews, however, is likewise expressed not only by contemporary nationalists who construct them as foreign, but also by the few remaining religious Jews in Hungary who question the 'Jewishness' of these survivors in Budapest. One Orthodox Jew who is part of a religious community of 1,000 people in the small city of Debrecen in Northern Hungary said this of the Budapest Jews: 'They don't know anything about the Jewish religion - you cannot separate culture and religion. They celebrate Christmas, intermarry with non-Jews, and they know nothing of the traditions. Most of them are Communists. So, what makes them Jewish anymore?'

The Reinvention of the Past in Times of Political Transition

The 1950s brought an increasingly Stalinist-style Party and group of leaders to power in Hungary, including Rákosi, the Soviet-appointed chief widely known both for his Jewish origins and equally well-known for his own anti-Semitic purges. For most Hungarians, however, he was known ironically as the 'first Jewish king of Hungary' and despised as the pinnacle of *foreign* Soviet domination over sovereign Hungary. (Rákosi had spent many years in exile in the Soviet Union prior to taking power.) For many Hungarians, the continuity and autonomy of the nation was symbolically broken during this particular reign of 'Jewish' terror.

For non-Jewish Hungarians, this confluence of the images, epitomized during the 1950s reign of Rákosi, of the 'Jew as foreigner' and of the 'Jew as Communist', was and remains a very well accepted idea - as accepted as the 'Jew as capitalist' image had been in the years preceding World War II. At the same time, it is, seemingly more in the construction of the folk and 'authentic' folk tradition that Hungarians are searching for a new sense of national identity in the context of a rapidly changing Europe.

Hungarians, at specific moments of re-imagining their past, trace themselves back to ancestry with Mongolian plains tribes and to warriors such as 'Attila the Hun'. Hofer (1991) outlines the way in which rival notions of Hungarianness have been developed by competing groups of elite during the last century and argues that the history of national ethnography in Hungary helped develop different symbolic economies including that of modernist/traditionalist, East/West, and populist/communist. Hofer (1991: 153), for example, discusses the 1909 picture entitled 'Attila's Palace' as 'linking the popular and Far Eastern motifs with ancient Hungarian history and with the Huns suggest[ing] that peasant culture retained ancient Oriental traditions and that the predecessors of Hungarians and the Huns earlier lived like the Hungarian peasants and herdsmen of a more recent past'. Hofer's (1991) description of different symbolic economies are interesting to apply to the construction of Jewish identity within a post-communist and emerging nationalist consciousness.

The historical re-imaginings and constructions of the Jew as 'other' continually challenge the dual possibility of Jew as Hungarian, and over time these constructions have encouraged Hungarians of Jewish background to censor the Jewish question from their lives completely. The possibility of a dual identity as both Jew and Hungarian was non-existent, as was the identity as both Jew and Communist. This is illustrated in various practices by the subjects themselves, including

conversion to Christianity, the practice of changing one's name, and hiding the details of 1944 from later generations. In their wish to distance themselves from a Jewish identity, this last generation also avoided talking excessively of the war years to their children and grandchildren. The newest manifestation of 'assimilation' is to avoid mentioning loyalty to Communist Party politics and of one's sentiments concerning the events of 1956.

The Uprising of 1956 and the Struggle for the Interpretation of the Past

Especially potent is the interpretation that is assigned to the uprising of 1956 (which briefly began as a reform movement within the Communist Party and meant to move it away from Soviet domination) and its aftermath: Hungarian nationalists have attempted to co-opt the interpretation of 1956, emphasizing its nationalist and revolutionary nature – as something expressive of the first wave of discontent with the Soviet system. Hungarian Communists, and especially those of Jewish origin, are less eager to celebrate the meaning of 1956. While many recognize some of the reformist potentials expressed in the 1956 movement, they generally tend to emphasize the criminal and fascist elements that participated in the uprising; they also have tended to justify the Soviet domination that followed 1956 because of the participation of fascists in the movement. The attempt to claim 1956 in any specific way is so heatedly debated that recently an institute was set up in Budapest to study day by day, and hour by hour the events that occurred during late October and early November in 1956.

The interpretation of 1956 has also embedded within it a piece of 'the Jewish question'. It is tacitly recognized that the fear of the fascist elements in 1956 is what led to the lessening of support by some in the Communist Party. Communist Party members of Jewish origin are recognized as having been influential in emphasizing the fascist elements that participated in the 1956 uprising. This issue continues to be important in terms of defining political identity in the new Hungary. Where you were and which group you ultimately sided with politically during the events of 1956 are partially indicative of one's present political ideology. For many Hungarians of Jewish background who supported the Soviets, it was also a sign of political reliability influenced by their previous experiences during the reign of the Arrow Cross in the 1940s.

In October of 1993, the '1956 Uprising' (as it is known in the

West) was celebrated in Hungary; it has, since the fall of the Communist Party in 1989, become a symbol of Hungarian nationalism and independence from the Soviet Bloc. During the 1992 celebration, skinheads bearing swastikas appeared at the national celebration and forced the president to leave the podium without speaking. The appearance of these young neo-fascists at the celebration confirmed for many in Hungary that feelings of national independence and autonomy from the former Soviet Union are linked to the rise of nationalism, fascism, and increasing anti-Semitism.

In October 1993, the struggle for ownership of the meaning of 1956 continued when a journalist and his oppositional news-team were dismissed because they had allegedly doctored a tape of the celebration of the year before. This journalist, widely respected and also known to be 'of Jewish origin', was accused of exaggerating the strength of the skinhead participation in the 1992 events, and was thus accused of tainting the government's image at home and abroad by implying that the government tolerated support of fascist skinheads. The coverage of events by this press group was also fuelled by the explicit nationalist and anti-Semitic language used by one of the far-right parties, which until late in 1993 was part of the coalition government. The opposition television news programme, the only alternative to the pro-government programme, was thus closed down, leaving all of Hungary with only one pro-government channel. The dismissed journalist was replaced by a right-wing pro-government director who is quoted as saying that Hungarian television had been (until now) 'ruled by the bleating sing-song of Yiddishism'.⁵

The New Nationalism after 1989

Many factors influence the contemporary position of Jews in Hungary. These include a collective history not necessarily determined by feelings of collective identity by the subjects themselves, as well as the changes in Hungary since 1989. These changes include a peaceful abdication of power by the Soviet-aligned Communist Party and the resurgence of Hungarian nationalism in the aftermath of forty years of Communism. Another important factor is that Hungary lost 67 per cent of its national territory and over 3 million ethnic Hungarians in the border shifts at the end of World War I, thus positioning Hungarians

5. Zygotian, Dork, 'Anthro 212: To Know or Not to Know', Editorial, *The Hungarian Times*, Monday November 1, 1993, Issue No. 23, p. 1.

as ethnic minorities within neighbouring Romania and the Slovak Republic. The pain of this loss is periodically rekindled by nationalists. Additionally, the continual re-imagining of Hungarian culture as something purely folk rather than urban ('népy' rather than 'urbános'), and which defines 'authentic' Hungarianness within the mythic peasant rural past, is a set of images which right-wing nationalists have drawn upon in a discourse of exclusion. It seems that one form of developing Hungarian national consciousness, perhaps best illustrated in the configuration of images used by extreme right-wing leaders such as Csurka (quoted above), draws upon a construction of Hungarianness that celebrates the existence of a pure Hungarian peasant, is anti-Communist, and is reactive against the forced 'Communist brotherhood' ideology that marked periods of Hungarian post-war history. In this construction of national identity, the ethnic Hungarians who live within the boundaries of present-day Romania represent an integral part of Hungarian authenticity, including their folk dances and musical traditions, which are imagined as 'untouched' by the Soviet period of influence.

The combination of the particular circumstances of Jewish history in the Hungarian context and the post-Communist search for a new identity not tied to Soviet era iconography, has once more situated the Jew as 'Other'. One interpretation of this coinciding of particular histories and the reactivation of peasant imagery, which necessarily excludes Hungarians of Jewish descent, is that in times of rapid political change (which are also accompanied by economic hardships often downplayed by Western commentators), minority groups are excluded from the image of citizenship so that a coherent (if imagined) image of 'we' can emerge (Dominguez, 1993). The two alterity markers labelling Hungarians of Jewish background as both metropolitans and communists in the post-war period and more recently as metropolitans and capitalists in the post-Communist period, although seemingly mutually exclusive at any one point in time, contrast deeply with the image of the rural Hungarian peasant folk tradition and imagery recently being drawn upon.

Recently, Hungary has been experiencing the arrival of new immigrant groups, especially to Budapest, thus continuing the challenge to narrow notions of belonging. The experience of Hungarian Jews and the construction of Hungarian nationalism is key to understanding the possibility of creating a multicultural state, one that is politically democratic but which also provides full cultural citizenship to all. The experience of Jews in Hungary can thus be compared and contrasted with the experiences of newly arriving immigrants in order to understand the processes of assimilation, ethnic identity formation,

and the re-creation of nationalism and anti-foreigner sentiment under contemporary circumstances. Despite the highly assimilated nature of contemporary Hungarian Jewry and their historically accommodating behaviour, rising anti-Semitism has recently been reported there.⁶ National diversity, even in an imagined form, is potentially threatening to the identity of the nation.

Erasing the Communist Past and the New Nationalism

Since 1989 and the fall of the original Communist Party from power, Hungarians have achieved a new level of social, economic, and political autonomy, are busy erasing the memory of Soviet occupation, and are recovering an independent political and economic structure. Surrounded by the continual disintegration of former Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, post-Communist Hungary struggles to achieve economic reforms and democratic institutions which bear a uniquely Hungarian national identity. All over Budapest, street names have changed from Soviet-era names to the names of Hungarian poets and national heroes, red stars are being replaced by the Hungarian coat of arms, and statues of Lenin and Soviet soldiers liberating Hungary from Nazi control now reside in a cemetery for Soviet-era monuments far from the city's centre.

Not only public symbols of the Soviet era are being reconstituted, however. There has been a resurgence of religious feelings, and new churches are vying for members in all corners of Hungary. Hungarian nationalism has also emerged as a strong force, and much of the democratic coalition is simultaneously democratic, nationalist, and explicitly anti-Semitic. The Jews of Budapest provide a good example of how Hungarian citizenship is constructed and re-imagined in the post-Communist world. It illustrates that there can be a 'Jewish question' and anti-Semitism even without the presence of a group that self-identifies strongly as Jews, and that Hungarians have been unable to forge a notion of dual identity, whether under fascist, liberal nationalist, or Communist Party rule. The question remains open as to whether in this democratic environment Hungarians will continue to ascribe onto the Jew the identity of foreigner or re-imagine the possibility of a Hungarian who is somehow Jewish. Even more problematic, however, is the realization by many Hungarians of Jewish

6. 'Hungarian Steps Up Attack on Rightist Opponent'. *New York Times*, 19 March, 1993, p. A7.

origin that even without an explicit religious or ethnic identity, their urban roots, anti-nationalist sentiments, and political affiliations label them as Jews and as foreign elements from the perspective of a conservative nationalist discourse.

Hungarian nationalism can be felt and seen in various forms. Besides the change in street names and the covering of red stars, museum exhibits of Hungarian folk culture use maps which proudly display the Hungarian borders pre-Trianon treaty. In the theatre, revivals of the Hungarian nationalist play 'Bank Ban' and a new rock musical 'Anila' celebrate Hungarian autonomy and independence from *foreign* invaders, which include Jews. There is a revival of Hungarian folk songs and dress of a particular style which attempts to distinguish itself from the parallel forms promoted during the Soviet era – these 'true' Hungarian symbols are perceived as having been preserved by the folk in the provinces, and especially in the rural areas of Transylvania, which contain a large population of Hungarian speakers but presently exists within the borders of Romania. Prime Minister Josef Antall had been known to say that he was the guarantor of all Magyars, and not just those living in Hungary itself.⁷

At the same time that urban middle-class Jews are constructed as foreigners, Magyar speaking peasants living in Romania are hailed as the 'authentic Magyars'. Budapest, in the discourse of right-wing nationalist intellectuals, is named a 'foreign' city, one dominated by Jews and other international invaders. At the same time, there is a great hopefulness and optimism concerning the possibility of joint-venture business projects with Western European and American companies. There is, simultaneously, a battle for the return of Hungary to the Hungarians – a desire to return Hungary to some mythic past of pureness which would exclude both Jews and others perceived as foreigners. At the same time, the city looks westward for models of capitalist economic miracles.

The Jew's image since the Second World War is now permanently connected with urban culture, a symbolic economy which celebrates the rural only and excludes anyone with a Jewish history from being 'truly Hungarian'. Thus, coming from Communist Party/survivor Jewish urban background contrasts with rural land-owning non-Communist Party origins. While the Jew can be seen as simultaneously communist and capitalist because of the urban connection, the Jew cannot be seen as also Hungarian and folk.

7. 'Meciar conciliatory toward Magyars', *Budapest Week*, 14-20 October, 1993, Volume III, No. 32, p. 9.

In this post-Communist search for identity, the third generation of Hungarian Jews are facing an interesting array of possibilities. Recently, Jewish organizations from abroad have arrived and are attempting to bring the grandchildren of assimilated Communist Jews back into Judaism and Jewish culture. Two schools have opened, one religiously oriented and the other not religious but which teaches Jewish history and which is attempting to re-create the possibility of being both Hungarian and somehow Jewish at the same time. Many of the students at the school speak of the resistance that they encountered from some of their own family members in choosing this school. One young student (age fourteen) told me, 'My grandmother said that I was now willingly entering the ghetto and that her mother told her, 'I am afraid that if you go to this school – if it happens again, they will know who you are'. The girl told me proudly, though, that her mother had in fact named her Miriam and that she was the first person to be named Miriam in Hungary since 1945. She said that for her generation, 'Being Jewish is just a fact, like being born male or female – I am Jewish and there is nothing I can do about that. I am not religious, but I feel that I am different, that I am Jewish as well as Hungarian.'

Ironically, what has preserved whatever remains of Jewish identity in Hungary is the continued construction, whether under Communist Party rule or democratic rule, of the Jew as somehow not belonging. Despite all attempts by the Communist Jewish survivors to end the so-called Jewish question and thus practice a form of self-erasure, it is precisely their grandchildren who are embracing a Jewish identity as something compatible with their identity as Hungarians. They are, perhaps, one group that can forge a dual or polyglot identity that would not threaten their rights to citizenship within contemporary Hungary. It is too soon to know exactly what exactly this cohort will choose.

The 'Closeted Jew'

Historically, Hungarians of Jewish descent have attempted to abide by the strict rules of citizenship governing the ethos of the times: they converted to Christianity or gave up religious practices, adhered to Magyar over German and other minority languages, and became Communists during the era of Soviet influence in Hungary. Such an extreme case of accommodating behaviour can be interpreted as a reflection of the specific demands of assimilation and the requirements of citizenship made on this group during different historical periods, and this can be seen as having flamed the production of what appear

to be 'closeted Jews' (Mouffe, 1993). Jews have been literally alternately marked as 'other' by 'yellow stars' during the period of Nazi occupation and then symbolically by 'red stars' in the post-Communist period. Both historical experiences could be said to perpetuate 'the closet' as part of a survival strategy. Because documentation such as diaries, reflections, and memoirs of subjects at these different historical junctures are lacking, we can only imagine from our contemporary positioning at what level and to what extent this mode of assimilation was self-imposed or externally conditioned. There is too much data on the politics of exclusion and anti-Semitism in all of these historical periods to ignore the external conditions. Re-examining the politics of cultural citizenship concerning Jews in Hungarian history, however, can perhaps shed light on the contemporary attempts to understand the structure of ethno-nationalism and ethnic tolerance in Hungary more generally. It also points to new directions, such as political affiliation, in understanding ethnicity, which functions even in the absence of an explicit religious or group feeling, as in the case of Communists of Jewish background.

If we examine the construction of Jewish alterity over time, a paradox exists which fuels an old conspiracy theory concerning anti-Semitism that postulates that the actual presence of Jews is unnecessary for anti-Semitism; it exists *sui generis*. In pre-war Europe, Jews were constructed as capitalists and representative of the corruptions accompanying modernity and industrialization. Today, in post-Soviet Hungary, they are constructed as both 'old communists' and 'new capitalists', two categories which contrast with the rural peasant and which provoke, in the first case, ambivalence about past Soviet domination, and in the second case, ambivalence about the economic reforms and possible hardships brought on within a newly promoted capitalism. Moreover, in the construction of Jewish subjects, there is no longer certainty or agreement about what exactly constitutes this category. At one level of analysis, it seems reasonable to assert that anti-Semitism could exist without a single Jew in the country. But, here, I would like to move away from conspiracy theories and attempt to broaden our understanding of anti-Semitism within the context of the notion of cultural citizenship, since this notion could perhaps encompass the cases of other minority groups who also find themselves in the New Europe struggling for the right to belong. If we understand the Hungarian search for identity as one that has shifted over time, sometimes looking West, other times looking East, sometimes celebrating modernity and other times the traditional, we notice that there is, more often, clarity about who shouldn't belong rather than who should belong. Mouffe (1993: 3-4) argues that in times of political

transition, and in the case of the Communist bloc countries, there is a 'resurgence of old antagonisms - ethnic, national, religious and others'. To some extent, it may be a misnomer to call what is emerging presently in Hungary and in other parts of Eastern Europe the 'new' nationalism (Jakubowska, 1993) since so many of these antagonisms have long histories. On the other hand, in the case of Jews in Hungary, we see the emergence of old antagonisms in what appear to be new forms. We also witness that even extreme forms of assimilation do not abolish the construction of Jew as 'Other'.

I have tried to understand the strands of identity linking Hungarians of Jewish background to the climate in which lines of cultural citizenship were drawn. One common strand of these different historical moments is the fact that ambiguity, or even duality, were inconceivable concepts. One had to be Christian and Hungarian rather than Jewish and Hungarian; one had to favour Magyar and not another language in order to be Hungarian; one could not be simultaneously a practising Jew and a Communist; one could not be folk and urban. Today, the same Jews who historically accommodated to these changing prerequisites for citizenship are now excluded because of their Communist past, or their metropolitan location, or even for their perceived links to the West.

In the North American context, we are witnessing the intensification of social movements and identity politics which are demanding the rights of cultural citizenship for polyglots. I wonder, from this context, who is left in Hungary to re-imagine and to demand, simply, the Hungarian who is also Jewish?

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Majority as a Minority: The Russian Ethno-Nationalism and its Ideology in the 1970-1990s

Victor Shnirelman and Galina Komarova

The Russian issue is unique in the context of minority problems. A complexity inherent in this issue is that, despite their numbers and their political and social dominance in the Russian Federation, Russians are currently experiencing an identity crisis as a result of the disintegration of the USSR and certain attendant circumstances. Thus, in subjective terms many ethnic Russians view themselves as a minority. Why is this so? We will first address a number of crucial objective factors which negatively affected the Russians during the past few decades. Next, an ideological response of the Russian ethno-nationalists to these processes will be analysed. Finally, we will argue that the current growth of Russian ethno-nationalism is not accidental and that it may have serious political consequences in the future. It is well-known that the Russians were a dominant majority in both the Russian Empire and the USSR, not only in numbers but in terms of political power, education, and cultural achievements. Until very recently, they primarily associated themselves with the state rather than with any particular culture and did not separate their history from the history of the state.

The ill-born, contradictory demographic trends manifested themselves in the development of the Russian community during approximately the last thirty years (Bernstam, 1986) at which time the Russians began to feel as if they were divorcing themselves from both their culture and their state. On the one hand, the growing dispersion of the Russians due to their engagement in the industrialization and urbanization of the marginal zones of the USSR, as well as forced resettlement to remote areas above all in the 1930s, caused the devastation of Central Russia, the historical core of the Russian community, and consequently