

Péter Apor

The Lost Deportations and the Lost People of Kunmadaras: A Pogrom in Hungary, 1946

The subject of this article is one of the scandals of postwar Hungarian politics and society: the anti-Semitic pogrom that took place on May 21, 1946 in the village of Kunmadaras. The Kunmadaras riot was part of a series of anti-Jewish atrocities that broke out in the summer of 1946 in the Hungarian countryside. These events, however, were comparable with similar violence against surviving and returning Jewish communities in East Central Europe, particularly in Poland and Slovakia. The scholarly literature so far has typically understood these events as the outcome of social discontent raised by economic hardships and mismanaged or openly abused and even generated by political ideologies, particularly Nazism and Communism. These descriptions rarely problematize the Jews as an obvious ethnic category and seldom ask questions concerning the ways peasant or local communities actually distanced their neighbors as “Jews” to be beaten. This article focuses on the everyday interaction through which ethnicity and ethnic identities were constructed in a village that, as the outcome of the events, was split between “Hungarians” and “Jews” in the summer of 1946. While taking the political implications into consideration, I argue that the pogrom was a consequence of the frames of traditional peasant culture, which were mobilized under the particular postwar social and political circumstances, and particularly of the culture of collective violence that was also present in the village of Kunmadaras. The second section of the article, however, concentrates on how politics abused the events during a subsequent trial and constructed a particular Hungarian version of the anti-Fascist myth without the Jewish victims themselves. As was the case all over Soviet-dominated East Central Europe, this myth built a certain level of legitimacy for Communist parties.

Keywords: Anti-Semitism, collective violence, Communism, popular culture, memory of World War II

Introduction

On May 21, 1946 a riot against the Jews of the Hungarian village of Kunmadaras broke out. Several people were beaten and eventually three of them were killed. The Kunmadaras revolt was one in a series of horrific assaults against surviving Jewish communities in postwar East Central Europe, particularly in Poland, Hungary and Slovakia. Attempts by historians to interpret these controversial events regularly generate fierce debates, such as the recent debate concerning

the 1946 Kielce pogrom in Poland or a debate in the mid-1990s about the postwar beatings of Jews in the Hungarian countryside. For many historians the pogroms are explained by social and economic circumstances, in particular the general privation and widespread social discontent that accompanied it, which was abused by various malicious political ideologies for their own purposes.¹ Apparently, such cases prove the survival of prewar fascist and Nazi racist propaganda and serve as *ex post facto* evidence for the complicity of local societies in the deportation of Jews initiated and coordinated by German authorities.² Other historians argue that while the impact of Nazi anti-Semitism was relevant, postwar domestic Communist parties played a more instrumental role in the pogroms, as they manipulated and abused anti-Semitic sentiments to legitimize their own dictatorial attempts.³ A third position, on the contrary, calls into question the notion that the atrocities were motivated by political anti-Semitism and, in fact, rejects anti-Semitism as a motif in general, links the violence instead to ordinary acts of banditry and robbery.⁴

Strangely, despite their disagreements on other points, both the interpretation based on the impact of political ideologies and framed as a history of political ideas and the alternative one focusing on allegedly non-political social mentalities lead to a rather embarrassing conclusion. The idea that peasants were either

1 Bożena Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach. 4. VII 1946 r.* (Warsaw: Bellona, 1992); Łukasz Kamiński and Jan Żaryn, eds., *Reflections on the Kielce Pogrom* (Warsaw: IPN, 2006); Éva Standeisky, "Antiszemita megmozdulások Magyarországon a koalíciós időszakban," *Századok* 126 (1992): 284–308; Éva Vörös, "Kunmadaras. Újabb adatok a pogrom történetéhez," *Múlt és Jövő* 5, no. 4 (1994): 69–80; Mária Palasik, *A jogállam megteremtésének kísérlete és kudarca Magyarországon 1944–1949* (Budapest: Napvilág, 2000). (These statements can be recognized in the basic study on the postwar situation of the Hungarian Jews: Viktor Karády, "Szociológiai kísérlet a magyar zsidóság 1945 és 1956 közötti helyzetének elemzésére," in *Zsidóság az 1945 utáni Magyarországon*, ed. Viktor Karády et al. (Paris: Magyar Füzetek, 1984), 37–180; László Ötvös, "A madarasi antiszemita megmozdulás," *Jászkunság* 36 (February 1990): 81–93. Interpretations based on socio-economic reasons were regular in studies on anti-Semitism by social historians of the 1970s. See for instance: Philippe Wolff, "The 1391 Pogrom in Spain. Social Crisis or not?," *Past & Present* 50 (February 1971): 4–18; Angus MacKay, "Popular Movements and Pogroms in Fifteenth-Century Castile," *Past & Present* 55 (May 1972): 33–67.

2 Jan Tomasz Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz* (New York: Random House, 2006); Ján Stanislav, "The Anti-Jewish Reprisals in Slovakia from September 1944 to April 1945," in *The Tragedy of Slovak Jews*, ed. Desider Tóth (Banská Bystrica: Datei, for the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, 1992), 205–46.

3 János Pelle, *Az utolsó vérévadak* (Budapest: Pelikán, 1995), 151–68; Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust: Polish-Jewish Conflict in the Wake of World War II* (Boulder, Col: East European Monographs, 2003).

4 Marek Edelman in *Gazeta Wyborcza* quoted in Ryan Lucas, "Book on Polish Anti-Semitism Sparks Fury," *USA Today*, Jan 24, 2008, accessed June 25, 2013, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-01-24-3040464218_x.htm.

manipulated by politically conscious organizations, groups or persons, Fascists or Communists, or were completely inimical to political ideologies sharply detaches the realm of political ideas from lower-class culture or popular mentalities. From this perspective, it seems as if peasants were invulnerable to violent ideologies, as if they had even resisted them, as if they were unable to commit racist atrocities on their own without the help of politics. The notion that ordinary people commit ordinary violence motivated by material reasons implies this reasoning, whereas racist ideological violence is the character of extraordinary, extremist evil political movements, the “Fascists” or “Communists”, who are cast as alien to “normal” society.

A careful reading of the evidence concerning the Kunmadaras pogrom, however, suggests a radically different reading. This essay examines this alternative explanation. The atrocities in Kunmadaras, where the villagers systematically beat almost all of their Jewish neighbors, were indeed anti-Semitic. Yet, peasants had no need of political organization or the guidance of parties: the pogrom was the outcome of an extreme combination of the peasant understanding of the postwar situation in the context of traditional popular culture. The beatings of Jews were not an inevitable outcome of the survival of fascism: the distancing of neighbors as an ethnically distinct other and their exclusion from the village community was a gradual process that was firmly located in the postwar context and happened through the activation of traditional means of popular culture.⁵ Peasants, having a sophisticated culture, were indeed able to launch pogroms by themselves.

Nonetheless, this culture was not separate from political or elite cultures. Contemporary politics did have a good deal of responsibility in the atrocities, particularly since villagers read the postwar campaign against the black-marketeers as actually justifying their actions. However, what established an even more striking relationship among various layers of popular and elite cultures was the memory of the deportations and the Holocaust, or more precisely, the absence of this memory. In postwar Hungary, as was the case in most European societies, the memory of World War II was dominated by the will to forget, and especially to forget the embarrassing memory of the massive horrors committed against Jews. In this context the war appeared as a general tragedy that hit everyone similarly, and the suffering of Jews was not a distinctive historical event: Jews

5 Carlo Ginzburg, “Killing a Chinese Mandarin: The Moral Implications of Distance,” *Critical Inquiry* 21 (Autumn 1994): 46–60.

were not special victims of Nazism. The context of the deliberately forgotten deportations made returning Jewish communities so vulnerable to violence, and the atrocities themselves so vulnerable to subsequent political manipulation. It was the virtual absence of Jewish victims from the Communist versions of the anti-Fascist myths that made these myths so attractive to Jews and anti-Semites alike.

The Trial of the Village Teacher

The Screening Committee, which was responsible for ousting out war criminals and fascist persons from public offices and decided whether or not someone would be put on trial, questioned the political reliability of the school teacher in the village. The Committee argued that the teacher was supporting the political measures that were forced on Hungarian society by German fascists.

János Nagy, a local school teacher, as the chief-trainer of the military youth corporation, infected the Hungarian youth for years with the controlled ideas of the pro-German, fascist politics. He himself, although he has never been in the army, had the gall to express the delight, in front of a large public, that he took in the German occupation, which had to be shared by the whole Hungarian people on the celebration of Heroes Day in spring, 1944. In his blindness he made the Jewry the cause of every problem.⁶

Following this report of the Committee, Nagy was brought to justice. He was accused of being a war criminal and was sentenced.

This ruling, however, was not exactly unanimous. Many young people who had been taught by Nagy marched into the room where the trial was held and demanded that he be released. Several of them gave confessions in front of the court, where, in general, they expressed their doubts that Nagy had been an anti-Semite and instead made a case for the general popularity of the teacher in the village.⁷ The only point of the indictment, which no one disproved, was

6 Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok Megyei Levéltár [The County Archives of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok], Szolnok XVII/418 document 70.

7 Budapest Főváros Levéltára (BFL) [Budapest City Archives], Budapesti Népbíróság, büntetőperes iratok, Tóth Zsigmond és társai ellen köztársasági államrendet veszélyeztető cselekmény ügyében, HU BFL – XXV.1.a – 1946 – 2351, July 4, 1946. President of the court: Károly Nagy, Prosecutors: Kálmán Szintay, Ervin Zaboreczky. Vizsgálati dosszié [Records of Investigation], vol. 1, V 56032/1 (Hereafter: BFL V 56032), 115–17, 133–36, 241–43, 254, 259–62, 298–300.

that he had given a chauvinistic and militaristic address on May 28, 1944, in which he had encouraged the audience to continue fighting on the side of the Germans. The speech sufficed not only to prove to the court that Nagy had pro-German sentiments, but also that he should be regarded as a war criminal: “With their propaganda, the defendant and others who shared his way of thinking influenced the Hungarian people not to take in sides with the Allies, and this had the consequence that the country was razed to the ground.”⁸ The conclusion that Nagy had been part of an interwar establishment that had run the propaganda was proven not by actual concrete evidence, but by an element of his biography: he was a teacher in the village and as such, in 1929, he became a “levente”-trainer, a position in the official youth organization, which specialized in patriotic and militaristic education. His accommodation to the interwar official infrastructure, however, made him automatically a fascist in the postwar context. The support Nagy had from his former students was interpreted by the court merely as an indication that “young people who had been educated by the accused in the spirit of fascism” were unashamed to show this attitude in public.

Qualifying him as a fascist justified further points of the indictment, although the number of the confessions that supported either the prosecution or the defense was approximately the same. The judge accepted that Nagy had disliked the Soviet Union, too. In his speech, Nagy had called his audience’s attention to “a horde that had been approaching the borders of Hungary, and Hungary had been obliged to resist.” The court considered the allegations regarding Nagy’s anti-Socialist sympathies as well-founded, although there was only one witness who supported them. He told the court that the defendant had threatened him, saying that “his socialist thinking would come to a bad end.” The conclusion that he was an anti-Semite was also logical for the court, although it was proven in a very convoluted way. The confession that Nagy forbidden his disciples to sing anti-Semitic songs became evidence against him according to the logic of the ruling. The judge argued that the fact that he had had occasion to ban the songs was indicative of the educational atmosphere, which had been in his control, meaning that he himself had once taught the anti-Semitic songs, which later he had forbidden students to sing. The court was not able to submit in evidence any concrete fascist act committed by the teacher—

8 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (MOL) [National Archives of Hungary] XX-4-b-348/1945.

participation in the deportation of the Jews or in fascist movements—, the evidence for his conviction was taken from part of his biography. The ruling was not based on falsified confessions, but the confessions used by the court gained their authenticity from the story told about the "levente"-trainer. One part of his past provided the frame which made it possible for the People's Tribunal to interpret other events of his life. The peculiar event conceived as the starting point of his story offered causal explanation for his further acts as well. The narrative made the fascist real: the life-story of the teacher was presented as the story of a fascist.⁹

The ruling of the court of first instance divided the population of the village. For a lot of them it was not acceptable: Nagy was a respected person of the community and they did not regard him as a fascist. Thus, when his second trial began on May 20, a significant crowd of approximately 300 persons on 15-20 carts accompanied Nagy on his way towards the neighboring settlement, Karcag, where the trial was to be held.¹⁰ The tension increased when the villagers arrived at the border of Karcag, where they were informed of the regulation that only five persons per party could enter the courtroom. The people of Kunmadaras were dissatisfied with this proposal and decided not to go. Furthermore, they did not let Nagy participate in his trial, in spite of the fact that he asked his followers to let him go. According to several statements the crowd got angry when they tried to enter Karcag, in spite of the police forces standing on the road. The police shot into the air, which further inflamed them. This event persuaded the people to return to their village, but they were very disappointed due to the failure of their acts. Remembering the tense situation, several witnesses recollected that they had heard Zsigmond Tóth, the first defendant of the post-pogrom trial who was accused of organizing it, inciting people against the Jews. He claimed that the Jews had to be struck dead by any means, since thanks to them the people allegedly could not enter the courtroom.¹¹

9 Jerome Bruner, "The Narrative Construction of Reality," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (Autumn 1991): 1–21. According to Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) modern jurisdiction considers crime as part of the personality and the outcome of its past. On biography as evidence cf. István Rév, "In Mendacio Veritas," *Representations* 35 (Summer 1991): 1–20.

10 BFL V 56032/1, 248, Balázs Berczi, May 23, 1946.

11 Ibid., Ferenc Fodor, May 24, 1946, Elek Kürti, May 25, 1946, Gergely Takács, May 31, 1946, Henrik Retzer, May 28, 1946, Ferenc Fodor, June 11, 1946, János Nagy, July 14, 1946, 39, 122–29, 165–68, 215–18, 254–59, 266, 303–09.

Campaign against the Black-Marketeers

From the autumn of 1945 until August 1946, the introduction of the new currency, the *forint* and the issue of the black-marketeers and speculators often appeared in newspapers. The fly-pitchers were considered enemies of the economic recovery and their activity were regarded as the main cause of the shortages that endangered the rebuilding of the country. Mátyás Rákosi, secretary general of the Hungarian Communist Party, laid great emphasis on this in his New Year's article in 1946. He claimed that the available goods had to be distributed first and foremost to the industrial workers, as they were the most needed in the rebuilding. This important principle was threatened by the black-marketeers who made their fortunes primarily through depreciation. The existence of great concentrations of capital revolted the workers, who "undertake the most serious sacrifices and privations quietly, if they see that the common bearing of the burdens is a reality and no one can obtain property and lead a life of luxury off their misery and privation."¹² Not rarely the articles called for the people to take steps against the black-marketeers, for example the article of József Révai, the main ideologue of the Communist Party, who stated that democracy was based on the consciousness of the people, but the people asked why democracy did not clamp down on the black-marketeers.¹³ Another article argued that the workers not only trust in the authorities, but assist to them in order to effect improvements to public supply. It stated that only regulations that could be secured by the masses would actually be realized.¹⁴ These articles emphasized that the measures were on behalf of the workers themselves, as they served the purpose of enabling them to get food from the pantries of the wealthy.

An important element in the "campaigns to defend the forint" was the boom of posters and caricatures that depicted the black-marketeers with easily recognizable stereotypically Jewish features, for instance before the lynching of two Jewish merchants in Miskolc in July, 1946.¹⁵ At the end of the nineteenth century Jews were usually depicted with "a thick crooked nose, thick lips, big ears, wooly hair, two shabby locks in front of the ears, a short fat body, short, bandy

12 *Szabad Nép* (hereafter: *SZN*), June 1, 1946: 1.

13 József Révai, "Pogrom és népmozgalom," *SZN*, June 16, 1946: 1–2.

14 *SZN*, January 1, 1946.

15 Pelle, *Az utolsó*, 203. Éva Standeisky, "A kommunista polgárelenség," *Budapesti Negyed* 8 (Summer 1995): 209–22; Róbert Szabó, *A kommunista párt és a zsidóság* (Budapest: Windsor, 1995), 71–152.

legs, rough hands and most characteristic of all, a devilish grin conveying greed and the desire for possessions.”¹⁶ These last features were attributed to them by a leaflet that appeared on a communist noticeboard: “However, if there will be persons among them [implying Jews – author’s note] who see the black market as a better chance, who want to gamble [...] or enter one of the parties in order to [...] satisfy their greed [...],” the left would protest against this immediately, as it had promised.¹⁷

The Historical Anthropology of Memory

The Jew-baiting began in the morning at the market square with the beating of a Jewish man who had arrived from a neighboring village, Tizzaszentimre. Then the crowd chased a Jewish merchant and his family through the streets, while at the market the others attacked a person from Budapest. After finishing at the market the people broke into the shop of a Jew who lived nearby. Members of the Jewish population who were not at the market tried to hide or lock themselves up. The crowd went to their houses and assaulted them. Several people were beaten and three of them were killed. One of the people who was murdered originally tried to escape from the village, but the persecutors caught up with him near the military airport.¹⁸

Villagers were called to account at the end of May, 1946 at the People’s Tribunal. They told their stories about the pogrom under rather special circumstances: the place where these accounts were given was a court room and the witnesses were speaking during a trial. The reports had a specific purpose: to defend the people giving them against various charges. They took the form of confessions, which is an act of memory that seeks to neutralize itself: it aims at purification. At first sight, the narratives tried to legitimize at the People’s Tribunal the behavior of their authors, but they provide no explanation for the outbreak of deadly violence. The historian finds no reasons in the defendants’ stories as to why they assaulted people, nor can one shed light on the motives underlying the violence or how the perpetrators gave reasons for the riot. The narratives that can be found among the documents of a trial inform the reader

16 Péter Hanák, “The Image of the Germans and the Jews in Nineteenth-Century Hungary,” in *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. László Kontler (Budapest: CEU History Department, 1995), 67–87.

17 Politikatörténeti és Szakszervezeti Levéltár [Archives for Political History and Trade Unions] (hereafter PHL), Szociáldemokrata Párt, Főtitkárság, A Főtitkárság levelezése zsidó szervezetekkel, 283. f. 10/212. 70.

18 The most detailed reconstruction is Vörös, “Kunmadaras.”

merely how the defendants or the villagers tried to tell stories that would sound authentic. Consequently, they did not want to legitimize their acts, but rather the memory of an ambiguous occurrence: they wanted to be able to continue living live with their memories. Thus the historian can speak about the form of memory that the narratives produced, he or she can describe the context in which the particular elements of stories gained meaning and constructed a coherent recollection of the event. Still, the manner in which the villagers told stories about the pogrom that sounded authentic sheds light on their ideas regarding a “legitimate” riot. Through the micro-historical analysis of the peasant way of thinking an answer can be found to the question of how the commission of acts of violence was meaningful for the villagers.¹⁹

What seems to be a remarkably striking feature of the trial even at first sight is that a large number of the statements claimed that mostly women had taken part in the violent acts. The first question that arises is whether there was a distinct female interpretation of the events? Did the women see the pogrom differently from the men? Was there a female narrative, a women’s story in Kunmadaras, like the story captured by Natalie Davis in her analysis of pardon

19 On how narratives were formed in order to win clemency for their authors see: Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987). On the confession as a form of memory: Richard Terdiman, “The Mnemonics of Musset’s *Confession*,” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 26–48. On the idea that crowd violence did not lack a legitimizing notion see esp.: Edward P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past and Present* 50 (February 1971): 76–136; Natalie Zemon Davis, “The Reasons of Misrule,” in idem, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987), 97–123, “The Rites of Violence,” 152–87, “Strikes and Salvation at Lyon,” 1–16. Their works recently became classic references in historical literature, see Suzanne Desan, “Crowds, Community, and Ritual in the Work of E. P. Thompson and Natalie Davis,” in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 47–71. On how interpreting the interpretation of a violent act can serve as a good methodology to decipher cultural systems see: Robert Darnton, “Workers Revolt: The Great Cat Massacre of the Rue Saint-Séverin,” in idem, *The Great Cat Massacre* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 75–104. Later the author added nuance to his analysis: “History and Anthropology,” in *The Kiss of Lamourette* (New York–London: Norton, 1990), 329–53. Further insights into the micro-historical analysis of collective violence in Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero, eds., *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991). Anthropological studies have turned towards explaining the commission of acts of extreme violence by examining cultural patterns and notions. See for example: Alexander Laban Hilton, “Why Did You Kill? The Cambodian Genocide and the Dark Side of Face and Honor,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57 (February 1998): 93–122. The aspirations to understand the motivations of ordinary people were extended to violence committed as part of the European Holocaust at the end of the 1990s. Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992); Jan T. Gross, *Neighbours: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

tales told by women in Early Modern France?²⁰ Can the researcher sort out peculiar elements that feature only the “women’s voice”?

There is a place in the memory of the women that occupies a central position. That place is the market. Very few women started their stories with the events of the previous day. For most of them the morning of the day at the market was the point when the pogrom had begun. A woman was selling turkey when she noticed that the merchant was beaten. A third one was going to the market when a group caught her eye, and she learned that Klein had been assaulted. Most of the witnesses remembered that women were the ones who participated in the pogrom: “all of them were women and girls, the men were not beating anyone, but rather incited the women to hit.”²¹ What do these statements prove? First of all that usually women went to the market. The market is the place of shopping in a village and shopping is considered women’s work. Therefore the market was full of women and not men. In Kunmadaras they participated in face-to-face marketing and consequently they were more sensitive to prices, as well. The women remembered the acts they had committed on the day of the violent outbreak in the context of their ordinary activity.

However, was this only a female narrative? The “memory of women” refers not only to what women remember, but also to how they are remembered by others. Many of the male witnesses remembered that the movement had been led by a woman named Eszter Kabai Tóth. She was the person who incited the people to beat the Jews by shouting, “The Jews have to be hit!” Then she personally attacked one of the first victims, Klein, after having slapped a Jew named Weisz a couple of times in the face.²² Numerous witnesses remembered that the victims had been assaulted mainly by women or at least that women had initiated the violence. The crowd was led by a couple of women towards the victims, who lived farther from the market square. The witnesses noticed the women on every side of the atrocities: by the house of Neuländer or Kohn.²³ The narrative described above was not told only by woman, but also about them. Obviously, numerous men also had taken part in the pogrom, as one of the policeman observed: “The whole crowd consisted of a very mixed group, men, women, adults, children, Hungarians, Gypsies, people with various

20 Davis, *Fiction in the Archives*, 77–110.

21 BFL V 56032/1, Julianna Andrásy, May 23, 1946.

22 Ibid., 139, 169.

23 Ibid., 240–41; Ferenc Gyarmati, May 23, 1946.

occupations...”²⁴ However, the presence of the women was so striking that most of the witnesses felt that they had to talk about it. However, emphasizing women’s participation and representing the pogrom as if it had been mainly a women’s issue could lead to further consequences.

For several witnesses the affair at the market was a usual clash between sellers and buyers: “On 21 May, on the market day, a quarrel broke out between Eszter Kabai and Klein, the egg-merchant who was called Csoli. I do not know what it was about exactly, but because of it Klein was beaten.”²⁵ Some of them were seeing to their everyday tasks at the market. There was a person who wanted to buy a pig when he noticed that the crowd was attacking someone. Another person went to the square with his fiancée and was talking with his friend, who was a member of the police, when he saw the people badgering two merchants.²⁶ For another person, the Jew-baiting was a simple village brawl. He had been drinking wine together with his friends in the morning and after having finished three liters he considered visiting another friend. He happened to walk down the same street as the riotous crowd and he began to shout because he was drunk. Some defendants told the story as if it had been one of the events of the day, one of many, for instance one of them said that after the Jew-baiting incident he had went home to have lunch, while the other gave reasons for having left the pogrom earlier: “According to my master’s instructions I had to go to Karcag, so I went home, had lunch, and at about one o’clock I went to Karcag by bicycle.”²⁷

However, some of the villagers remembered more. Many women gave an account of a quarrel between the women who had arrived to sell or buy in the market and the Jewish merchant, Klein. One of them went to get some information about the price of eggs when she heard Klein saying that he was willing to buy eggs for 100 million *pengős* instead of the normal 30 million. The women protested and suddenly started to hit the merchant.²⁸ His offer was understandable for them, since they knew that if he were to buy all the eggs, they would not be able to get any, as one of them shouted: “Then we cannot live!” Another woman told the story as if all the Jewish merchants had declared that the price of the eggs had been 100 million. The conflict at the market was presented as a struggle between the rich Jewish merchants and the village. According to

24 BFL V 56032/4, Imre Katona, May 31, 1946.

25 BFL V 56032/1, Imre Csatári, May 29, 1946.

26 BFL V 56032/4, Balázs Berczi, May 23, 1946.

27 BFL V 56032/1, Balázs Berczi, May 23, 1946.

28 Ibid., 246–47.

one of the witnesses, the merchant had claimed that he wanted to devastate all Hungarians. The women considered themselves keepers of the household, and this perception was strengthened by the men. In their eyes, the individual clash between Klein and “one of them” represented the social dissatisfaction due to the bad living conditions, inflation and the shortage of food. A woman said that after the Weinbergers were beaten, the sausages and meat that had been found in their house had been carried to the police station, since the crowd had demanded that this food be taken away because the Jewish family even had a pig. (According to the medical report one of the three murdered victims was strikingly well-fed.) One of the women gave an account of her participation as follows: she had gone to find her husband and when she had recognized him in the crowd she was told that the people were beating Klein. She immediately pulled her husband from the crowd and sent him home. She presented herself as the defender of the family and the caretaker of her man. Women referred to the security of the household, thus retelling the story primarily as an issue that affected women meant that it would represent the welfare of the family. The Jewish merchants became economic criminals and beating them was transformed into justified revenge. For these defendants, the pogrom was not about fascism and anti-Semitism: their accounts evoked the image of stalwart defense of the family and acting to facilitate the proper distribution of food. They had beaten Jews in the name of their “moral economy,” which shaped ideas about the just share of economic goods and work in a community. The participants in the market riot could understand the posters that appeared on walls all over the country saying, for instance, “Women! Against black market, starvation, and shortage of fuel you cannot fight alone. The Hungarian Communist Party fights with you, for you.” These posters could be interpreted to imply that in the eyes of the state the claims of the rioters had some legitimacy.²⁹

The quick wealth of the Jewish population as it was perceived by the villagers was absolutely incomprehensible for them. The Jews “returned from

29 BFL V 56032/1, 92–94, Ferenc Fodorné Erzsébet Barta, May 27, 1946, Julianna Andrásy, May 23, 1946. Clinical evidence of Ferenc Kuti, June 23, 1946, V 56032/4, Ferenc Csatári, May 23, 1946; Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd.” According to Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women. Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley–Los Angeles–Oxford: University of California Press, 1992) the same pattern of behavior can be noticed in the last months of Italian fascism when women started the resistance simply by activating traditional family obligations, such as providing food for their children. Women defendants were over-represented in postwar trials concerning anti-Semitic acts (38 percent), in contrast to their overall 18 percent share as defendants in all postwar processes of People’s Tribunals. Ildikó Barna and Andrea Pető, *A politikai igazságszolgáltatás a II. világháború utáni Budapesten* (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 2012), 61.

the deportations, and though they assert that nothing remained for them and they have nothing, within a couple of months they had the best things, their shops were full, they lived well, seemingly without any work.”³⁰ For the villagers, the rational explanation for this phenomenon was that the Jews surely earned their money through the black market. The villagers were clear on the existence of the black-market. However, an abstract social category was not recognizable for the villagers: the concrete category of the Jews filled it with meaning. In their perception, by raising prices the Jews behaved on the market square exactly how black marketeers were depicted as behaving. Every feature that was attributed to the speculators found embodiment in the Jews in the perceptions of the villagers, and the consequence of this was not only were the Jewish merchants considered black-marketeers, but their features started to be considered characteristic of all Jews. This understanding was confirmed by popular wisdom about Jews and business, Jews and money, as the following common sayings collected in Kunmadaras illustrate: “Nor the Jew gives on credit,” meaning only for cash, or “Counts like a Jew in an empty shop,” meaning he or she has no income.³¹

The defendants remembered their personal disappointment that led to their violent behavior:

I returned from Russian captivity in October, 1945 and I have been employed as a day-laborer, but I cannot afford even to buy a suit. In Kunmadaras a lot of people talked about, I do not remember who they were, how the Jews, sure enough, were well off, hardly arriving back from the deportations how well they lived by buying and selling on the black market and on the side, they did no work, yet they ate white bread, had suits made, while we, prisoners of war, had nothing. Thus, a certain antipathy evolved against the Jews, although personally I had no troubles with any of them, but the things I heard produced bad feelings in me too.³²

For them, the most significant reason for the outbreak of the pogrom was this perceived social tension. Issues of basic sustenance and food supply were extremely pressing in 1946 in the Hungarian countryside, since the inadequate supplies, a consequence primarily of the war acquisitions mostly by the Red Army in 1945, had substantially decreased agrarian production. The gap in the

30 BFL V 56032/1, József Vona, May 29, 1946.

31 István Birkás, *Kunmadarasi jegyzetek* (Dunaújváros: TACT Bt, 1995), 102; 110.

32 BFL V 56032/1, Imre Kóta, May 29, 1946.

living standard was recognized through the comparison of the living conditions of the former war prisoners and the deported Jews. The difference in the living standard that was formulated in this manner meant a real threat for the villagers: “they eat white bread, whereas I can hardly provide a little corn pone to my family, which consists of five small children.”³³

For some of the accused persons, this threat was connected with the fear of an imagined Jewish revenge. One of them remembered that Klein had given reasons for increasing the price of the eggs by asserting that he would ruin all the retailers since he had been deported because of the Hungarians and only as many Hungarians should have remained would be needed to carry the chamber pots for the Jews. He also claimed that the Hungarians did not know what suffering was, as they had been at home and were eating and drinking, and only the Jews knew what suffering was. These statements referred to a certain sense of guilt, nevertheless only a few defendants had been motivated by personal thirst for revenge. They remembered when the Jews had returned from the deportations and demanded back their lost property: “Mrs. Weinberger, when she came back from the deportations and began to collect belongings that had been taken, falsely accused me, saying my eiderdown was hers, but it was mine.”³⁴

Recollecting the reasons of why they had begun to beat the Jews, the people of Kunmadaras connected the pogrom with the memory of the World War at the People’s Court, but in a very peculiar way. They did not remember the events of the war, for example deportations or joining the army. On the contrary they recalled only the end of the fighting, namely the return home, speaking about soldiers as well as Jews. The Jewish population of Kunmadaras, which amounted to 273 persons at first, was transported to the ghetto of a neighboring small town, Karcag, that was formed on April 24, 1944. Roughly 1,300 Jews lived there until they were taken to the sugar factory of the county town, Szolnok, on June 18. A few days later they were put on trains and transported to the Third Reich. However, in accordance with an agreement between Edmund Veessenmayer (1904–1977, the Nazi deputy in Hungary) and the Hungarian authorities most of them were taken to an Austrian village, Laa an der Thaya near Strasshof, for forced labor, and not to concentration camps. Some of them, nevertheless, died in Auschwitz. A significant proportion of the deported persons returned home, somewhere between 70 and 120 Jews, of whom many had survived in

33 Ibid., Sándor Vincze, May 29, 1946.

34 Ibid., 94.

Austrian labor camps, in the summer and autumn of 1945.³⁵ Consequently, most of the Jews who came home had no personal experiences and memories of death camps, and they could not give account of such events to the villagers. On the other hand, those who could have spoken about the horrors of camps had died in them. Thus the inhabitants of Kunmadaras did not remember the deportations in the context of a genocide that might have been perceived as exceptional, but rather connected them with the other type of returning home: the return of the soldiers from captivity.

Approximately 20–25 percent of the war prisoners returned from Soviet and Allied captivity by the summer of 1946, but most of the war prisoners came back after July, 1946, and definitely in 1947 for the sake of the elections. The people of Kunmadaras therefore experienced their arrival mostly after the pogrom, in contrast with the deported Jews, who had been already returned by that time. Also, 112 soldiers from Kunmadaras died during the war,³⁶ which means that the catastrophe of the Jews did not seem exceptional. Thus, the memory of the former war prisoners took the form of a sort of a comparative memory, in the sense that the villagers who fought on the Eastern front as soldiers of the Hungarian army always compared their living conditions to the living conditions of the Jews:

[...] when the Hungarian war prisoners came home from the captivity, they had nothing, they had nothing to eat, the Jews returned from the deportations and started to buy and sell at once on the black market and lived well without doing any work, ate white bread, while we were digging in the ground [...]³⁷

35 1941. évi népszámlálás (Budapest: Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1947), 548–9; Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Hungarian Holocaust*, vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 641, 649; Pelle, *Az utolsó*, 152, wrote about 73 Jews who had returned, but did not refer to the source of this detail, on the other hand the weekly *Képes Figyelő* (hereafter *KF*), May 25, 1946: 5. referred to about 100–120 persons. The data of the journal is probably incorrect, as a recently published survey on the human losses of Kunmadaras speaks about 75 survivors. László Ötvös, *Emlékezzünk régiekre, áldozatokra!* (Kunmadaras: Önkormányzat, 1992), 20. In this regard there is no basic research that concerns the social and demographic consequences of the Hungarian genocide, extending it to local communities as well, although recently a demographic survey has been published: Tamás Stark, *Zsidóság a vészkeorszakban és a felszabadulás után (1939–1955)* (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 1995).

36 Tamás Stark, *Hungary's Human Losses in World War II* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1995); Péter Gosztonyi, *A magyar honvédség a második világháborúban* (Budapest: Európa, 1992), 283–85. (First edition: Rome: Katolikus Szemle, 1986). Ötvös, *Emlékezzünk régiekre*, 7–11.

37 BFL V 56032/1, Imre Szarka, May 29, 1946.

This phenomenon could shed light on how they remembered the war. The villagers never mentioned events of the war in connection with the Jew-baiting, nevertheless a special linkage to the interpretation of the war can be deciphered. The memory of the villagers blurred the difference between the deportation of the Jews (when each member of the community, including children, elderly and women as well were carried away without any reason) and service in the army, which concerned only the men. For them the war was a real disaster that was followed by starvation and privation. During the war the men were carried away either as soldiers or as deported Jews. When they returned home, they found poverty and had to begin life again, using every effort, which for them meant mainly hard physical work. Regarding this, it is obvious that for the villagers the way of life of the Jewish merchants who claimed that they were victims of the war was incomprehensible and merely confirmed the view that the Jewish population did not belong to the community that was suffering the consequences of the war.

This supposition is confirmed by the text of the decision that was accepted after the pogrom by an inter-party meeting of the local parties. The main point of this document was the immediate expulsion of the Jews, however later it was modified so that the Jews who could adapt themselves to the social change and the Hungarian community would be allowed to stay. Another witness explained this statement more subtly, namely that the people who had held the meeting expected the Jews to become used to democracy, that is to say, throw in their lot with the community. What did this common fate mean for the villagers? The witnesses claimed that the decision had been made against the Jews, who allegedly had not worked and had felt unwell in the village and had been requested to leave. The villagers considered hard work as the common duty in the postwar situation, and those who seemed to fall short of their expectations could be excluded from the community.³⁸

The Jewish merchants were represented as people who were not bound to the village society, consequently sacrificing them meant no danger for the community. They could be sacrificed in order to preserve social peace.³⁹ The way they were introduced implied that black-marketeers had no place in a working community: they placed themselves outside of the society. In front of the People's Tribunal a particular social tension arose, a tension that was also understood by

38 Ibid., 6–8, 35, 211–13, János Lippai, May 23, 1946.

39 René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), esp. 1–38.

the defendants. However, the fact that a certain layer of the society lives better than others does not provide justification for violent actions against them. The conflict has to be represented and comprehended in a symbolic way that makes it inevitable that the hated group is an enemy who endangers other categories of the society.

One of the defendants who had participated in the beating of Rosinger at the military airport gave reasons why he had joined in: people coming from the village had told him that the Jews had collected the Christian children:

My five little children, the eldest of which is nine years old, on that day, namely May 21, at the same time that I heard the abovementioned news, was at home absolutely alone. I totally lost my mind when I heard this rumor, as I immediately thought that my children might have been in the clutches of the Jews since then.⁴⁰

Another defendant said that at first he had not believed this rumor, but later, influenced by the atmosphere among the crowd, he had changed his mind. His sister stated that his children had been collected by certain Jews, and this drove the man—who certainly had joined the people beating the Jews—crazy.⁴¹

This kind of accusation created a moral distance between the Jews and the other groups of the community of Kunmadaras. The Jewish merchants were transformed into cruel child-murderers who endangered the community. The charge of killing children is a very powerful one. It contrasts the principle of innocence, which is embodied by the image of the children, with the other side of the moral dichotomy that is thus created, evil. On the other hand, this technique is a very basic mode of distancing. Very similar accusations were made against the early Christians in the Roman Empire, against the Jews and heretics in the Middle Ages in Western Europe and later against witches. The historian can explore these charges in nineteenth-century East Central Europe, where for instance the Jews were accused of committing ritual child murders or Gypsies were accused of killing babies, or different religious sects of depraving children. However, the last two forms of accusations characteristically belonged to the twentieth century. Charges of inhumanity made against a group that is excluded from a given community because it questions the basic norms of that community may sound authentic, thus the emotional distance can be easily

40 BFL V 56032/4, Sándor Vincze, May 25, 1946.

41 BFL V 56032/1, 96–98.

reproduced. What is more, this sort of accusation is very powerful since if the guilty person or group offends basic norms of the community, then normally there is no intention of “improving” him or her. In such cases the pattern of the revenge is strengthened: the intention is to cast out the culprit.⁴²

According to the defendants, why did the Jews collect and kill Christian children? One of the witnesses remembered when Eszter Kabai had shouted to the women at the market square that the Jews had killed the children and then boiled and eaten them. A defendant offered the following explanation for why he had joined the crowd: when he had worked on the fields he had been told that the Jews had carried away the Christian children. Four were found by one of the Jews, while two others were found by another Jew. They were made into sausages and salami. Considering that the difference between the living standard of certain Jewish merchants and the poorer peasants was the main cause of the conflict according to the villagers, the tale of the Jewish merchants who were turning Hungarian children into sausages and salami was a perfect metaphor for their emotions. In a community in which there were serious shortages of food and a meat dish was considered almost a luxury, the abundance of goods possessed by those merchants was absolutely incomprehensible and intolerable. Food is a very powerful form of expression in societies that have to live in want: this was the situation in every traditional agricultural community, as peasant tales clearly show. Therefore the symbolic expression of such welfare obviously could be sausages made from the meat of Christian children. This narrative provided an explanation for the prosperity of the merchants. Only a few people could believe the charge of Jewish ritual murders in middle-of-the-century Hungary, however the tale of cannibalism expressed demonstratively the attitude of the peasants towards black-marketeers. This group endangered the survival of poorer families and meant social injustice for them. The black-marketeers, who were perceived on the basis of differences in living standards, were given physical form with the help of traditional Jewish images, and the charge of being child-murderers symbolized social discontent because of the privation and sense of threat. As one of the defendants put it, “The Jews have to be exterminated, let them perish, the bloody Jews since they live on Christian and Hungarian

42 Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* (New York: Basic Books, 1975); Gábor Klaniczay, “Az orgiavádak nyomában,” in idem, *A civilizáció peremén* (Budapest: Magvető, 1990) 194–208; Tamás Kende, *Vérvád* (Budapest: Osiris, 1995). His argument in English: Tamás Kende, “The Language of Blood Libel in Central and East European History,” in *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. László Kontler (Budapest: CEU History Department, 1995), 91–104.

flesh, they collect the Christian children and turn them into sausages, they want to hang the Hungarians.”⁴³

The particularly deformed blood libel was not the cause of the outbreak of the pogrom, but it served as a means of legitimizing it. The altered charge of ritual murder certainly evoked aspects of popular anti-Semitism, but in spite of this popular anti-Semitism cannot be regarded as the reason for the outbreak. Jews had often been accused of killing children, and older people in the village could remember blood libels of the nineteenth century. The charge of ritual murder appeared in modern Hungary from 1882 (Tiszaeszlár) up until 1901 (Németújvár). In Tiszaeszlár on April 1 a fourteen-year-old girl disappeared, and two days later in the village it was widely claimed that she had been killed by the Jews. It was the time of the Jewish Easter and the election of a new kosher butcher, so a great number of Jews had come to the village. These events produced a tense atmosphere and the villagers connected the loss of the girl to the Jews, evoking the traditional charge of ritual murder. The Jews were accused of taking the blood of the Christian virgin in order to consecrate their temple or matzoh. This is the traditional language of blood libels. Consequently, the tale of the Jewish child-murderers did not sound absolutely surprising to the inhabitants of Kunmadaras. People were familiar with stories of Jewish child murderers. Perhaps some of them believed these stories, but nonetheless, a statement made by one of the defendants is more plausible: “Do you believe that the Jews kill the children?” “Yes and no.”⁴⁴

However the accusation in this case differed from the traditional blood libel in that it excluded any interpretation of the reemergence of the charge of ritual murder. This case was rather a symbolically proper form of popular accusations against profiteers. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that they assaulted only the merchant Jews. As Ede Kempfnek, who was a veterinary surgeon,

43 All statements in BFL V 56032/1, 28, 31, 58–65, 65–67, 94–96, 168–69, 225–27, 264–65. On the symbolism of peasant tales see: Robert Darnton, “Peasants Tell Tales: The Meaning of Mother Goose,” in *The Great Cat Massacre*, 9–72. The perception of governments’ inability to supply the population with the culturally understood minimum of proper food was crucial in starting the revolutions of early twentieth-century Europe, see Belinda J. Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Lars T. Lih, *Bread and Authority in Russia, 1914–1921* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Barbara Alpern Engel, “Not By Bread Alone: Subsistence Riots in Russia during World War I,” *Journal of Modern History* 69 (December 1997): 696–721.

44 Pelle, *Az utolsó*, 164. The description of the blood libels are from Kende, *Vérnád*, 99–123. See also: Andrew Handler, *Blood Libel at Tiszaeszlár* (New York: Boulder, 1980); György Kövér, *A tiszteszlári dráma: társadalomtörténeti látásrögzések* (Budapest: Osiris, 2011).

noted 45 years later, “When they got there somebody started saying that this man should not be hurt since he helped a lot when we were in trouble with the animals. And the people went away.”⁴⁵ The participants in the riot distanced their neighbors by casting them in the role of the Jewish black-marketeer during concrete experiences and contact.⁴⁶ The memory of the villagers preserved the violence as a reaction to the offenses that were taking place in the community, such as the arrest of János Nagy, the illegal wealth of the Jews, or the inflationary profiteering, whereas their belief was confirmed by the campaign against the fly-pitchers and the popular aversion to Jews.

The Penetration of History: The Trial

The case of Kunmadaras was tried by the Special Council of Five of the People’s Tribunal, which was formed by Act No. VII/1946 in order to pass sentence on persons who were accused of committing crimes against democracy and the Republican system. The trial took place in Budapest in late June, 1946. All the major defendants were convicted of leading a movement to overthrow the Republic and democracy. At first sight, it may seem surprising to characterize violent acts against Jewish merchants as conspiracy against the system of the state, nevertheless the ruling stated clearly that, “the fall of the state order would be bound to happen, if similar demonstrations were to become frequent for any reason.”⁴⁷ How was it possible to interpret the pogrom in Kunmadaras in this way?

The trial was exceptionally important for the communists, so the party intervened in the process immediately. Originally, the communist Attorney General, József Domokos considered condemning the defendants as swiftly as possible, so he assigned the Summary Court of the County of Szolnok as the court of competent jurisdiction. Accordingly, the social democrat Minister of Justice, István Ries, also sent the public prosecutor of Budapest, György

45 Ötvös, “*A madarasi*,” 86.

46 Distancing was one the key factors that turned “ordinary men” into cold-blooded killers in July 1942 in Józefow, Poland. Browning, *Ordinary Men*, 162. On how difference is constituted during interaction see: Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “The Cultural Contexts of Ethnic Differences,” *Man* 26 (March 1991): 127–144. The concept of culture as a system of appropriation was developed by Roger Chartier, “Culture As Appropriation: Popular Cultural Uses in Early Modern France,” in *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Steven L. Kaplan (Berlin: Mouton, 1984), 229–53.

47 BFL V 56032/2, the sentence, 58.

Auer, to Szolnok.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the Summary Court did not press charges against the people who were regarded as the main instigators, which disgusted the communist press. It wrote that the people, the community of Kunmadaras, saw with indignation that only eight dirty, stupefied people in rags were sitting in the prisoner's box, while the real instigators were missing. They were looking for János Nagy among the defendants.⁴⁹ The attacks against the Summary Court also produced doubts regarding the competency of the Summary Court, so the Attorney General passed the issue to the People's Tribunal of Budapest. However this measure had to include a modification of the charge, since the Summary Court had the right to sentence only common criminals, while the People's Tribunal tried political cases. The indictments of the important cases of the People's Tribunals normally were prepared in the Ministry of Justice, even when these were not led by communist judges, and also every issue where the defendants were accused of acting against democracy had to be passed on to the Ministry in order to be controlled. Under these circumstances, when the Attorney General found the indictment incorrect from the political point of view, he could modify it.⁵⁰ Although the People's Tribunals were influenced by the left, they cannot be regarded communist institutions in 1946.⁵¹ The courts consisted of five members: each of them was delegated by a party of the Hungarian National Front for Independence (MNFF; the Hungarian People's Front).⁵² The two workers' parties hoped for the nomination of a judge who in their view could be trusted to represent justice.

What was this justice? Regarding the number of defendants, there were 59, and the judging by the echo of the case in the international press, it was a gigantic trial. The greatest emphasis was placed on the first three defendants. The first defendant was Zsigmond Tóth, who had been born in Pozsony (Bratislava) in 1920. At the time of the riot he was a Czechoslovak citizen, and together with his family he had been expelled from the country according to the Czechoslovak policy of declaring people of Hungarian nationality collectively

48 Ákos Major, *Népbíráskodás – forradalmi törvényesség* (Budapest: Minerva, 1988), 279–92.

49 *Tiszavidék* (hereafter *TV*), June 6, 1946.

50 PIL 274/11 – 64. The report of the Attorney General, József Domokos to Mihály Farkas, June 26, 1946.

51 Cf. László Karsai, "The People's Courts and Revolutionary Justice in Hungary," in *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath, 1939–1948*, ed. István Deák, Jan Gross, and Tony Judt (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 233–51.

52 On the organization of the Hungarian People's Courts see Lukács Tibor, *A magyar népbírási jog és a népbíráóságok (1945–1950)* (Budapest: Zrínyi, 1979).

war criminals. Tóth had been living in Kunmadaras for several months when the pogrom was broke out. The second defendant was Gergely Takács, the secretary of the local organization of the Smallholders Party. He had been born in 1899 in Balmazújváros. Takács had lived in the village for a long time and he was one of the most significant members of the community. He occupied various posts in the local administration in the interwar period. The third one was János Nagy, who had been born in Kunmadaras in 1903 and practically never left the village. He was embedded strongly in the life of the community since he gained the post of the local reformed teacher in 1927, became a “levente”-trainer in 1929, and then in 1932 a chief trainer. In addition, he knew Gergely Takács from prewar times. The others were common people of the village and actually it was these people who had assaulted the Jews.⁵³

The judge had already known János Nagy, who by that time had been condemned of being a fascist. So the People’s Tribunal of Budapest generated certain assumptions about the identity of the teacher according to which his past acts were judged. The court interpreted his initiative to gather in the building of the Trade Corporation and prepare a petition to be submitted to the Minister of Justice as an attempt to create a sympathetic crowd in support of his case. As a consequence, he was seen responsible for the establishment of an aggressive mass of people, which already created an anti-Semitic atmosphere. Finally, Nagy’s activity was considered the definite cause of further violent actions. The fact that he had stayed at home passively as the Jews in Kunmadaras were being beaten and killed was transformed into a crime: the court believed that he had consciously failed to prevent the villagers and especially his former disciples from beating the Jews, in spite of the fact that as a teacher he had had considerable authority.⁵⁴

As the teacher was considered the most influential person of the movement, the other actors and the event itself were cast in light of his alleged identity as a fascist. The facts gained meaning in the narrative of the People’s Tribunal according to the prescribed narrative identity of Nagy. The trial functioned as a closed institution, which tried, as far as it is possible to maintain, the validity of the identities that it had previously produced.⁵⁵ The narrative in the ruling

53 BFL V 56032/1, 3.

54 BFL V 56032/2, the sentence, 60.

55 Erving Goffman, *Asylums* (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 159–86. On the narrative see also: Róbert Braun, *Holocaust, elveszélés, történelem* (Budapest: Osiris, 1995). A summary in English: Robert Braun, “The Holocaust and Problems of Historical Representation,” *History & Theory* 33 (May 1994): 172–94.

began early on May 21, 1946. Two would-be participants in the pogrom visited Zsigmond Tóth in his apartment. Tóth first buckled on his dagger and then all of them went to the market square, which was already full of stallholders and buyers from the village, as well as from other parts of the region. According to the ruling, the pogrom started with Tóth's exclamation, "Well, now it's time to start the dance!" He allegedly had made this statement when he became convinced that the atmosphere and the size of the crowd were both appropriate. According to the People's Tribunal, the villagers had realized that Tóth had called on them to beat, hit, and kill the Jews.⁵⁶

Listing the events of the morning, the judge stated that, "At about eleven o'clock in the morning the organized crowd reached József Kohn's house, in which he also has his shop."⁵⁷ Another victim tried to hide in a wagon at the railway station, but after a little while he was discovered and ordered to come out. According to the ruling, the only way in which the crowd could have found him was that he had been observed when in flight by certain people who later had called the others to the station. It concluded that this scene was evidence that the pogrom in Kunmadaras "occurred in an organized way, systematically and it was known and carried out by a large part of the people."⁵⁸ Their command, "Come down, bloody Jew, none of you'll escape!", verified the statement of the People's Tribunal. "After having beaten Bertalan Weisz, the crowd, which was systematically advancing and operating," proceeded towards the house of another Jew.

If the pogrom was an organized action of the villagers, then consequently somebody had had to organize it ahead of time. According to the ruling, the first direct organizer of the movement was Zsigmond Tóth, the first defendant:

It could not be revealed how long had he been waiting for this propitious occasion, but he had been well prepared, as is shown by the fact that he had systematically engaged in this activity with all his might and competence and he had not rested until he had heated the passions of the crowd to the degree that had become proper for the outbreak of the subsequent events of the day.⁵⁹

56 BFL V-56032/2, on page 45–46 of the sentence.

57 Ibid., 50.

58 Ibid., 52.

59 Ibid., 40–41.

According to the ruling, János Nagy and Gergely Takács had been responsible for the violent acts, too. They knew that the mood among the people had become anti-Semitic, yet in spite of this they did not do anything against it. Moreover they assisted in planning the pogrom. They acted consciously, according to the ruling, and given their intelligence they could have predicted the subsequent events, namely that pogrom-like actions would be taken by fascists. They were clear that assaulting and killing innocent Jews were fascist acts, thus they knew that they would commit fascist crimes.⁶⁰ The court was sure that anti-Semitism and fascism could be equated.

The position of the left was reflected in a speech given by one of their representatives in the parliament: “Is the government aware that the concomitant phenomenon of fascism, anti-Semitism, has appeared again in certain places in the country? [...] What is the government ready to do in order to nip reaction, disguised in this way, in the bud?”⁶¹ Anti-Semitism was the litmus test of fascism: where it was discovered, one had to look for fascists immediately. After the pogroms, the Central Board (*Központi Vezetőség*) of the Communist Party arranged a conference where the problems of the anti-Semitic events were included. Moreover, the party considered the issue so important that Mátyás Rákosi, the secretary-general himself, also delivered a speech. He listed all the pogroms of which he was aware, beginning with the Ózd case. As Rákosi noted, the communist secretary had been knocked down and then the anti-Semitic disturbances had broken out. “We have inquired into things there,” he concluded, “and obviously we have found fascist threads...”⁶² Rákosi interpreted the Miskolc case as a pogrom that had taken place after an anti-Semitic provocation during a political meeting. He contended that “many fascist people from Miskolc and the neighborhood had joined” the participants in the gathering. He was convinced that it had to be a well prepared provocation since it had paralyzed the economic life of the region (no one had gone to work during the pogrom), had presented the Communist Party as an anti-Semitic party, and had dealt the police a heavy blow. He closed his speech with a supposition, namely that “a central fascist organization is taking part here.”⁶³

60 V 56032/2, sentence, 59–60.

61 Vörös, “*Kunmadaras*,” 77.

62 Éva Standeisky, “A miskolci pogrom – ahogyan Rákosiék látták,” source publication with a preface, *Társadalmi Szemle* 45 (November 1990): 78–86.

63 Ibid.

One of the court's main pieces of evidence for that allegation that the villagers organized a pogrom was the fact that a meeting had taken place after the unsuccessful excursion to Nagy's trial. The ruling interpreted the events as follows: when the villagers found themselves unable to enter the court, they returned home and decided to gather in the building of the Trade Corporation (*Ipartestület*) of Kunmadaras to write a petition on Nagy's behalf to the Minister of Justice. The fact that the crowd returned home after they were not allowed to enter the courtroom convinced the chairman that their basic purpose had been to repeat their previous "terror action." According to him, the people of Kunmadaras had gone back because they had realized that there was no chance of achieving their goal to liberate the teacher by coercing the court. The fact that every witness confessed that they had signed the form also spoke against them. The atmosphere of the meeting had been characterized by the hatred against the People's Tribunal, the police and the Jews, stated the judge. That was the point where the results of the activity of the three major defendants were merged into each other, since each of them was present in the building that evening. Gergely Takács then actively incited against the Jews. He learned from a participant that someone had rung the police in Karcag to prevent the crowd from entering. He immediately claimed that this had surely been done by the Jews. The People's Tribunal argued that the defendants had consciously exploited the people's anger, which had been inflamed partly by them against the People's Tribunal and the police, and had contributed to the creation of an anti-Semitic atmosphere by making inflammatory statements.⁶⁴

They knew that the villagers were angry with the witnesses for the prosecution, consequently Takács suggested forcing them to withdraw their testimony. Thus the crowd waited for Ferenc Takács, one of the witnesses for the prosecution, near the cemetery, where they started to pelt the witness, who was returning home on a cart, with stones. By that time they had been persuaded, however, that the Jews had obstructed the trial, which was shown clearly by the curses they uttered at Ferenc Takács and his wife: "Wait till we catch you, bloody democrats, henchmen of the Jew People's Tribunal, Jewish henchmen, there will be no trial now!"⁶⁵ A few villagers started to identify the witnesses for the prosecution with the Jews and to imagine a Jewish conspiracy behind the events. They had decided, according to the ruling, that in spite of any alleged plans of

64 BFL V 56032/2, sentence, 42.

65 Ibid., 43.

the Jews, they would defend the teacher. Another group of villagers went to the house of the second witness for the prosecution, Ferenc Wurczel, and forced him to go with them to the building of the Trade Corporation. However, in the street he was attacked by the crowd and badly beaten. According to the ruling, he was assaulted primarily because of his Jewish origins.⁶⁶

What thoroughly convinced the People's Tribunal that the case had been an anti-Semitic conspiracy was that Zsigmond Tóth had stated that he had learned that the Jews would try to carry off János Nagy from his house at night, so he had decided to watch. He also called on people to harass the Jews the next day.⁶⁷ The ruling interpreted the antecedents of the pogrom as part of an organized conspiracy that had been prepared by three anti-Semitic people to achieve, firstly, the release of one of them from police custody together with the humiliation of the People's Tribunal, secondly, the organization of a pogrom. The ruling considered Tóth's anti-Semitic activity and Nagy and Takács's movement against the People's Tribunal as connected. When Zsigmond Tóth incited the people against the Jews, Gergely Takács joined in the activity, claiming that "it's time to get rid of those who sponge off the Hungarian people."⁶⁸ The ruling managed to find an anti-Semitic conspiracy that finally had resulted in a pogrom.

Nevertheless, according to the People's Tribunal the main purpose of the conspiracy was not to plan violence against the Jews. Parallel to the organization of the anti-Semitic pogrom another movement took place in Kunmadaras at approximately the same time. The teacher in the village, János Nagy, was sentenced as a war criminal in 1945. However, due to the legal incompetence of the first court, a second trial was planned to be held in Karcag on May 20, 1946. In order to be acquitted he started a movement among his former disciples in the "levente"-organization, as the People's Tribunal argued.⁶⁹ The ruling interpreted the incident when the police prevented the villagers from entering the location of Nagy's trial as an attack against the authority and honor of the police and the People's Tribunal, since it had happened publicly. The judge concluded that Nagy and his friend Takács had acted consciously and maliciously against the People's Tribunal in order to prevent Nagy's conviction. They also had involved Nagy's wife in the movement by persuading her to go to the Hungarian Democratic

66 Ibid., 44; 59.

67 Ibid., 44–45.

68 Ibid., 41.

69 Ibid., 40.

Women's Association (MNDSZ), where she "asked them, in tears, to save her husband from the clutches of the People's Tribunal."⁷⁰

The sentence claimed that Nagy and Takács had led a movement against the democratic system when they had prevented the police and the People's Tribunal from fulfilling their obligations. They created a mass action, the judge argued, that prevented the police from leading the defendant into the courtroom, and this had paralyzed the power of the police. Furthermore, they had compelled the People's Tribunal, with the help of the crowd that had been mobilized by them, not to pass sentence on a criminal (Nagy). That it became known among a couple of thousand people that the force of the masses was capable of obstructing the work of constitutional institutions and even paralyzing the functioning of the democratic system was the antidemocratic factor in the aforementioned defendants' action.⁷¹ The sentence stressed that the security of the democracy had been seriously threatened.

What or who threatened democracy? In its understanding of the events the People's Tribunal described the incident when the villagers had returned home together with their teacher, characterizing them all as fascists who were enemies of the democratic order and who had obstructed the People's Tribunal and the police, preventing them from fulfilling their obligations. The ruling offered the following evidence: they had also known that the fascists had been enemies of the contemporary system and had been aspiring to overthrow it. Therefore, concluded the People's Tribunal, when they had obstructed the police and the People's Tribunal, they had committed fascist crimes. In the following part the ruling proved that everyone had known that acting against the law meant attacking the state. After the pogrom the representatives of the local parties gathered and issued a declaration that said that the Jews of the village and Ferenc Takács, the most important witness for the prosecution, would have to leave the village. The People's Tribunal comprehended this scene as a real fascist act against democracy, since it had alloyed anti-Semitic elements with an attack against a person "who is really faithful to the ideas of the people's democracy."⁷²

This manner of reasoning endowed anti-Semitism with a new function. It ceased to refer to the crime of which the defendants had been accused. Instead it became an indicator of fascism. Accordingly, the chairman interpreted the decision of the inter-party meeting about the fact that the Jews and Ferenc

70 Ibid., 37.

71 Ibid., 58.

72 Ibid., 56.

Takács had had to leave the village as a typical manifestation of fascist terror. The concomitant phenomenon of every fascist action inevitably was anti-Semitism, as implied by the following statement:

As a natural, obvious outcome, and necessary accessories of the fascist, anti-state character of the whole movement, an act that was originally directed solely against the power of the state, the People's Tribunal, the state institutions that had ordered the arrest, turned against the Jews through the guidance of Zsigmond Tóth and Gergely Takács.⁷³

According to this logic, fascists always organize anti-Semitic pogroms and anti-Semitic pogroms are always committed by fascists. The People's Tribunal equated fascism with anti-Semitism and vice versa. This argumentation meant doubtlessly that any anti-Jewish act was directed against the democratic system. According to this understanding, the Chairman of the Court argued that the events of Kunmadaras were not a Jewish issue, but rather an issue pertaining to the whole Hungarian state order.⁷⁴ These statements disconnected anti-Semitism from the Jews. Although beating and killing Jews (or any other group) is obviously at the least an anti-democratic act, the sentence referred to this act only to prove the appearance of fascism. In a strange way, the events were recaptured without the presence of the Jews. The People's Tribunal managed to produce a narrative of an anti-Semitic pogrom without involving the Jewish victims.

What was very characteristic of the case is that even the Jewish victims contributed to this reconstruction. While they recollected memories of their sufferings they connected these events with another atrocity that had taken place in the village. For them, this provided a logical explanation of the pogrom, not least of all because they could find people responsible for it. The victims who had experienced deportations, official anti-Semitic discourse and Nazi and Arrow Cross cruelty against Jews interpreted the harassment of Jews in Kunmadaras in the same framework. For them it had been an anti-Semitic pogrom that had been organized by fascist war criminals and carried out by a cruel crowd. A victim said that he knew János Nagy as a "levente"-trainer with a Sam Browne belt who taught his disciples to sing anti-Semitic songs. Another one recognized one of the defendants as a chief "levente" whom she knew as a great fascist.

73 BFL V 56032/1, the dissent of the chairman of the Court.

74 Ibid.

One of the victims claimed that people who had hit them had also served in the Hungarian SS armored division.⁷⁵

The occurrences evoked memories of the deportations in the witnesses. One of them recollected that one of the defendants had accompanied them to the village with the following words: "Well, Jews I have come for you, go to the others who are already lying in a heap." This was represented also symbolically. According to some of them, the villagers had been led by a person dressed in black or brown with a little moustache. Furthermore, for them the tale of infanticides was remembered in the form of a charge of ritual murder. A few of them recollected that the villagers had been asserting that the Jews had collected the Christian children, as they had needed blood to consecrate temples.⁷⁶

While the Jewish victims were looking for the people responsible for the violence and the reasons underlying their acts, the explanation of the People's Tribunal was plausible for them. The statement that the pogrom was not only a Jewish issue but rather an issue pertaining to the new democracy meant for them that anti-Semitism was considered a crime against the state that called for serious punishment. It seemed that the authorities took the issue of Jew-baiting seriously, and this created a feeling of security. In addition the deportations were not an exceptionally important element in Jewish memory in this trial. The memory of the deportations was not formulated exclusively in the Jewish context. The victims remembered it in connection with other events, but the memory served symbolically to represent suffering. Their suffering, however, was not given greater significance than the sufferings of anyone else. As the chief rabbi of Kecskemét argued, there was no need to mourn for the Jews who had been killed innocently, but rather for human civilization, which had fallen, and the classes that had been responsible for this had persecuted not only the Jewry but the exploited poor as well.⁷⁷ If anti-Semitism was considered an act against the democratic state, then it was possible to be an anti-Fascist without being a Jew. Jewishness could be solved within the identity of a person who was on the side of democracy and the oppressed.

Rulings in a trial are, however, not simple statements. They are not simply one among many publicly manifested opinions that can be freely contested. If rulings are brought in formally adequate conditions, they have legally binding consequences. A legally correct ruling is a performative speech act that impacts

75 BFL V 56032/1. 277–80, 301–03, 333.

76 BFL V 56032/1, 4.

77 *TV*, July 3, 1947: 2.

social reality in very concrete ways. It makes (and often compels) individuals, institutions and authorities act and speak in certain ways, obliges them to commit certain actions and to address issues in a particular manner.⁷⁸ The manner in which the People's Tribunal equated Fascism and anti-Semitism had important consequences on how institutions and public figures started to think and speak about the state and the concept of democracy. In a situation in which the notion of democracy required an absolutely new form of public discourse that was based primarily on the sense of being threatened, fascism was produced as the enemy of the democracy, which made it possible to identify democracy with the struggle against fascism. Fascism and democracy were presented together, and fascist movements were needed in order to constitute the endangered democracy. In the thirteenth century the Eucharist started to occupy a central position in Christian ceremonies. The Eucharist was represented as potent and capable of working miracles. The Eucharist was considered a sacrament that was able to defend itself from its enemies. The Jews, who were obviously not Christians (and official Church discourse often referred to them as murderers of Christ), were involved in that process. A new narrative emerged about Jewish abuse and desecration of the holy host that usually ended with a miracle ensuring the safety of the Eucharist. However, these accusations were not merely intended to "point out" that the Jews were enemies of Christianity, but rather to provide evidence of the threats to the host and, consequently, its miraculous power. The Jews played a crucial rhetorical role in producing the qualities and existence of the Eucharist, and furthermore their existence as a (fabricated) threat was a fundamental requirement of the foundation of that entity.⁷⁹

Something very similar happened in the case of the notion of democracy in Hungary after World War II. The National Assembly accepted in March, 1946 Act VII, which was about the protection of the democratic system and the republic and contained definitions of several political crimes. In a situation in which the democracy in Hungary defined itself as young and therefore defenseless and fascism had proven a danger to democracy during the war, the representatives of the Assembly considered penal protection as an effective and necessary measure against opponents of this system. As the act explained it,

78 John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

79 Miri Rubin, "The Making of the Host Desecration Accusation: Persuasive Narratives, Persistent Doubts," in *Proof and Persuasion. Essays on Authority, Objectivity, and Evidence*, ed. Suzanne Marchand and Elizabeth Lunbeck (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 100–23.

The penal defense of the state order is an obligation of the first order for every country, a system based on democratic principles cannot lack an effective penal state defense. But least of all a state like Hungary, which is rising again after World War II and the Arrow Cross–German devastation. Our democratic system can look back on only one year of development, while the republican form of state has been realized only recently. Regarding these conditions, the attacks against the democratic Hungarian system and form of state are of even greater account, since they endanger substantially the existence of the state, the development of the life of the society and, together with them, the place of the Hungarian people among the democratic nations.⁸⁰

Therefore the Act considered every attack aiming at the overthrow of the democratic system and the republican form of the state to merit serious punishment. The explanation indicated the purpose of the act as the prevention of any recurrence of fascist-like anti-state aspirations. The trial of the pogrom in Kunmadaras was the first case that was tried on the basis of this Act.

Fascism is definitely inimical to democracy. The People's Tribunal also shared this view. Fascist acts were obviously capable of overthrowing any kind of democratic system, as the ruling emphasized. It argued essentially that inherent characteristics showed the real nature of particular acts. Accordingly, the conclusion was drawn that fascist deeds and movements naturally opposed the notion of democracy. They were incapable of living together and fascism could prevail only after the death of democracy. Consequently it aspired to destroy democratic order.⁸¹ Fascism and democracy were old enemies, so protecting fascist activity endangered the Hungarian republic, as had happened in Germany, when the Weimar Republic had been overthrown by Hitler's fascists (so argued the chairman of the Court). It was therefore seen as logical for the People's Tribunal to interpret the events in Kunmadaras as simply signs of a reemergence of fascism. The ruling stated that Gergely Takács had been the election agent of an Arrow Cross member of the parliament, and later had been named sergeant by Ferenc Szálasi, the leader of the fascist Arrow Cross Party, during the last days of the war in Germany. János Nagy had allegedly mobilized his disciples, who had been educated in the spirit of fascism by him. Not only had old fascists reappeared, but the whole village had gone back to the age of fascism, to 1944. According to the chairman of the Court, the case of

80 1946. évi törvények (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1946), 19–20.

81 BFL V 56032/2, sentence, 59–60.

Rosinger, who had been killed, clearly proved the total victory of the prevailing ideas of 1944. The chairman evoked another scene: “Ernő Weinberger’s family is lying bloody in the ditch and the crowd is carrying off the lard, bacon, and goods in stock. The atmosphere of 1944 is complete.”⁸² He characterized the decision of the inter-party meeting as a fascist act by claiming that the fall of order in Kunmadaras had become absolute. Only the wagons necessary in order to deport the persecuted had been missing. According to these statements, in Kunmadaras fascists had reenacted their role by attacking Hungarian democracy.

A historical trial makes history internal, in other words it personalizes it. The goal is to transform the historical narrative into personal experiences. The trial is a drama in which social reality is constituted, reproduced and reenacted.⁸³ In the first trial of Nagy the sentence evoked history: the defendant was connected to the fascists of World War II. A similar technique can be detected in the trial of the pogrom in Kunmadaras.

A freak smile could show on the face of the organizers and leaders of the movement, what they had wanted was realized: the village of Kunmadaras had gone back on the cart of time to the fascist and Arrow Cross era of the year 1944, some of its inhabitants acted as the fascist and Arrow Cross scoundrels of that time had acted.⁸⁴

The process established historical continuity between Nazism and the anti-Jewish riot of Kunmadaras in order to show the continuity of fascism. However, through this representation, the enemies of postwar fascism could present themselves as the heirs to an anti-Fascist past or speak about their past as the anti-Fascist past. As fascism is against democratic systems, the adversaries of fascism could present themselves as perpetual defenders of democracy. Thus the emergence of the new democratic state of Hungary could be explained not as the consequence of the collapse of the prewar regime, but as part of a constant anti-Fascist struggle. Consequently, only people who could prove their anti-Fascist pasts could present themselves as propagators of the new democracy, and at the same time this became sufficient evidence that someone had a democratic mentality.

82 BFL V 56032/1, the dissent of the chairman of the court.

83 Robert Hariman, ed., *Popular Trials* (London–Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 1–16; James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory* (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 1993), 11–15; Steven Knapp, “Collective Memory and the Actual Past,” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 123–49.

84 BFL V 56032/2, sentence, 46.

The dissent of the chairman stated that after the crowd had returned home, Kunmadaras had experienced a fascist-like terror and the state authority basically had fallen due to this terror.⁸⁵ This interpretation added a new aspect to the concept of democracy, which started to mean the institutions and the structure of the state. From this time on, the security of democracy meant defending the authority of the state. From the point of view of the birth of the Hungarian people's democracy, the aspiration of the post-World War II system to find fascist conspirators, who allegedly represented the greatest threat to it, can be considered crucial. During this endeavor the regime itself produced the fascists. The People's Tribunal defined the anti-Jewish riot in Kunmadaras as a fascist conspiracy. This statement identified fascism with anti-Semitism and provided a tool with which the authorities could find their enemies: from this time on the appearance of anti-Semitism made fascist conspiracies immediately recognizable. This logical connection made it possible for the system, which defined itself as a young democracy threatened by fascism, to demonstrate a historical continuity of fascism, and this presented the regime as the authentic heir to the anti-Fascist struggle. Finally, the state authority, which was taking measures against fascism, was able to conceive of itself as democracy.

Conclusions

Various Communist versions of the anti-Fascist myth played an immense role in the shaping of the Stalinist dictatorships in postwar East Central Europe. In this narrative, fascism was simplified as the brutal attempt of reactionary capitalist classes to maintain their rule over the working masses and to suppress the democratic aspirations of the people. Communists claimed themselves the representatives of the people, thus, initiating and leading the resistance against Fascism. The protection of democracy, thus, equaled Communism, whereas any attack or criticism of this (Communist) "democracy" was understood as Fascism. In this particular narrative, the fascist assault against democracy necessarily targeted Communists, and Communists were the only people who really resisted Fascism. The victims of Fascism suffered for political reasons. The Jews were at best marginal components of the story or were rather completely ignored. Despite the blatant simplifications and manipulations in this narrative, this strange post-Fascist anti-Fascism could link itself to tangible experiences of

85 BFL V 56032/1, the dissent of the chairman of the court.

political resistance, as in Germany, or nationwide anti-German armed resistance, as in Yugoslavia or Poland.⁸⁶ In Hungary, which remained unfortunately Hitler's last, if only reluctant, ally, on the contrary, there had been only sporadic domestic resistance. The Hungarian version of the anti-Fascist myth, it seems, instead of the wartime semi-fiction of Communist anti-Fascist resistance was based on the postwar fiction of anti-Communist Fascism.

As they abused the Jewish victims only to establish a clearly and immediately recognizable characteristic of "Fascism", these strange anti-Fascist ideologies took for granted the existence of "Jews" as an ethnic category. As a consequence, such ideologies were never interested in the actual social and cultural circumstances that helped to sustain the particularism and exclusion of Jewish citizens and the ethnicization of such mechanisms. In Kunmadaras, however, cultural stereotypes were mobilized and political messages were appropriated and finally were translated into ethnic categories during actual social intercourse in the marketplace on May 21, 1946.⁸⁷ Peasant or local communities actually distanced their neighbors as "Jews" to be beaten through their everyday interactions, which helped to construct ethnicity and ethnic identities in a village that, as an outcome, was split between "Hungarians" and "Jews" in the Summer of 1946.

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86 Alan L. Nothnagle, *Building the East German Myth: Historical Mythology and Youth Propaganda in the German Democratic Republic, 1945–1989* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 93–131; Ingo Loose, "The Anti-Fascist Myth of the German Democratic Republic and Its Decline after 1989," in *Past in the Making: Historical Revisionism in Central Europe after 1989*, ed. Michal Kopeček (Budapest: CEU Press, 2008), 59–63; Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, "New Threads on an Old Loom: National Memory and Social Identity in Postwar and Post-Communist Poland," in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, ed. Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, and Claudio Fogu (Durham–London: Duke University Press, 2006), 178–96.

87 Ethnicity seems a transactional category: it is the outcome of the dynamic relationships and encounters among various socio-cultural groups. Richard Jenkins, "Rethinking Ethnicity: Identity, Categorization and Power," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17 (April 1994): 197–223.

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