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Introduction: The Specificities of the Holocaust in Hungary

After making the perilous journey across the border into Hungary, one wartime Jewish refugee hailed Hungary as a 'promised land… the only place you could be a Jew and stay alive'.[1] This statement is surprising, given that over 400,000 Hungarian Jews were deported—the majority of them to their deaths—with thousands more dying in forced labour battalions from 1939. Yet it highlights an important and largely unrecognized aspect of the Holocaust in Hungary: its Hungarian specificity. Conventional histories of the Holocaust in Hungary place it within a wider, more established Holocaust narrative, ignoring the many ways in which experiences in Hungary were drastically different to those in other countries. Clearly, there can be no typical "Holocaust experience": each individual's story is unique. Within Hungary, however, there exist important elements that add complexities—and sometimes contradictions—to the experiences of the Holocaust there. Indeed, the Holocaust in Hungary was of Hungarian design: partly ideological, partly pragmatic and wholly done with indifference to the lives of the Jews. As a result, traditional narratives of antisemitism, bureaucracy, or the brutal environment of war in the east are insufficient and inadequate for understanding why experiences of the Holocaust in Hungary were so nuanced.

Understanding the Holocaust in Hungary requires more than an exploration of antisemitism. Widespread low-level antisemitism facilitated persecution, creating an environment of indifference in which persecution was considered socially acceptable. That persecution, however, was motivated by other ideological and pragmatic factors. Following the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, which ended the First World War between the Allies and Hungary and removed over two-thirds of Hungary's former territories, a sense of national humiliation drove a strong nationalist desire to revise the treaty and regain lost territories. Nationalism and to a greater extent revisionism were pivotal in driving and shaping the character of the Holocaust in Hungary. However, ideology

[1] Vera Goodwin, quoted in A. Kershaw, *To Save A People*, (London, 2011), p. 12.

alone—however multifaceted—is not absolute in its importance. A significant amount of political, economic and personal pragmatism shaped the way in which Hungarians engaged with the Holocaust. A consistent willingness to use the Jews for Hungarian benefit is evident. They were pawns in international relations, particularly when in competition with Romania over Northern Transylvania. Furthermore, they were forced laborers supporting military action, and in everyday political, social and economic life. The roots of this willingness came from both ideological and pragmatic motivations: Hungary sought to recover political power, economic influence, and lost territories following the Treaty of Trianon. Neither of the traditional schools of thought on the Holocaust are sufficient to explain the Holocaust in Hungary.[2] Firstly, there is the ideological focus of intentionalist scholars, who argue that the Holocaust was a deliberate manifestation of years of antisemitism and related long-term plans to bring about the destruction of the Jewish people. On the other hand, there is the contextual focus of functionalists, who place a greater emphasis on surrounding social and economic factors, such as hierarchy and the pressures of the Second World War. However, Hungarians were neither Daniel Goldhagen's 'eliminationist' and 'demonological' anti-Semites, nor Christopher Browning's 'good bureaucrats' following orders from a Nazi hierarchy.[3] Instead, the Holocaust in Hungary was perpetrated by large numbers of ordinary people, brought to complicity by an anti-Semitic environment and motivated by wider ideologies and personal pragmatism. Hungarians in the government, parliament, army and in everyday life, had their own motivations for the Holocaust and implemented it in their own way.

The Hungarian Ideologies: Antisemitism, Revisionism and Nationalism

Historical antisemitism created an environment where Hungarian citizens became increasingly indifferent to—and, eventually, violent towards—the social, political and

[2] M. Berenbaum, 'Introduction', in D. Goldhagen, C. Browning and L. Wieseltier, (eds), *The "Willing Executioners"/ "Ordinary Men" Debate*, Selections from the Symposium April 8, 1996', https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Publication_OP_1996-01.pdf, (last accessed 5 November 2017), pp. i-iii; D. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, (London, 1997), pp. 254-256.

[3] D. Goldhagen, C. Browning, L. Wieseltier, 'Introduction by Michael Berenbaum, *The "Willing Executioners"/ "Ordinary Men" Debate*, Selections from the Symposium April 8, 1996', https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Publication_OP_1996-01.pdf, (last accessed 5 November 2017); D. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, (London, 1997).

economic persecution of the Jews. Anti-Semitic propaganda and social pressure were key to creating this environment: as early as 1925, Hungarian newspapers were reporting on anti-Semitic measures taking place in the neighbouring capital of Vienna.[4] Posters calling Jews the 'enemy of the nation' and 'the eternal shame of Hungary' appeared at local markets—the very center of everyday Hungarian life.[5] In 1944, one newspaper stated that 'the Jews use all opportunity for provocation and to spread false reports'.[6] This environment led Hungarians to become widely complicit in repressive measures. One Hungarian woman, Magda Soymár, remembered that people would 'immediately denounce' any Jews they knew with false papers.[7] This widespread complicity, however, explains little about the motivations for repressive policies. Furthermore, in comparison with other Axis countries, Hungarian repression was significantly less violent. While Jews in pre-occupation Hungary were persecuted economically, politically and socially, they were not subjected to the same level of threat to life, property and dignity as in other European countries. Important as it was for creating complicity and indifference among the Hungarian people, antisemitism alone is insufficient to explain the motivations for and the character of the Holocaust in Hungary.

The economic needs of pre-War Hungary found a convenient ally in anti-Semitic ideology, significantly shaping the way in which anti-Semitic policies were enacted. Hungarian reluctance to deport the Jews at German request should not be considered as a desire to protect the Jews. This was a calculated decision in the national economic interest. Wary of the Jewish contribution to the Hungarian economy, the government was reluctant to deport Jews from Hungary.[8] Instead, the Hungarian government took active steps to limit the number of Jews in political, social and economic life, creating jobs and opportunities for non-Jewish Hungarians. Plans were drawn up, although never implemented, to impose a limit of six percent for the number

[4] L. Blau, *Bonyhád: A Destroyed Community: The Jews of Bonyhád, Hungary*, (New York, 1994), p. 81; 'Hetikiadás, Május 27 1925', from the Magyar Távirati Iroda, April – June 1925, https://library.hungaricana.hu/en/view/HetiKiadas_1925_04_06/?pg=130&layout=s, (last accessed 26 November 2017), p. 132.
[5] 'Copy Transcript of an anti-Semitic Hungarian Party Notice', 669/3, Wiener Library, London.
[6] 'Politikai Kiadás Június 3 1944', from the Magyar Távirati Iroda, June 3 1944, https://library.hungaricana.hu/en/view/PolitikaiKiadas_1944_06/?pg=101&layout=s, (last accessed 19 November 2017), p.102.
[7] Magda Solymár, 'The Memories of Magda Solymár', Unpublished Mem. 4237, Wiener Library London.
[8] Y. Kasnett, *The World That Was: Hungary/ Romania: A Study of the Life and Torah Consciousness of Jews in the Cities and Villages of Transylvania, The Carpathian Mountains and Budapest*, (Cleveland, OH, 1999), p. 33.

of Jewish deputies in parliament.[9] Jews were excluded, sometimes violently, from university courses, with quotas introduced as early as 1920.[10] In 1936, firms 'could only have 6% of their staff Jewish', with further laws on professions and business following in 1938 and 1939.[11] For good reason, therefore, some Jews in Hungary felt increasingly 'trapped'.[12] These measures were welcomed by rank-and-file Hungarians, especially the middle classes who 'aspired to better social status' and saw these policies and an opportunity for them to 'replace the Jews in several areas of national life'.[13] Thus, the anti-Semitic ideology was infused with class-oriented economic considerations, making the middle-classes beneficiaries of anti-Jewish measures.[14] The political circumstances in pre-War Hungary were similarly nuanced. Indeed, Vera Ranki's claim that 'antisemitism was an integral part of the political ethos' seems an overstatement.[15] This is because unlike Germany, where Hitler pursued an overt and strong anti-Semitic programme, pre-occupation Hungarian Prime Ministers were often much less anti-Semitic than political leaders on the extreme right.[16] One of these, Ferenc Szálasi, founder of the Hungarian fascist Arrow Cross party, which controlled the government from 1944 to 1945, was imprisoned in 1938 and his party officially banned.[17] So dissatisfied were the Arrow Cross with the Hungarian government's actions that in July 1940 they planned to assassinate the Minister for Home Affairs, break Szálasi out of prison and force Admiral Horthy, Regent of Hungary, to resign in his favor.[18] Thus the government found itself pursuing nationalistic, economic measures that were dependent on the ongoing existence of the Jews and, at the same time, trying to appease far right groups that were constantly pushing for a radicalization of anti-Semitic policy.[19] In this way, Hungarian antisemitism

[9] N. Katzberg, *Hungary and the Jews: Policy and Legislation 1920-1943,* (New York, NY, 1981), p. 125.
[10] Magda Solymár *The Memories of Magda Solymár*, Unpublished Mem. 4237, Wiener Library London; M. Winstone, *The Holocaust Sites of Europe: An Historical Guide,* (London, 2010), p. 192; 'Lily Livia Bruck, 'Oral History', Imperial War Museum, 17101, http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80016512, (last accessed 19 November 2017).
[11] 'Eva Stein's Memoirs as told to her grandson Daniel Balint-Kurti and recorded on tape', in 'Hammerschlag and Stein Families: Personal Papers', 1753, Wiener Library London; Winstone, *The Holocaust Sites of Europe,* p. 192.
[12] 'Eva Stein's Memoirs as told to her grandson Daniel Balint-Kurti and recorded on tape', in 'Hammerschlag and Stein Families: Personal Papers', 1753, Wiener Library London.
[13] Katzberg, *Hungary and the Jews,* p. 115.
[14] D. Cornelius, *Hungary in World War II: Caught in the Cauldron*, (New York, NY, 2011), pp. 62-3.
[15] V. Ranki, *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, (New York, NY, 1999), p. 209.
[16] M. Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe*, (London, 2008), p. 393.
[17] Winstone, *The Holocaust Sites of Europe*, p. 192.
[18] N. Horthy, *Memoirs*, (London, 1956), p. 181.
[19] Kasnett, *The World That Was*, p. 32.

became part of a wider ideological set of nationalistic and economic motivations that drove the persecution of the Jews.

In another aspect of ideological development, the search and desire for economic stability and national prestige manifested itself in the rise of revisionism. This ideology, which Holly Case argues constituted a 'quest' for all political parties in Hungary, was highly influential in shaping Hungarian foreign policy after the Treaty of Trianon of 1920.[20] The overwhelming rationale for the rise of revisionism was that the Treaty of Trianon, which saw Hungary 'not so much mutilated as dismembered', was widely despised by Hungarians.[21] Subsequently, revisionist ideology, which demanded the return of lost territories, gained increasing popularity and drove various Hungarian governments closer to Nazi Germany in the hope of recovering lost territories. One of the most humiliating losses was Transylvania, considered an ancient home of Hungarians for hundreds of years. This led to a deep enmity with Romania and encouraged complicity in almost any action which offered even the most remote of hopes for recovering Transylvania. In a 1928 book *Justice for Hungary*, revisionist writers argued that Trianon was 'the harshest, the most inhuman, and the most unjust' treaty, born out of the 'evil spirits' of 'cynicism, hatred and greed', which 'must be rectified'.[22] Many revisionist stickers, cartoons and posters were produced, with popular slogans such as "Everything Hungarian must be returned!" and 'No! No! Never!" being widespread.[23] Such rank-and-file revisionism was mirrored throughout the socio-political tools of the state. Identity cards, for example, had a list of 'reminders' on the back, espousing nationalist sentiment such as 'love the Hungarian soldier, for they are the country's power, their force in turn is safety'.[24] Even in primary schools, children 'sang songs of the strong yearning to recapture the territories lost in the First

[20] H. Case, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea During World War II*, (Stanford, CA, 2009), p. 69.
[21] Case, *Between States*, p. 69; C. Macartney, *Hungary and Her Successors: The Treaty of Trianon and its Consequences 1919-1937,* (Oxford, 1937), p. 1.
[22] G. Lukács, 'The Injustices of the Treaty of Trianon', in A. Apponyi (ed.), *Justice for Hungary: Review and Criticism of the Effect of the Treaty of Trianon*, (London, 1928), pp. 123-188, p. 125; E. Nagy, 'The Road Towards Rectification', in A. Apponyi (ed.), *Justice for Hungary: Review and Criticism of the Effect of the Treaty of Trianon*, (London, 1928), pp. 361-376, p. 375.
[23] "Ami Magyar Mindent Vissza" (Translation: "Everything Hungarian must be returned") in 'Booklet D "Jegyzet": Collection of Political Stickers and Flyers from Hungary', 1393/4, Wiener Library London; 'Nem! Nem! Soha!' poster (Translation: "No! No! Never"), Imperial War Museum, London, Art.IWM PST 6587, http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/28704, (last accessed 19 November 2017).
[24] 'Hungarian Jewish ID Card in 'Material Relating to Nazi Persecution'' in 'Brody-Pauncz family Papers', 627/4/1-12, Wiener Library London.

World War'.[25] The intensity of this revisionist ideology, coupled with rising antisemitism, was instrumental in motivating the Hungarian Holocaust. As Jean Ancel notes, Jews became 'another pawn' in the 'overt and covert competition' between Hungary and Romania over Northern Transylvania.[26] Indeed, Hungarian anti-Semitic policy increased dramatically after the First Vienna Award (1938) that granted parts of southern Slovakia to Hungary, as it became evident that Germany held the power to redraw European borders. [27] Emboldened by the decision, the right wing Hungarian Prime Minister in 1938-1939, Béla Imrédy, was said to have 'changed into a rabid anti-Semite', seeking to follow German policy by introducing further restrictions.[28] In addition to the economic exploitation and nationalistic policies, revisionism became a key part of the Hungarian ideologies, which moved Hungary towards anti-Jewish policies, culminating in the Holocaust.

Over the years, these policies started to develop into violent incidents; indeed, there is much evidence of nationalist-incited violence against the Jews in Hungary. Jews were rounded up into forced labour battalions to work for the national interest. Many of these were sent to the military fronts in Poland, Serbia and Transylvania, where they were 'mistreated and humiliated', resulting in around 40,000 deaths.[29] One officer 'hosed down [his battalion] with cold water in winter so they resembled "ice statues"'.[30] Other battalions were tasked to 'reveal mines by stepping on them'.[31] These incidents point to a more complex form of nationalism than the revisionist 'quest' espoused by Case, in motivating and shaping the Holocaust in Hungary.[32] Indeed, Case's focus on Transylvania ignores other motivations for the Holocaust in Hungary.[33] For example, a recent development in the historiography of the Holocaust in Hungary has been for scholars to argue that antisemitism was a key element of the anti-Liberal nationalism of the post First World War years, making the Holocaust in

[25] S. Pollack, 'She had not recognised him…', in *We Remember: Child Survivors of the Holocaust Speak*, (Leicestershire, 2011), pp. 143-146, p. 144.
[26] J. Ancel, *The History of the Holocaust in Romania*, (Yad Vashem, 2011), p. 490.
[27] Katzberg, *Hungary and the Jews,* p. 116.
[28] Horthy, *Memoirs*, p. 174.
[29] Blau, *Bonyhád,* p. 45; Kasnett, *The World That Was*, p. 32.
[30] L. Rees, *The Holocaust: A New History*, (London, 2017), p. 292.
[31] R. Rozett, *Conscripted Slaves: Hungarian Jewish Forced Laborers on the Eastern Front during World War II,* Yad Vashem, http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/newsletter/31/conscripted_slaves.aspx, (last accessed 19 November 2017).
[32] Case, *Between States*, p. 69.
[33] Case, *Between States*, p. 69.

Hungary inevitable.[34] This argument is, however, limited in key ways: because of context and because of patriotism. Many of the examples of poor treatment of the Jews took place at the military front, in an environment of extreme violence. However, not all labour battalions were sent to the front and those that remained in Hungary were, on the whole, better treated.[35] There is, therefore, a strong case to be made for the theory of brutalization, which suggests that as violence was an everyday occurrence at the front, it escalated easily. In addition, the idea of an inevitable Holocaust implies that, as antisemitism was a part of nationalism, all patriots were anti-Semites.[36] This was not the case. Indeed, several Hungarian military officers who helped and protected Jews under their command have been named 'Righteous among the Nations' by the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre Yad Vashem - an honour granted to non-Jews who rescued Jews during the Holocaust.[37] Lajos Fülöp who commanded a Jewish forced labour battalion in Poland and Slovakia in 1943 and 1944, 'took care of his charges as if they were regular Hungarian solders', ensuring that they were well fed and protected from other 'sadistic' officers.[38] Furthermore, considered in the wider context, antisemitism was more nationalist than nationalism was anti-Semitic, as Jews without Hungarian nationality were treated far harsher than Hungarian Jews. In 1941, 17,000 non-Hungarian Jews were expelled east, where they were murdered by Einsatzgruppen or sent to concentration camps.[39] Treatment was particularly harsh for Jews in the occupied territories of Romania, with higher levels of

[34] For examples of this interpretation, see: Ranki, *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, p. 209; R. Wistrich, 'Antisemitism', in P. Hayes (ed.) *How Was It Possible?: A Holocaust Reader*, (Lincoln, NE, 2015); V. Karady, 'Continuities of the "Jewish Question" in Hungary since the "Golden Age"', in R. L. Braham and A. Kovács, (eds), *The Holocaust in Hungary: Seventy Years Later*, (Budapest, 2016), pp. 45-72, p. 72; R. Nemes, 'Hungary's Anti-Semitic Provinces: Violence and Ritual Murder in the 1880s', *Slavic Review* 66, (2007), pp. 20-44.
[35] Blau, *Bonyhád*, p. 45.
[36] See especially Ranki, *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, p. 209.
[37] For examples of members of the Hungarian military awarded 'Righteous Among The Nations', see: 'The Righteous Among The Nations: Fülöp, Lajos' profile', Yad Vashem, http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=4014920, (last accessed 19 November 2017); 'The Righteous Among The Nations: Meixner, Mihály's profile', Yad Vashem, http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=4016377, (last accessed 19 November 2017); 'The Righteous Among The Nations: Gidófalvy, Lajos' profile', Yad Vashem, http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=4015006, (last accessed 19 November 2017); 'The Righteous Among The Nations: Szabó, Imre's profile', Yad Vashem, http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=4017756, (last accessed 19 November 2017).
[38] 'The Righteous Among The Nations: Fülöp, Lajos' profile', Yad Vashem, http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=4014920, (last accessed 19 November 2017).
[39] Rees, *The Holocaust*, p. 292, Peter Meisner, 'Oral History', Imperial War Museum, 16852, http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80016291, (last accessed 19 November 2017).

violence, suspicion and brutality, including the Novi Sad massacre (1941), which killed over 800.[40] It is clear that violent nationalism strongly influenced every-day antisemitism. The historians' argument, however, lacks an understanding of the subtleties of the Hungarian situation and the context of massacres. For many, antisemitism was a part of Hungarian nationalism, with Jews seen as 'the enemy within'.[41] This was not, however, all-pervasive and there was a notable difference in attitudes towards Hungarian and foreign Jews. In this way, nationalism simultaneously motivated persecution and protected Hungarian Jews from its extreme forms, becoming another aspect of the complex set of ideologies shaping the character of persecution.

Hungarian Pragmatism: Jews and the National Interest

The economic, revisionist, and nationalistic ideologies arose from antisemitism but aimed to re-build Hungary after the Trianon Treaty. This meant that a large degree of pragmatism characterised Hungarian policies towards the Jews before and throughout the occupation. Consequently, it was considered politically acceptable to use Jewish people as pawns in international relations. Key to this pragmatic policy was Admiral Horthy, Regent of Hungary until October 1944. In describing Horthy's attitude, Laurence Rees affirms that Horthy would 'play the long game, waiting to see how the war developed'.[42] Indeed, it is clear that under Horthy's leadership, Hungary pursued a strongly pragmatic approach, seeking to appease both the Allies and Germany. Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s Hungary attempted to please the Allies by refusing German demands for deportations, while introducing increasingly anti-Semitic laws to 'prove to Berlin that [Hungary's] antisemitism had not subsided'.[43] This pragmatism in international relations was instrumental in shaping the Holocaust in pre-occupation Hungary: it stopped Hungarian Jews from being deported and it prompted the introduction and intensification of anti-Jewish measures. Furthermore, the strong

[40] R. Fritz and C. Novak-Rainer, 'Inside the Ghetto: Everyday Life in Hungarian Ghettos', *The Hungarian Historical Review* 4, (2015), pp. 606-639; Ancel, *The History of the Holocaust in Romania*, p. 493; Z. Vági, *The Holocaust in Hungary: Evolution of a Genocide*, (Lanham, 2013), p. xliii; 'Mini Exhibits from the Yad Vashem Collections: 'Until The Last Jew… Until The Last Name'', Yad Vashem, http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/our_collections/until_the_last_jew/02.asp, (last accessed 19 November 2017).
[41] Ranki, *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, p. 206.
[42] Rees, *The Holocaust*, p. 292.
[43] Vági, *The Holocaust in Hungary*, p. 62.

pragmatism persisted during the occupation. While deportations did take place, Horthy acted quickly following international pressure in July 1944 to halt these. While historians disagree over the exact motivations for stopping the deportations in July 1944, it is widely accepted that these were overwhelmingly pragmatic, not ideological factors.[44] For example, Michael Fleming cites international pressure from neutral Sweden, the USA and the Pope.[45] Tsvi Erez focuses on Horthy's desire for his own personal safety, wanting to neutralise far right nationalists who were plotting against him.[46] Zoltán Vági argues that the deteriorating military situation of the Axis forces made Horthy keen to appease the allies, as it showed that the Germans would most likely lose the war.[47] These factors aggravated each other, making it clear to Horthy that, in the likely event of an Allied victory, Hungary would face 'allied retribution' if it continued with the deportations.[48] Stopping the deportations sent an unequivocal message to the allies that Hungary wanted peace.[49] Hungarian policies towards the Jews were therefore persistently characterised by pragmatism more than by pure ideology, with a view of positioning the country to achieve its ambitions.

In addition to the political pragmatism, following the occupation of Hungary and the long duration of the war Hungarian policies towards the Jews were increasingly motivated by economic pragmatism. By 1944, around 44.1% of Hungary's national income was spent on war expenses.[50] In order to forestall a fast-developing economic crisis, the Hungarian government sought to expropriate the 20 to 25% of the national wealth that was held by the Jews.[51] Indeed, the state took extreme measures to expropriate all the wealth they could from Jews across the country. This was enacted both through legislation and violently by members of the police and gendarmerie. A survivor from Ungvár recalled how after the occupation had started they had to 'hand in all the gold, valuables and money' that their family had, while one from Kalocsa

[44] For different arguments on the exact reasons for the stopping of deportations, see: M. Fleming, *Auschwitz, the Allies and Censorship of the Holocaust*, (Cambridge, 2014), p. 233; T. Erez, 'Hungary – Six Days in July 1944', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 3 (1988), 37-53, pp.42-43; Vági, *The Holocaust in Hungary,* p. 136; Winstone, *The Holocaust Sites of Europe,* p.192; Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, p. 346.
[45] Fleming, *Auschwitz,* p. 233.
[46] Erez, 'Hungary – Six Days in July 1944', pp. 42-43.
[47] Vági, *The Holocaust in Hungary*, p. 136.
[48] Winstone, *The Holocaust Sites of Europe,* p. 192.
[49] Mazower, *Hitler's Empire,* p. 346.
[50] Vági, *The Holocaust in Hungary,* p. 179.
[51] Vági, *The Holocaust in Hungary*, p. 179.

described how Jewish 'shops were seized' and trade licenses revoked.[52] These laws were strictly enforced: in June 1944 two Jewish librarians were arrested and ransomed for 12,000 pengő for having been found with 100,000 pengő worth of 'silver, gold and precious stones'.[53] Furthermore, violence was widespread by members of the police and gendarmerie, who were principally responsible for seizing the wealth of the Jews. In Ungvár, members of the gendarmerie 'trod on [and] danced on [rich Jews] until they confessed where they hid their valuables'.[54] Remembering the liquidation of the Újpest ghetto, another survivor stated that 'people were beaten to tell where they had hidden their money and jewelry'.[55] Thus, the needs of the state became a key driving force behind the pragmatic manifestations of anti-Jewish measures.

Economic gain not only motivated the state but also ordinary people's engagement with the Holocaust in Hungary. While it is generally accepted that the Hungarian state sought to maximise the economic benefits of their anti-Jewish legislation, there is disagreement—particularly between Cole and Vági—–over the extent to which ordinary people were also motivated by economic gain.[56] In his detailed study on local agricultural carters who transported Jews to ghettos, Cole argues that local participation in the Holocaust was 'not a story of material enrichment'.[57] Ordinary people, Cole asserts, were 'mobilized… as the state sought to expropriate every last piece of Jewish wealth', but did not benefit themselves sufficiently to explain their motivations.[58] Whilst Cole's claim may be true for the carters on which he focuses, it is not representative of the motivations of ordinary Hungarians across the country. Those mobilised by the state to 'expropriate every last piece of Jewish wealth', did so not just for the state's benefit, but for their own 'state sanctioned greed'.[59] When they were transported into Ghettos the property that Jews left behind

[52] K. R. Testimony, DEOGB, http://degob.org/index.php?showjk=174, (last accessed 19 November 2017); K. L. Testimony, DEGOB, http://degob.org/index.php?showjk=873, (last accessed 19 November 2017).
[53] '*Politikai Kiadás Június 7 1944',* from the Magyar Távirati Iroda, June 7 1944, https://library.hungaricana.hu/en/view/PolitikaiKiadas_1944_06/?pg=282&layout=s, (last accessed 19 November 2017), p. 283.
[54] W. R., W. L., J. H., J. S., J. E. Testimony, DEOGB, http://degob.org/index.php?showjk=699, (last accessed 19 November 2017).
[55] Dr. L. I. Testimony, DEOGB, http://degob.org/index.php?showjk=2448, (last accessed 19 November 2017).
[56] For this debate, see: Rees, *The Holocaust,* p.382; T. Cole, *Traces of the Holocaust: Journeying in and out of the ghettos*, (London, 2011), p. 39; T. Cole, *Holocaust Landscapes,* (London, 2006), p.151; Vági, *The Holocaust in Hungary,* p. 179.
[57] Cole, *Traces of the Holocaust,* p. 39.
[58] Cole, *Traces of the Holocaust,* p. 38.
[59] Cole, *Traces of the Holocaust,* p. 38; Vági, *The Holocaust in Hungary*, p. 193.

was often plundered by their former neighbors. Many hoped to benefit from the 'chaotic distribution of Jewish property, especially housing' following ghettoization and the deportations.[60] One survivor from Alsóapsa describes the non-Jewish population as 'watching the preparations for deportation happily', stating that 'they could hardly wait to pillage freely'.[61] Furthermore, the rank-and-file nature of taking valuables from the Jews actively encouraged corruption. Vági argues that 'theft became an everyday affair', with Jewish property being the 'coveted goal' of many ordinary people.[62] In addition to the plunder of Jewish property, non-Jews were heavily involved in stripping wealth from Jews in a self-centered, dehumanized manner. Local midwives and nurses willingly carried out invasive inspections of Jews with a complete disregard for hygiene and safety, in what Vági has aptly described one of the 'all time moral low points in Hungarian history'.[63] A survivor from Kispest recalled being intrusively searched in a school in Csepel 'where midwives searched us and took whatever they liked'.[64] In Hurst, 'a local midwife called Mrs Sárosi examined us [Jewish] women to find whether we had hidden some valuables'.[65] Searches were carried out in appalling conditions. In Székesfehérvár, a team of ten nurses used only two pairs of rubber gloves to examine several hundred women.[66] In Pécs, inspectors would not even wash their hands between searching the internal cavities of different women.[67] While this work was done at the direction of the state, the personal and local nature of these searches suggests that much was kept by the nurses and obstetricians themselves. The centrality of material wealth to the experiences and recollections of victims, perpetrators and bystanders reflects its strong place in the motivation and formation of the Holocaust in Hungary. Economic gain was, therefore, a key part of the motivations of ordinary Hungarians becoming complicit in the Holocaust.

[60] M. Pittang, *The Workers' State: Industrial Labor and the Making of Socialist Hungary 1944-1958*, (Pittsburgh, PA, 2012), p. 29.
[61] K. R. Testimony, DEOGB, http://degob.org/index.php?showjk=174, (last accessed 19 November 2017).
[62] Vági, *The Holocaust in Hungary,* pp. 200, 204.
[63] Vági, *The Holocaust in Hungary*, p. 195.
[64] G. E. Testimony, DEOGB, http://degob.org/index.php?showjk=3593, (last accessed 19 November 2017).
[65] H. E. Testimony, DEOGB, http://degob.org/index.php?showjk=1448, (last accessed 19 November 2017).
[66] G. Kádár, and Z. Vági, *Self-Financing Genocide: The Gold Train, the Becher Case and the Wealth of Hungarian Jews*, (Budapest, 2004), pp. 103.
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Conclusion: Towards a More Complex Historiography

The Holocaust in Hungary defies the traditional historical interpretations of the ideology behind the Holocaust as a whole. The motives behind Hungarian perpetration of the Holocaust were neither purely anti-Semitic, nor wholly functional. For Hungary, antisemitism was intertwined with strong local ideological and pragmatic considerations. The historiography focusing on the Holocaust in Hungary is limited and little developed: much of the scholarship overestimates Hungarian antisemitism, ignoring the plethora of other factors. Economic, revisionist and nationalist ideologies, along with economic and political pragmatism, contributed to form a unique anti-Semitic environment. A desire for economic aggrandisement, twinned with practical considerations, fundamentally shaped the character of Hungary's policies towards the Jews: resisting deportation but intensifying persecution. Nationalism has had an equally nuanced impact, both protecting and persecuting Jews. Political flexibility dominated Hungary's international relations, as the government sought to maximise its position to achieve its revisionist goals. Indeed, revisionism was a unifying component between these factors: Hungarian determination to regain economic and political prestige by recovering territories lost in the Treaty of Trianon can hardly be emphasised enough. This resolve impacted the way Hungary engaged with Germany and the Allies; it created a willingness to use the Jews as pawns, and encouraged complicity in any other action that offered hope of returning territories to Hungary. An understanding of all Hungarian ideologies is thus extremely important, as it is significantly nuanced and complex. For both the state and the individual, antisemitism was conflated with wider ideological and pragmatic motivations, which had a profound impact on the motivations for and character of the Holocaust in Hungary.

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