



THE

Hungarian Historical Review

NEW SERIES OF ACTA HISTORICA
ACADEMIÆ SCIENTIARUM HUNGARICÆ

*Holocaust Victimhood in Hungary:
New Histories*

VOLUME 9 NUMBER 3
2020

Institute of History,
Research Centre for the Humanities

THE

Hungarian Historical Review

NEW SERIES OF ACTA HISTORICA
ACADEMIÆ SCIENTIARUM HUNGARICÆ



Supported by the HUNGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (HAS) and
the NATIONAL CULTURAL FUND OF HUNGARY



Nemzeti Kulturális Alap

Editor-in-Chief

Pál Fodor (Research Centre for the Humanities)

Editors

Péter APOR (RCH), Gabriella ERDÉLYI (RCH), Sándor HORVÁTH (RCH), Judit KLEMENT (RCH),
Veronika NOVÁK (Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest), Tamás PÁLOSFAI (RCH),
András VADAS (Eötvös Loránd University / CEU), Bálint VARGA (RCH)

Review Editors

Veronika ESZIK (RCH), Judit GÁL (Eötvös Loránd University), Janka KOVÁCS (Eötvös Loránd University),
Réka KRIZMANICS (CEU), Tamás RÉVÉSZ (RCH)

Editorial Secretaries

Gábor DEMETER (RCH), Judit LAKATOS (RCH)

Editorial Board

Attila BÁRÁNY (University of Debrecen), László BORHI (RCH), Gábor CZOCH (Eötvös Loránd University of
Budapest), Zoltán CSEPREGI (Evangelical-Lutheran Theological University), Gábor GYÁNI (RCH), Péter HAHNER
(University of Pécs), György KÖVÉR (Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest), Géza PÁLFFY (RCH), Attila PÓK
(RCH), Béla TOMKA (University of Szeged), Attila ZSOLDOS (RCH)

Advisory Board

Gábor AGOSTON (Georgetown University), János BAK (Central European University), Neven BUDAK (University
of Zagreb), Václav BŮŽEK (University of South Bohemia), Olivier CHALINE (Université de Paris-IV Paris-
Sorbonne), Jeroen DUINDAM (Leiden University), Robert J. W. EVANS (University of Oxford), Alice FREIFELD
(University of Florida), Tatjana GUSAROVA (Lomonosov Moscow State University), Catherine HOREL (Université
de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne), Olga KHAVANOVA (Russian Academy of Sciences), Gábor KLANICZAY (Central
European University), Mark KRAMER (Harvard University), László KONTLER (Central European University),
Tünde LENGYELOVÁ (Slovakian Academy of Sciences), Martyn RADY (University College London, School of
Slavonic and East European Studies), Anton SCHINDLING (Universität Tübingen), Stanisław A. SROKA
(Jagiellonian University), Thomas WINKELBAUER (Universität Wien)

INDEXED/ABSTRACTED IN: CEEOL, EBSCO, EPA, JSTOR, MATARKA, Recensio.net.



Institute of History,
Research Centre for the Humanities
H-1097 Budapest, Tóth Kálmán utca 4.
www.hunghist.org
HU ISSN 2063-8647

The Hungarian Historical Review

New Series of Acta Historica
Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae

Volume 9 No. 3 2020

Holocaust Victimhood in Hungary: New Histories

Alexandra Szabó and András Szécsényi
Special Editors of the Thematic Issue

Contents

Contents

INTRODUCTION

ANDREA PETŐ, ALEXANDRA M. SZABÓ, AND ANDRÁS SZÉCSÉNYI 385

ARTICLES

TAMÁS CSAPODY Bor Forced Labor Service as Reflected in Diaries 391

ALEXANDRA M. SZABÓ The Corporeal Continuation of the Holocaust:
A Look at Miscarriages 408

HELÉNA HUHÁK Place Attachment in a Concentration Camp:
Bergen-Belsen 430

EDIT JEGES Hungarian Holocaust Testimonies in Global
Memory Frames: Digital Storytelling about
“Change” and “Liberation” 452

ANDRÁS SZÉCSÉNYI Hillersleben: Spatial Experiences of a Hungarian
Jew in a German DP Camp, 1945 470

ISTVÁN PÁL ÁDÁM Budapest Butchers, the Jewish Question,
and Holocaust Survivors 491

BORBÁLA KLACSMANN Neglected Restitution: The Relations of the
Government Commission for Abandoned
Property and the Hungarian Jews, 1945–1948 512

FERENC LACZÓ From Collaboration to Cooperation: German
Historiography of the Holocaust in Hungary 530

BOOK REVIEWS

- Eastern Europe in Icelandic Sagas. By Tatjana N. Jackson.
Reviewed by Csete Katona 556
- Účtovné registre Bratislavskej kapituly 1417–1529 [Account registers of the
chapter of Bratislava, 1417–1529]. By Rastislav Luz. Reviewed by Petra Vručina 559
- Media and Literature in Multilingual Hungary (1770–1820).
Edited by Ágnes Dóbék, Gábor Mészáros, and Gábor Vaderna.
Reviewed by Csenge Aradi 561
- The Secular Enlightenment. By Margaret C. Jacob.
Reviewed by Tibor Bodnár-Király 565
- “Kedves Hazámfiái, mozdulni kell...” Georgikoni peregrinatio oeconomica
a 19. század elején [“Dear fellow countrymen, we must move...” The technological
journeys of Hungary’s first college of farming in the early nineteenth century].
By György Kurucz. Reviewed by Gábor Gelléri 570
- Universities in Imperial Austria 1848–1918: A Social History of a Multicultural
Space. By Surman, Jan. Reviewed by Katalin Stráner 573
- Slovutný pán prezident. Listy Jozefovi Tisovi [Your Honor, Mr. President:
Letters to Jozef Tiso]. By Madeline Vadkerty. Reviewed by Denisa Nešťáková 577
- Budapest–Bergen-Belsen–Svájc: A Kasztner-vonat fővárosi utasai
[Budapest–Bergen-Belsen–Switzerland: The Budapest passengers of
the Kasztner train]. Edited by Anikó Lukács. Reviewed by Borbála Klacsmann 580
- Hóman Bálint és népbíróági pere [Bálint Hóman and his trial
at the People’s Court]. Edited by Gábor Ujváry. Reviewed by Andrea Pető 583
- New Perspectives in Transnational History of Communism in East Central
Europe. Edited by Krzysztof Brzechczyn. Reviewed by Piotr Kowalewski Jahromi 587
- Magyar-zsidó identitásminták [Hungarian-Jewish identity patterns].
Edited by Iván Zoltán Dénes. Reviewed by Attila Novák 591

Hóman Bálint és népbíróvási pere [Bálint Hóman and his trial at the People's Court]. Edited by Gábor Ujváry. Budapest: Ráció Kiadó; Székesfehérvár: Városi Levéltár és Kutatóintézet, 2019. 668 pp.

Bálint Hóman (1885–1951) a long-serving Minister of Culture of the Horthy regime, became a recent symbol of “historical revisionism.” By revisionism, I am referring not only to the revisions of indictments made by the people's court after 1945 but also to the history of the period between 1945 and 1989 and thus, indirectly, to the attempt to revalue the whole period before 1945, which is a constitutive part of the memory politics of illiberal regimes. A thick volume entitled *Historical Revisionism* was also published in 2011. It was edited by Gábor Ujváry, a founding member of the controversial government-sponsored Veritas Historical Institute and Archive, in which the most outstanding contemporary Hungarian historians presented Hóman as a historian, a public collection specialist (as he was the director of the National Museum), and a politician while also examining his networks of valuable contacts (without which his upward career would have been unthinkable) and his connection to Székesfehérvár. However, this edited volume did not bring any closure on the subject. Rather, it was followed in 2015 by the ultimately failed plan to erect a statue of Hóman and, in 2016, the also failed lawsuit against the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Magyar Tudományos Akadémia – MTA), which demanded the restoration of Hóman's MTA membership.

The volume under review, which offers the text of the documents in Bálint Hóman's people's court files and analyses of these documents surprisingly begins with a detailed, almost hundred-page, extremely thoroughly compiled chronology (pp.11–108). Although there are usually chronologies at the end of publications of historical sources, this chronology at the beginning of the volume provides a primary framework for interpreting the publication: the volume sticks to sources and facts and seeks to give the impression of a scholarly endeavor that is objective, clearly substantiated, and apolitical. The chronology and bibliography of Hóman's works are followed by Tibor Zinner's 40-page study on the history of the people's courts. The basic tenet of illiberal “revisionist historiography” is the emphasis on the need for a fresh start on the grounds that, until the work we have in our hands now was written, no one had dealt with the topic being analyzed. Zinner, who published his first work on the history of people's courts already in 1983, also uses this topos. Another reflection on the history of the people's court by Zsolt Horváth (which for some reason is at the end of the

volume) mentions only the book by Tibor Lukács published in 1979 as the only summarizing work on the topic.

The volume contains two introductions concerning the people's courts and one about the 2015 retrial. This is followed by material from the people's court case in 1946. The real starting point of the volume is the thorough research work carried out by Gábor Ujváry as an expert for the case in 2015 (pp.537–610) and his analysis of the public debate (pp.162–99). This is followed by the documents of a court case in 1946 and then the 2015 trial.

The larger, more substantial part of the volume (about 300 pages) is the thoroughly annotated publication of the documents of the People's Court. The rules concerning the publication of these documents are explained in a preface to the collection (as is fitting). In this volume, the studies about the court case exceed in length the documents of the court case themselves, so the reader gets two loosely connected books. The largest theoretical problem of the volume is the authors' ambiguous attitude towards the empirical source of the volume, i.e. the minutes of the people's court proceedings.

Anyone who has ever worked with people's court documents knows this is a very challenging genre. The materials from a single case are sometimes held in different archives, and it can be extremely difficult to determine what documents the people's court used and often how it used them. The version of the Hóman court case published in the book was also created by merging two archival files (one from the Budapest City Archives, the other from the Historical Archives of the State Security Services). It is therefore strange that the documents' archival references are completely missing and, furthermore, that there is no reference to the missing materials that have been removed from the files in the meantime.

There are other methodological and theoretical problems which the authors fail to raise concerning the genre of people's court protocols as a source. The first problem concerns the transitional nature of the institution of the people's court itself. In an ever-changing legal environment, the authorities ran and used an institution which gained its legitimacy precisely from its ignorance of this constant change.

The second problem concerns the fact that, as is true in all court sources, since these kinds of written sources are available, they can be analyzed in two ways. The first approach is to consider these lawsuits as theatrical productions in which the actors performed the events of their past for the audience and the community according to the rules they thought were known. This, of course, had political consequences. In the case of the Hungarian people's courts, for

example, if the defendants were female, they referred to themselves as “weak women” and were usually given lighter sentences for crimes for which a male defendant would have been given a more seriously punishment.¹ Hóman tried to use this tactic. According to the interrogating investigators’ summary report he behaved “womanly”: “[He] describes his role as insignificant, denies his influence, and omits from his role the moments that show his unbroken German friendship, fascist attitude, and anti-Semitic attitude throughout.” (p.210) He was not successful, given the court’s politics and context. In other cases, defendants try to arouse emotions. Female defendants, for instance, may try crying. In the case of Hóman, however, the “old woman’s complaint” (p.210), his strategy to portray himself as a victim, which is also mentioned in the report, did not help and may have hurt him. In this interpretive framework, the emphasis is on the fact that the trial, regardless of whether it happened incidentally in the transitional justice system of the extraordinary transitional period, never returns “the truth.”

The other methodological approach typical of this volume is to consider what was happening in the court as “objective.” The courts as institutions of post–World War II political justice did not function in this manner. The publication insists on factual accountability of the people’s courts with great commitment and a huge footnote apparatus. This interpretation, even if consistent in its own methodological approach, would still be questionable. First of all, it is not clear that the lawyers, police officers, and investigators working in Budapest (a city largely in ruins) in 1945 and 1946 can be expected to have the same insights, knowledge, and source knowledge that today’s researchers have. Second, this approach is inconsistent in the volume. For example, the investigative report of November 29, 1945 mentions 147 pieces of attached evidence in support of the allegations against Hóman, on which the volume does not reflect here. It is incumbent on the historian who is editing the text not simply to check and (quite legitimately) criticize the professionalism of the people’s courts but also to explain why and how this kind of legal institution and procedure developed. Analyses of large, highly symbolic court cases like the Hóman hearing, however, are not suitable for this purpose.²

1 See more on this: Andrea Pető, *The Women of the Arrow Cross Party. Invisible Hungarian Perpetrators in the Second World War* (Palgrave: Macmillan, 2020).

2 See more Ildikó Barna, and Andrea Pető, *Political Justice in Budapest after World War II* (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2015).

In this review, I would not go into the controversial points of judging Hóman's professional life, which was extensively analyzed in the 2011 volume. The volume under review is interesting in part because it returns to the pre-2011 framework without meaningfully reflecting on the failure to erect a statue of Hóman and the failure to rehabilitate him as a historian and scholar. The book seems to have been intended as a monument of sorts, like a book to create a memory of the trial.

The volume concludes with a history of attempts to rehabilitate Hóman, analyzing the process that resulted in neither the erection of a statue of Hóman nor the restoration of his membership in Hungarian Academy of Sciences. István Varga (FIDESZ MP), who has been the political engine behind the rehabilitation of Hóman in recent decades, gained significant space in this part of the volume. In his writing, Varga puts himself at the center of these attempts, saying "without the two-thirds parliamentary majority, I would have found it much harder to take up the obstacles" (p.505). Thus, the legal process of rehabilitation became just as much a political process as the verdict against Hóman in 1946. When the volume mercilessly and meticulously footnotes the court case, it fights a battle that it had already lost when it was launched.

Andrea Pető
Central European University

THE

Hungarian Historical Review

Aims and Scope

The Hungarian Historical Review is a peer-reviewed international journal of the social sciences and humanities with a focus on Hungarian history. The journal's geographical scope—Hungary and East-Central Europe—makes it unique: the Hungarian Historical Review explores historical events in Hungary, but also raises broader questions in a transnational context. The articles and book reviews cover topics regarding Hungarian and East-Central European History. The journal aims to stimulate dialogue on Hungarian and East-Central European History in a transnational context. The journal fills lacuna, as it provides a forum for articles and reviews in English on Hungarian and East-Central European history, making Hungarian historiography accessible to the international reading public and part of the larger international scholarly discourse.

The Hungarian Historical Reviews

(Formerly *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*)

4 Tóth Kálmán utca, Budapest H – 1097 Hungary

Postal address: H-1453 Budapest, P.O. Box 33. Hungary

E-mail: hunghist@btk.mta.hu

Homepage: <http://www.hunghist.org>

Published quarterly by the Institute of History,
Research Centre for the Humanities (RCH).

Responsible Editor: Pál Fodor (Director General).

Prepress preparation by the Institute of History, RCH, Research Assistance Team;
Leader: Éva Kovács. Page layout: Imre Horváth. Cover design: Gergely Böhm.

Printed in Hungary, by Prime Rate Kft, Budapest.

Translators/proofreaders: Alan Campbell, Matthew W. Caples, Thomas Cooper,
Sean Lambert, Thomas Szerecz.

Annual subscriptions: \$80/€60 (\$100/€75 for institutions), postage excluded.

For Hungarian institutions HUF7900 per year, postage included.

Single copy \$25/€20. For Hungarian institutions HUF2000.

Send orders to *The Hungarian Historical Review*, H-1453 Budapest, P.O. Box 33.
Hungary; e-mail: hunghist@btk.mta.hu

Articles, books for review, and correspondence concerning editorial matters,
advertising, or permissions should be sent to *The Hungarian Historical Review*,
Editorial, H-1453 Budapest, P.O. Box 33. Hungary; e-mail: hunghist@btk.mta.hu. Please consult us if you would like to propose a book for review or a review essay.

Copyright © 2020 *The Hungarian Historical Review* by the Institute of History,
Research Centre for the Humanities.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored, transmitted,
or disseminated in any form or by any means without prior written permission
from the publisher.

THE

Hungarian Historical Review

Holocaust Victimhood in Hungary: New Histories

CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	A. PETŐ, A. M. SZABÓ, A. SZÉCSÉNYI	385
<i>Bor Forced Labor Service as Reflected in Diaries</i>	T. CSAPODY	391
<i>The Corporeal Continuation of the Holocaust: A Look at Miscarriages</i>	A. M. SZABÓ	408
<i>Place Attachment in a Concentration Camp: Bergen-Belsen</i>	H. HUHÁK	430
<i>Hungarian Holocaust Testimonies in Global Memory Frames</i>	E. JEGES	452
<i>Hillersleben: Spatial Experiences of a Hungarian Jew</i>	A. SZÉCSÉNYI	470
<i>Budapest Butchers, the Jewish Question, and Holocaust Survivors</i>	I. P. ÁDÁM	491
<i>The Government Commission for Abandoned Property and the Hungarian Jews</i>	B. KLACSMANN	512
<i>German Historiography of the Holocaust in Hungary</i>	F. LACZÓ	530

hr

HU ISSN
2063-8647



9 772063 864004



2 0003