



**Randolph L. Braham, András Kovács.** *A holokauszt Magyarországon hetven év múltán: Történelem és emlékezet [The Holocaust in Hungary Seventy Years Later. History and Memory]*. Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2015. 288 S. ISBN 978-615548014-0.

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## Braham u.a.: A holokauszt Magyarországon hetven év múltán

The reviewed volume draws on two closely connected conferences respectively held at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. and at the Central European University in Budapest in the spring of 2014. An English-language version with slightly different contents ought to appear in 2016. It is published as number four in a series co-edited by leading survivor historian Randolph L. Braham on round anniversaries of the genocide Randolph Braham / Bela Vago (eds.), *The Holocaust in Hungary. Forty Years Later*, New York 1985; Randolph L. Braham / Attila Pálkó (eds.), *The Holocaust in Hungary. Fifty Years Later*, New York 1997; Randolph L. Braham / Brewster S. Chamberlin (eds.), *The Holocaust in Hungary. Sixty Years Later*, Boulder, CO 2006. , and belongs among the most important joint scholarly efforts coinciding with the controversial recent year of Hungarian Holocaust commemoration. Comparable initiatives include Judit Molnár (ed.), *A nagypolitikától a hétköznapi életig. A magyar holokauszt 70 év története [From High Politics to Everyday Life. The Hungarian Holocaust from the Perspective of Seventy Years]*, Budapest forthcoming in 2016, based on a major conference in Szeged also held in 2014, and the thematic issue of the *Hungarian Historical Review* (2015/3) titled *The Holocaust in Hungary in Contexts. New Perspectives and Research Results* edited by the author of this review. As Braham and András Kovács emphasize in their editorial introduction, the field of Holocaust Studies has substantially grown and diversified in Hungary since the 1980s with the Holocaust also serving as

the subject of vivid historiographical debates.

Next to co-editor András Kovács's insightful historiographical overview, the collection includes four studies on various dimensions of the anti-Semitic policies of inter-war Hungary and three on underexplored aspects of the Hungarian Jewish catastrophe, whereas a clear sign of an ongoing thematic shift another four deal with questions of Holocaust memory. Kovács's *A magyar intencionalizmus. Új irányok a magyar holokauszt történetében [Hungarian Intentionalism. New Directions in Hungarian Holocaust Historiography]* presents a perceptive overview of new directions in Hungarian Holocaust historiography, arguing that ongoing debates on the Holocaust in Hungary closely resemble the quarrel between intentionalists and functionalists known from the historiography of Nazi Germany from earlier decades, though with some crucial twists. Analyzing discussions of the German occupation of Hungary in March 1944 first, Kovács sees an emerging consensus concerning the primacy of pragmatic German considerations which, however, were directly translated into anti-Semitic policy preferences and choices.

His study subsequently explains that this emerging consensus on the occupiers has served as the starting point of a new debate revolving around the question of how to assess Hungarian collaboration. As Kovács highlights, a new intentionalist interpretation of 1944 emerged in the early 2000s that starkly re-embedded the Holocaust in Hungarian historical development. Such

an interpretation tended to view the German occupiers as driven primarily by pragmatic considerations and depicted Hungarian anti-Semitic politicians as the ones placing the agenda of *âde-Judaizationâ* above all others. See, above all, Gábor Kádár / Zoltán Vágyi, *Hullarablás. A magyar zsidók gazdasági megsemmisítése* [Robbing the Dead. The Economic Annihilation of Hungarian Jews], Budapest 2005, and Gábor Kádár / Zoltán Vágyi, *A végleges döntés* [The Final Solution]. Berlin, Budapest, Birkenau 1944, Budapest 2013. See also Christian Gerlach / Gertzel Aly, *Das letzte Kapitel. Realpolitik, Ideologie und der Mord an den ungarischen Juden 1944/45*, Stuttgart 2002. Moving beyond his more narrow focus on historiographical trends, Kovács persuasively argues that, unlike in Germany, questions of historical memory and thus also the new intentionalist interpretation have become increasingly divisive and politicized in early 21st century Hungary.

If András Kovács's study of scholarly trends showed how Hungarian responsibility had been emphasized in novel ways, Randolph Braham's contribution *âMagyarország: hadjárati holokauszt történelmi emlékezetellenâ* [Hungary: Campaign against the Historical Memory of the Holocaust] traces the opposite pattern in political and social life, focusing on the manifold distortions and falsifications of history since 1989 that were united in aiming at downplaying and externalizing guilt for the Holocaust. The two studies by the editors thus clearly show how scholarly conceptions of and public views on the Holocaust have come to diverge in recent decades.

The debate on Hungarian intentionalism was not only accompanied by a broad wave of contesting Hungarian responsibility, but was also intertwined with a new-old debate on the continuities of Hungarian anti-Semitism. In this volume the disagreement is rearticulated in Ignác Romsics's and Mária M. Kovács's respective contributions. In *âBethlen István antiszemitizmusa és a Horthy-korszak zsidópolitikája* [The Anti-Semitism of István Bethlen and the Jewish Policy of the Horthy Era], Romsics argues that Prime Minister Bethlen pursued a *âconservative-liberal politics of integrationâ* during the 1920s and maintains that the subsequent *ârupturesâ* cannot be explained without reference to the Great Depression and the changing international context of the country. In his view, the ever more drastic official anti-Semitism of the late 1930s and early 1940s thus broke with previous policies of state- and nation-building under the regency of Miklós Horthy. As opposed to Romsics, in her *âA numerus clausus*

*és a zsidótörvények* [The Numerus Clausus and the Jewish Laws], Mária M. Kovács emphasizes the connections between the numerus clausus of 1920 and the later anti-Jewish laws promulgated by the regime. Clearly distinguishing her perspective from outdated suggestions regarding a *âstraight pathâ* leading from 1919 to 1944, Mária M. Kovács explains that the Bethlenian consolidation of the 1920s was both more ambivalent and fragile than Romsics would have it as it did not even intend to counter the anti-Semitic restrictions already in place. Her article ultimately emphasizes that the principle of legal equality was violated as early as 1920 and that the ever more severe extension of legalized discrimination and social exclusion was later chiefly pursued by men socialized in the age of the numerus clausus.

In their seminal overview of nine larger waves of anti-Semitic violence between 1848 and 1956 (*âHosszú század: antiszemita erők Magyarországon* [The Long Century: Anti-Semitic Violence in Hungary], 1848-1956), Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vágyi rightly complain that these recurrent acts have been marginalized in Hungarian historical memory. Their brief coverage of about a thousand instances clearly shows that practically all regime changes in modern Hungary were accompanied by attacks on the country's Jewish population. While the authors thus reveal remarkable continuities in local patterns of violence, they also emphasize several notable ruptures. They explain that while the state aimed to protect Jews from violence in the long 19th century and state terror was newly employed against them during the Republic of Councils of 1919, it was during the wave of pogroms between 1919 and 1921 that the rulers of Hungary first consciously aimed at violently targeting Jews. Another important finding of their overview more directly related to the history of the Holocaust is that social participation in the expropriation of Jews may have been widespread during the state-directed persecution of Jews in 1944, but *â* rather exceptionally in broader time frames as well as regional terms *â* no local pogroms were recorded.

The regional contextualization of Hungary is a key agenda of another highlight of the volume, László Császár's insightful *âA magyarországi háborús munkaszolgálat eredete és nemzetközi összefüggéseiâ* [The Origins and International Connections of the Wartime Labor Service in Hungary]. Beyond the much better appreciated impact of Germany in the 1930s, Császár also focuses on the early impact the Bulgarian institution of labor service exerted on Hungary and draws revealing parallels and contrasts with

both Bulgaria and Romania. Being the most vested in articulating comparative and transnational perspectives, Császár's innovative study indirectly also reveals the near absence of considerations on Nazi Germany throughout the volume. *ÂA holokauszt Magyarországon hetven év múlta* may thus also be seen as an asymmetrical counter-part to the recent German-language volume on new results and questions of Holocaust research where the states allied to Nazi Germany received rather limited attention. See Frank Bajohr / Andrea L  w (eds.), *Der Holocaust. Ergebnisse und neue Fragen der Forschung*, Frankfurt am Main 2015.

Viktor Kar  dy and P  ter Tibor Nagy both aim to complement political historical explorations by studying social historical specificities of the genocide. Kar  dy does so by comparing the 1940 and 1947 list of members of the Hungarian chamber of medical professionals to reveal how notable an impact age, gender, and place of residence, but also levels of assimilation and social integration had on the chances of survival. Drawing on Budapest-based housing surveys from before and after the Holocaust, Nagy's related study shows in particular that those in higher social position and those employed in the public sector were significantly better placed to escape the Judeocide. Last but not least, Claudia K. Farkas's contribution analyzes contemporaneous Hungarian Jewish responses to persecution, comparing mainstream reactions to the enactment of anti-Semitic laws in 1938 and 1939. Farkas critically diagnoses how inadequate early responses to Hungarian anti-Semitism were, but also shows that by 1939 Hungarian Jewish appreciation of their implications became more pragmatic.

Beyond Brahm's critical overview, three further case studies are devoted to Holocaust memory on various scales. M  nika Kov  cs explores the chances of local reconciliation in post-genocidal situations from a social psychological point of view. Whereas her emphasis on fostering autonomous individuals and respect for hu-

man rights may sound conventional, M  nika Kov  cs presents various sophisticated techniques of how to achieve the decategorization of individuals through memory work and thereby help increase trust in radically asymmetrical post-conflict societies. However, her declared goal of achieving a common representation of the past sounds somewhat overly ambitious in light of her convincing previous elaborations on how memory regimes of victim and perpetrator groups and their descendants tend to diverge over time. Andrea Pet  s's intervention reflects on the intersections of the People's Courts, Holocaust witnessing, and our digital access, arguing that a close analysis of the Visual History Archive's videos that relate to the survivors' experience of the People's Courts can reveal tabooed sentiments. Pet  s thereby pleads for a new recognition of psychic as opposed to material truths in historical scholarship. Focusing on a key wave of dealing with the Holocaust in Hungary during the 1970s, G  bor Gy  ni explores the complex relationship between collected and collective memories and aims to show that Hungary-based approaches to the subject under communism could not really be considered belated as compared to Western ones.

*ÂA holokauszt Magyarországon hetven év múlta* offers an impressive sample of Hungarian research on the origins and prehistory as well as the implementation and aftermath of the genocide by scholars belonging to the middle and older generations. It analyzes recent and ongoing trends in both Hungarian scholarship and public life to reveal their marked divergence, highlights the key disagreement over the continuities of Hungarian anti-Semitism during the Horthy era, and last but certainly not least also suggests some novel social historical and comparative approaches. The volume as a whole thus demonstrates how diverse and sophisticated the scholarship produced locally on the Holocaust in Hungary is after seventy years though it unintentionally also reveals its seemingly persistent level of insularity.

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