

Hungary: History as a Legitimizing Precedent—“Illiberal Democracy”

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A regime that is committed to “national rebirth” must necessarily find historical justifications for its politics and use history as a mythologized collection of examples from which it can take elements it deems useful for its own policies. In Hungary, this obsession with history is rooted, both in an ideal of romantic nationalism, which continues to be actively cultivated, and in the traumas of recent history, that are simultaneously interpreted as “national” experiences. Noteworthy examples of these include the loss of the historical kingdom in 1918, the “trauma of Trianon,” as well as the terror of Stalinism and the communist regime. Since 2001, February 25 has been celebrated as a day of remembrance for the victims of the communist dictatorship and, since 2010, June 4 has been added as a Trianon Memorial Day.² Already under the first Orbán government (1998-2002), Béla Rásky pointed out “that the hastily introduced attempt in 1989 to break with this traditional obsession with history and to find legitimization through a constitution, democratic institutions and a functioning public sphere was not likely to have ever been more than a finite episode.”³ When the Orbán regime with its historically-oriented politics emerged from the 2010 elections, not just victorious but with an absolute majority, this prognosis was confirmed.

Elements of the FIDESZ’s Interpretation of History and Historicizing Politics

The “Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége” party (Alliance of Young Democrats) was established in 1989 by a group of young intellectuals. Known under the abbreviation FIDESZ, it originally represented a liberal, leftwing position. In 1996, the party’s name was appended to include the title “Magyar Polgári Párt” (the Hungarian Citizens’ Party), which, under the leadership of Viktor Orbán, signaled its change of course to a national-conservative direction. By 1998, the systematic deployment of Hungarian nationalism as a strategy for

¹ The article was completed in March 2018.

² On June 4, 1920, the peace treaty named after this palace was signed. It set the seal on the dissolution of the old Hungary.

³ BÉLA RÁSKY: Eloquent Silence: Beredtes Schweigen. Einschreibungen ungarischer Gedächtnisse, in: Europäische Rundschau 29 (2001), 4, pp. 105-116, here p. 105. On the problem of the legitimacy deficit in post-socialist societies, see CHRISTIAN GIOR-DANO: Politische Krisen in Südost- und Osteuropa? Zum Problem des chronischen Legitimitätsdefizits in postsozialistischen Gesellschaften, in: BÁLINT BALLA, WOLFGANG DAHMEN et al. (eds.): Demokratische Entwicklungen in der Krise? Politische und gesellschaftliche Verwerfungen in Rumänien, Ungarn und Bulgarien, Hamburg 2015, pp. 13-32.

political mobilization had achieved success. The resulting marginalization of the liberal-democratic element was accompanied by the adoption of the elevating term “*citizegn*” as a positive antithesis to the socialist concept of the subservient “*subject*.” As this construct lacked persuasive power on its own, however, “Orbán and his intellectual entourage decided on a legitimization strategy that was more strongly history-oriented.”⁴

This strategy was put into effect in the year 2000 by the FIDESZ administration, which had come to power in 1998, in coalition with the *Független Kisgazdapárt*, the Independent Smallholders’ Party. Initially, it gained momentum in the context of celebrations commemorating a thousand years since the establishment of the Hungarian state. The “*Holy Crown*” played a central role in these proceedings. Associated with the country’s founder, Stephen I, it was transferred from the national museum to a prominent setting in the domed hall of the Hungarian parliament building and was restored as a symbol of national unity and the continuity of the state.⁵ When the party was defeated in the parliamentary elections of 2002, the nationalistic rhetoric underpinning its historical discourse became radicalized, an escalation that was reflected by their slogan: “The nation cannot be the opposition.” Thus, the liberal leftwing government that was in office at the time found itself maligned, not only as an historic anomaly, but also as an “inorganic” power and was put on a par with a series of regimes that had violated or shunned national tradition, namely those of 1918/19, 1948-1990 and 1994-1998 (the years of the social-liberal government coalition under Prime Minister Gyula Horn). In 2002, Gyula Tellér, the party’s leading ideologist and closest advisor of Orbán since 1996, divided Hungarian society into two categories: members of an organic nation and their “inorganic” opponents, who were slaves to international interests.⁶ Communists, according to Tellér, belonged to the latter group, including Imre Nagy—who, he claimed, had stolen the revolution of 1956 from the “citizens”—together with the opposition forces of the 1970s and 1980s, who he saw as Nagy’s successors. Eventually, Tellér succeeded in establishing a paranoid ethno-nationalism whose adherents could be justified in feeling threatened by Hungarian agents of foreign powers, as they had also made every endeavor, during the era of Soviet rule, to undermine the

⁴ BALÁZS TRENCSENYI: *Geschichtspolitik und Regimebildung in Ungarn*, in: *Transit. Europäische Revue* (Winter 2015/Spring 2016), 48, pp. 45-60, here p. 50.

⁵ More recent research has found that this crown does not date back to the time of Stephen I, but instead to the late 11th or 12th century. Still today, opinions on this point differ. See GERHARD SEEWANN: *Stephanskrone*, in: HOLM SUNDHAUSSEN, KONRAD CLEWING (eds.): *Lexikon zur Geschichte Südosteuropas*, 2nd ed., Wien et al. 2016, pp. 908-909.

⁶ GYÖRGY VÁRI: *Megalvadt gondolatok—Tellér Gyula miniszterelnöki tanácsadó portréja* [Curdled Thinking—Portrait of the Prime Minister’s Advisor, Tellér Gyula], in: *Magyar narancs* from 2014-08-11, URL: <http://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/megalvadt-gondolatok-82385> (2018-03-14).

Hungary's national identity and to "weaken the national resilience of the East European peoples."⁷

According to the historian Rudolf Ungváry, the root causes of Orbán's current politics can be found in the Hungary of the past. The Horthy regime from 1920 until 1944 has been a model for Orbán's autocratic regime⁸ and the nationalistic and clerical thinking of that era's political elite is experiencing a revival; in concrete terms, this can be recognized in dichotomous "friend or foe" thinking, anti-liberalism, anti-modernism, and anti-Semitism, as well as a categorical rejection of the "West" and its values, which are seen in opposition to the "higher" values of the "Hungarian nation." In his frequent speeches, Orbán reiterates again and again that Hungary's politics and economics are being threatened both internally and externally. Orbán's world view contains numerous elements of the romantic nationalism and the cultural pessimism that were thriving at the end of the 19th century. In his constant application of the friend-or-foe schema, his language is a language of permanent confrontation and his rhetoric knows no compromise. His goal is to eradicate both internal and external enemies. The internal enemies are all those who oppose the FIDESZ and its policies. This includes the NGOs that are financed from abroad, in particular the sixty organizations sponsored by American billionaire George Soros as part of his Open Society Foundation, which are active in the country and are being monitored as agents of "foreign interests that are directed against the nation."⁹ The law relating to the NGOs that was passed in the summer of 2017 has systematically impeded their work and will continue to do so as long as they receive financial backing from foreign sources.¹⁰ Government propaganda insinuates that Soros is a mastermind of global migration politics who wants to destroy Europe, and especially Hungary, with waves of Muslim immigrants.¹¹ The "Stop Soros" legislative package was put forward in February 2018 with the aim to completely pro-

⁷ TRENCSENYI (as in footnote 4), p. 54.

⁸ RUDOLF UNGVÁRY: A láthatatlan valóság: A fasisztoid mutáció a mai Magyarországon [An Unmistakable Reality: The Fascist Mutation in Hungary Today]. Pozsony—Bratislava 2014; IDEM: "Tief ist der Brunnen der Vergangenheit." Ungarns gescheiterte Übergänge nach Europa, in: Osteuropa 61 (2011), 12, pp. 199-134; BÁLINT MAGYAR: Autokratie in Aktion. Ungarn unter Orbán, ebenda, pp. 89-104; ANDRÁS INOTAI (ed.): Hungary's Path Toward an Illiberal System, in: Südosteuropa 63 (2015), 2; GÁBOR HALMAI: Der Niedergang der liberalen Demokratie mitten in Europa, in: Transit. Europäische Revue (Winter 2015/Spring 2016), 48, pp. 20-44.

⁹ Süddeutsche Zeitung from 2017-01-12.

¹⁰ Süddeutsche Zeitung from 2018-02-10.

¹¹ http://www.t-online.de/nachrichten/ausland/eu/id_81722648/orban-wirft-eu-muslimisierung-von-europa-vor.html (2018-03-15). Orbán held the speech quoted here on July 23, 2017, in Tusnádfürdő. Preceding the Stop Soros legislative package, the government carried out a poster campaign in the second half of 2017. The poster shows a portrait of a smiling Soros next to the words: "Ne hagyunk hogy Soros nevesen a végen" (We will not allow Soros to triumph in the end).

hibit NGO aid for refugees. Naturally, the large-scale media spectacle that was created around this legislation served as a mobilization tool for the FIDESZ party ahead of the parliamentary election scheduled for the 8th of April and was targeted at winning support for the party among the even more rightwing Jobbik voters.

Soros and the Soros-Plan he controls represent the intersection where internal and external enemies meet. According to Orbán's interpretation of history, the external enemies of Hungary are defined along the following lines: the Hungarian people have been, and continue to be, victimized by external enemies, including the Ottoman Empire, centered around Istanbul, the Habsburgs in Vienna, the Communists, whose seat of power was Moscow and now EU bureaucrats working out of Brussels. All the evil and afflictions that have plagued Hungary have come from outside its borders and, for centuries, the country has remained an exploited colony of foreign powers. Hungarians themselves were never the perpetrators in these ordeals, but victims; the Holocaust was exclusively a crime of Germany, Communism a Soviet crime and the demarcation of the border according to the Treaty of Trianon in 1920 was a crime committed by the victorious western powers. The "House of Terror" museum, which was opened in 2002, was supposed to highlight the victim role that Hungary played during the 20th century.¹² In 2013, the historical institute "Veritas" was established by the government. One of its tasks has been to produce an "official" reinterpretation of the last 150 years of Hungary's history in line with the particular politics of memory advocated by Orbán. The contractually sanctioned borders of 1920 destroyed the unity of the Hungarian nation, which, according to Orbán, must be re-established under any conditions. In his speech in the Romanian Tusnádfürdő (Băile Tușnad) on July 23, 2011, he reiterated that the victors of World War One constructed an "unnatural state" and "we, the Hungarian nation, have been fighting since then to make this unnatural state whole and sound once more."¹³ Because Orbán is convinced that the consumer and welfare society of the western world is falling apart, he sees his mission, not just as that of protecting his own country from a similar fate, but also of assuming a pioneering role by advancing the interests of the nation against a hostile outside world with all the means at his disposal and regardless of the sacrifices it will take.

The following three examples illustrate, in more detail, the various ways in which the politics of the Orbán regime have become historicized: firstly, in

¹² For more on this subject, see ÉVA KOVÁCS: The Cynical and the Ironical—Remembering Communism in Hungary, in: *Regio. Minorities, Politics, Society* 6 (2003), pp. 155-196; BRIGITTE MIHOK: Das "Haus des Terrors" in Budapest. Spiegelbild der nationalen Geschichtsdeutung?, in: *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 19 (2010), pp. 363-378.

¹³ <http://2010-2014.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/miniszterelnok/beszedekek-publikaciok-interjuk?page=12> (2018-03-15).

the example of the 2011 Hungarian constitution, secondly, the commemorative culture in the form of several historical monuments on Budapest's Liberty Square, and, thirdly, the Holocaust remembrance over the last two decades. Finally, there will be a brief discussion on the history-based policies of the rightwing Jobbik party, as this has been the only political party to have, thus far, successfully asserted itself as a possible alternative to the FIDESZ government.

The New Hungarian Constitution

Officiated on April 25, 2011, the Hungarian constitution defines, in detail, certain "superior" national values (in opposition to those of the West) together with the precepts of political action that derive from them.¹⁴ The uppermost value, as defined by this constitution, is the safeguarding and maintaining of the nation and its unity, and the protection those who belong to it. The state is called upon to serve the *nation* and not simply the people, that is, its citizens, who are also constitutionally obliged to be exclusively committed to the nation. An overview of all the statements relating to this term "nation" makes it clear that what is really meant is the "ethnic nation," in which Christianity is assigned a protective role. Here, Christianity amounts to more than just a religion—in fact, its primary purpose is to serve the Hungarian nation and ensure its continued existence.¹⁵ The concept of a nation that centers on ethnicity excludes, by definition, all non-Christian and ethnic minorities who live in Hungary, despite the fact that these groups (according to a paragraph adopted from the "old" constitution from 1989/90) are recognized as having a formative function in the state. However, this is not a contradiction, as the role of the state is, in turn, to serve the nation, a role that must also apply to the ethnically defined and non-Christian minorities (though this category has primarily referred to the Jews who have lived for centuries in Hungary). The preamble to the constitution, which begins with the words "God save Hungary!" (a phrase borrowed from the first verse of the national anthem written in 1823) defines its value orientation as follows: "We affirm that the most important institutions underpinning our coexistence are family and nation, and that the fundamental values of our shared identity are loyalty, faith and love." In this heavily ideologized constitution, which is completely centered around the idea of the collective, there is, initially, no mention of civic rights and duties as is the case in most constitutions. Instead, the focus is on nation and history, including historicizing references to events such as Hungary's defense of the Western World during the course of its

¹⁴ The German translation forms the basis for these statements, submitted by HERBERT KÜPPER: Ungarns Verfassung vom 25. April 2011: Einführung—Übersetzung—Materialien, Frankfurt a. M. 2012, pp. 199-260.

¹⁵ TRENCSENYI (as in footnote 4), p. 56.

thousand-year history. The preamble “concludes with the juxtaposition of present-day decadence and future regeneration and invokes the classical topos of a nationalized renaissance.”¹⁶ The German constitutional expert Herbert Küpper adds that: “Alongside this backward-looking vision of the nation, several other historicizing elements stand out. The ‘accomplishments of our historic state,’ for example, play a prominent role.”¹⁷ Küpper goes on to observe that this fictional thousand-year state mentioned in the preamble serves as a “self-contained guiding principle within the design of the constitution and basic law”¹⁸ because there is an indisputable premise that “it is to be honored.” However, this historic constitution (which is often readily compared with the English one) did not serve, as the English constitution did, in the development of a civil society and parliamentarianism, but instead served to safeguard Hungary’s pre-bourgeois, feudal structures, in particular the privileges and prerogatives of the nobility. The penultimate paragraph of the preamble explicitly addresses contemporary history, identifying the period from March 19, 1944, until May 2, 1989, as a time when sovereignty was lost and the “historic constitution” therefore had to be abandoned. The times of “foreign domination” (which is also made responsible for the Holocaust) are therefore interpreted as an obstruction to autonomous, nation-centered rule rather than an assault against democracy, republic and individual liberty. The preamble specifies several public holidays that have a national focus, namely: March 15 (the revolution of 1848), August 20 (commemorating St. Stephen’s founding of the Hungarian state in the year 1000) and October 23 (the 1956 revolution). The word “republic” was removed from the country’s previous name, “the Republic of Hungary”, and the term was thereafter only mentioned in the context of regulatory statutes. At the end of the preamble, the aim is expressly stipulated “to make Hungary great again.”

With the emphasis on the “Holy Crown,” which “embodies the constancy of Hungary’s constitution and state and the unity of the nation”, the Carpathian Basin is indirectly referenced as a geographical reference space. Derived from this is an explicit statement, in Article D, that Hungarians living in neighboring countries be eligible for cross-border state care. In contrast to the old constitution of 1989/90, there is no clarification at this point in the new constitution that prohibits either the use of force or the violent enforcement of territorial claims, even though such an addition would appear necessary. These kinds of changes have even been permitted in revised interpretations. In his concluding remarks on the subject, Küpper observes that, in light of a number of its regulations, the new constitution of 2011 can certainly be linked to the illiberal legacy of Kadarism and, furthermore, “has departed, in many ways, from general West European constitutional norms.” This is especially

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 57.

¹⁷ KÜPPER (as in footnote 14), p. 59.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

true with respect to its historicization¹⁹, which presents a perception of history that has little in common with the findings of reputable historical research.

Liberty Square in Budapest as an Example of the New Commemorative Culture

Liberty Square (Szabadság tér), situated in the parliament district on the Pest side of the city, is almost overcrowded with historical monuments and statues. Opposite the American embassy at the northern corner of the square stands the Soviet liberation monument, which was erected in 1848, and opposite that is a new memorial built to commemorate the years of Soviet occupation. Two further monuments stand in front of the embassy: one is the statue of Harry Hill Bandholtz, Brigadier General of the U.S. army, who, as a member of the Allied Control Commission, oversaw the retreat of Romanian troops out of Budapest in August 1919. The statue was removed at the end of the 1940s and re-erected in July 1989. The second monument, modestly depicting a simple opened book, is dedicated to the memory of Carl Lutz, the Swiss vice consul in Budapest, who saved more than 50,000 Jews from the Holocaust through the issuing of passports and letters of protection. After Hungary declared war on the USA and diplomatic relations between the two countries broke down, Switzerland assumed responsibility for the diplomatic relations, not just of the USA, but also of Great Britain and other countries, and Vice Consul Lutz took up office in the U.S. embassy building. At the south-east end of Liberty Square stands the Protestant “Homecomers’ Church” commemorating the “return” of Transylvania following the Second Vienna Arbitration Award (1940). It is built in the Novecento style of Mussolini’s Italy. Today, the church and adjacent building complex houses one of the Jobbik headquarters. In front of the church stands the Byzantine double cross, “one of the favorite symbols of the nationalistic political right wing.”²⁰ In November 2003, a bust of Admiral Horthy was installed in front of the main entrance to the church. Particularly controversial is the memorial on the southern side of the square, which was approved by the government on January 17, 2014, and erected in July that year. In memory of the German army’s occupation of Hungary on March 19, 1944, “it is a physical rendering of the official interpretation of history that Hungary, after weighing up all the circumstances, must ultimately be considered a victim of Germany in the Second World War rather than its ally. According to this interpretation, the sole reason Hungary entered the war was in order to protect the West from the Bolshevik barbarism advancing from the East.”²¹ The luminous bronze statue of the Arch-

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 195.

²⁰ ISTVÁN REV: Freiheitsplatz, Budapest, in: *Transit. Europäische Revue* (Winter 2015/ Spring 2016), 48, pp. 61-76, here p. 65.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 70.

angel Gabriel with broken wings, surrounded by the stumps of columns, stands as an allegory of the innocent Hungary. A bronze eagle mounted above the statue is depicted as plunging towards the archangel and represents the German occupiers. However, this is not the eagle of the Nazi Empire, which grasps a swastika in its claws, but the imperial eagle of the Holy Roman Empire. The choice of this symbol can be directly traced back to Orbán, who argued in an open letter that the occupiers were “in fact just Germans” who “were living at the time in a National Socialist state [...] For this reason, we don’t feel it to be offensive to use the imperial eagle as a symbol for Germany [...] What I have discovered in the figure of the angel is the innocent victim [...] of anti-Christianity.”²² With this rhetoric of self-stigmatization, Orbán is looking for a way to obscure the responsibility of the Horthy regime for its policy of alliances with the Third Reich and thus its complicit role in the death of around a million Hungarians, 600,000 of whom were Jews. The myth of victimhood rules out any way for the nation to come to terms with its own role and perspective as a co-perpetrator of such crimes. Within a short time after the statue’s construction, a counter-memorial was set up with the help of community funding and support on a site directly opposite it, separated by a busy one-way street. This second memorial, which is constantly being re-designed and altered, features the names of places where the Jewish cemeteries are no longer visited, together with newspaper clippings from the time and numerous photographs and texts that deal with the Hungarian—including the Jewish—victims of this epoch as well as the perpetrators.

Holocaust Remembrance

According to Éva Kovács, the Trianon trauma gained a hegemonic position in Hungarian memory politics after 1990, intensifying after 1998 and again in 2010 in a way that the country’s collective memory of the Holocaust could never compete with.²³ The “House of Terror” opened in 2002 and was entrusted to the management of Mária Schmidt, the “Government Commissioner for Contemporary History” under the Orbán administrations of 1998–2002 and since 2010. In the numerous studies she has written on the Holocaust, Schmidt denies its singularity, which she considers to be an invention of mass media dominated by “liberals.” She surpasses this claim with the as-

²² Open letter written by Viktor Orbán to the art historian Katalin Dávid from April 30, 2014, quoted here from *ibidem*, p. 71.

²³ ÉVA KOVÁCS: The Hungarian Holocaust Memorial Year 2014: Some Remarks, in: S.I.M.O.N.—Shoa: Intervention. Methods. Documentation 4 (2017), 1, pp. 109–121, here p. 111, URL: https://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2017-1/2017-1_ART_Kovacs/ART_Kovacs01.pdf (2018-03-15).

sertion that there never was a Holocaust in Hungary.²⁴ This kind of trivialization and relativization of the Holocaust is inseparably linked to the argument Schmidt also puts forward that National Socialism and Communism and their regimes can simply be equated.²⁵ What Kovács describes as the “ghettoization” of the Holocaust Museum, which opened in 2004, in an outlying eastern suburb of Budapest, highlights the minor importance attributed to the Holocaust within the mainstream national memory. The museum has continued to be the subject of ongoing conflicts involving various institutions, including government institutions, and can by no means be considered a “success story.”²⁶ The same can also be said for the Hungarian Holocaust Memorial Year in 2014, which was announced by the government and allocated a budget of € 6 million for a variety of projects. The government-run project entitled the “House of Fate” (Sorsok Háza) took center stage and, as the name already demonstrates, represented a deliberate counter-position to the well-known work *Sorstalanság* (Fateless) written by Nobel Prizewinner for Literature, Imre Kertész. Led by Schmidt as program director, the museum project was meant to be dedicated to the child victims of the Holocaust, and, just like the Holocaust Museum, was to be set up on the outskirts of Budapest in a building also intended as the new premises for the Holocaust Documentation Center. However, the museum has never been opened and still stands empty as the opposing parties behind the initiative—on the one side the government, and on the other the “Federation of Jewish Communities in Hungary”—have not been able to agree, either on the concept or on how the museum should be managed. Numerous civic organizations and initiatives (including the “Trefort Garden monument,” “Living Memory,” “Memento 70,” and the Facebook group “The Holocaust and my Family”) have made it clear that they oppose the “government’s ahistorical Holocaust narrative”²⁷ and have been successful, at least, in having Schmidt removed from her role as director of the Sorsok Háza.

Kovács summarizes the results of the Memorial Year, which was so disastrous for the government, with the following words: “After decades of silence, the second generation of survivors could speak and tell the stories of their parents and grandparents publicly, while behind the scenes, further ne-

²⁴ MÁRIA SCHMIDT: Holocausts a huszadik században [The Holocausts in the 20th Century]. In: Magyar Hírlap from 1999-11-13. The use of the term Holocaust as a plural is not a misprint, but is intended as programmatic.

²⁵ In criticism of this, RANDOLPH BRAHAM: Hungary and the Holocaust: The Nationalist Drive to Whitewash the Past, in: RFE/RL Reports, East European Perspectives 3 from 2001-01-14, p. 20. For more details, see the comprehensive study by GERHARD SEEWANN, ÉVA KOVÁCS: Juden und Holocaust in der ungarischen Erinnerungskultur seit 1945, in: Südosteuropa 54 (2006), 1, pp. 24-59, here in particular pp. 38-59.

²⁶ JULIA CREET: The House of Terror and the Holocaust Memorial Center: Resentiment and Melancholia in Post-89 Hungary, in: European Studies 30 (2013), pp. 29-62.

²⁷ KOVÁCS, The Hungarian Holocaust Memorial Year 2014 (as in footnote 23), p. 117.

gotiations are being conducted on the future of the House of Fate that have not ended until the completion of this essay.”²⁸

Jobbik

The Jobbik party, which formed out of the movement of the same name (Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom—Movement for a Better Hungary) gained 20 per cent of all votes in the 2014 election and came to rank second place behind the FIDESZ in many constituencies.²⁹ Unlike the divided and quarreling parties on the left wing of the political spectrum, Orbán saw Jobbik as a challenge, even a potential threat, for his almost unlimited position of power. Jobbik aligned itself closely to the anti-Semitic and anti-Roma racist and revisionist tendencies of the Horthy era, and cultivated the neo-traditionalist cultural philosophy of Béla Hamvas, which originated during that period. The party also took up a critical position towards Europe and attracted the majority of its voters by shrilly criticizing capitalism and the system.

Because the years following the system change failed to bring increased prosperity to many Hungarians, Jobbik’s populist critique of the established parties, including the FIDESZ, met with widespread approval. They attained their best election results in former socialist strongholds, areas that have come to be characterized by poverty and general decline. The party’s explicit objective was, and still is, to bring about a better regime of “national cooperation,” an aim with which they sought to overtake the governing party via the right. Jobbik also called for a new national holiday to be established on the anniversary of the battle at Pressburg in the year 907, in which the grand duke Árpád mounted a devastating retaliation on July 4 to wipe out an East-Franconian army that had attempted to conquer Pannonia.³⁰ This can also be seen as a signal to the EU, not only to recognize Hungary’s stubborn self-will, but also that the country is firmly opposed to a Western orientation. Further historicizing measures on Jobbik’s agenda include reconfiguring the monuments on Liberty Square, replacing the irredentist statues that were removed from the square after 1945, as well as officially recognizing the *turul* bird as a national symbol (this was the “bird of death”, used as an emblem both by the Árpáden rulers and by rightwing extremist groups in the interwar period.) Furthermore, the party has proposed that Hungary’s Asian ancestry be acknowledged in the form of Turanism and also that there be official recognition of Hungary’s ethnic ties to the Turan peoples, although Turanism is seen as confrontationally opposed to the theory of Finno-Ugric descent. The

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 120.

²⁹ ANDRÁS KOVÁCS: *The Post-Communist Extreme Right: The Jobbik Party in Hungary*, in: RUTH WODAK, MAJID KHOSRAVINIK et al. (eds.): *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*, London et al. 2013, pp. 223-258.

³⁰ TRENCSENYI (as in footnote 4), pp. 58-59.

Jobbik internet portal (kuruk.info), which is operated out of the USA and used intensively, is divided into three thematic subsections, namely “Jewish Criminality,” “Gypsy Criminality” and “The Holocaust Lie.”

For Jobbik voters, Orbán is still too liberal. While Orbán focuses on a renaissance of the “original Magyar people,” Jobbik calls for the rebirth of the white Arian race. This rebirth must, however, be preceded by a “cleansing catastrophe,” the destruction of the old world. It is a political objective that amounts to an apocalyptic vision and is essentially also an idea that is propagated by Donald Trump’s former chief advisor, Stephen Bannon.

Conclusion

The national narrative of victimhood rests on a manipulated version of history and on an understanding of politics as a perpetual battle between irreconcilable forces. The aim of completely eliminating the imagined enemies both inside and outside the national borders rules out any options for compromise. The political program of “illiberal democracy” is intrinsically meaningless. It is not based on the concept of the common good, but instead on a shared concept of the enemy, and thus only recognizes a need for unrestricted power to be wielded over a society that is as ethnically homogenous and culturally assimilated as possible, a society that can be transferred to, and ultimately unite within, a single, sacred nation.