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**Nazi Perpetrator Trials
in the Eastern Bloc**


Edited by Katharina Rauschenberger,
Joachim von Puttkamer and Sybille Steinbacher

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Máté Zombory

Holocaust Historian or Anti-fascist Nazi Hunter?

Jenő Lévai's Comeback at the End of the 1950s

Introduction

Hungarian journalist Jenő Lévai (1892-1983) is known for his books that contribute to our historical knowledge about the Jewish genocide. Until 1981, when American survivor-historian of Hungarian origin, Randolph L. Braham, published his monumental *The Politics of Genocide. The Holocaust in Hungary* in the United States, Lévai's *Black Book on the Martyrdom of Hungarian Jewry* had been, since its publication in 1948, the only internationally accessible monographical account of the anti-Jewish persecutions in Hungary. Today considered as the forerunner of Holocaust history writing, Lévai's name continues to circulate among Hungarian scholars. In Holocaust and Memory Studies, he appears as the »doyen of Hungarian Holocaust historiography« whose »oeuvre has functioned as a foundational discourse on the history of the Holocaust in Hungary«.¹

Against the backdrop of this canonisation, it might come as a surprise that Lévai practically died unnoticed. His death was not even mentioned in the prestigious weekly *Élet és Irodalom* (Life and Literature), where a discussion had unfolded about Hungary's role in the Holocaust. Notably, it was historian György Ránki's critical review of *The Politics of Genocide*, entitled »Hungarian Holocaust«, that started the discussion one year prior to Lévai's death.² Lévai passed away during the process of a paradigm shift through which the new conceptualisation of Holocaust Studies was appropriated by Hungarian scholars. Only two newspapers reported on the death of the 90-year-old journalist, namely, the ones in which most of his articles had appeared in the preceding decades. The obituaries said farewell to the »Nestor of Hungarian journalists«, the »living conscience of the fight against fascism«, whose main topic was »the historical report revealing the crimes of Nazism«.³ For those who dealt with his

1 Ferenc Laczó: The Foundational Dilemmas of Jenő Lévai. On the Birth of Hungarian Holocaust Historiography in the 1940s, in: *Holocaust Studies* 21 (2015), nos. 1-2, pp. 93-119.

2 György Ránki: Magyar holocaust [Hungarian Holocaust], in: *Élet és Irodalom*, 18.6.1982, p. 7.

3 *Magyar Nemzet*, 16.7.1983, p. 11; *Új Élet*, 15.7.1983, p. 2.

death at all, Lévai appeared as an anti-fascist Nazi hunter rather than a historian of the Holocaust.

Certainly, this is not an either/or question. Yet, it is significant what the two portrayals fail to consider when assessing Lévai's significance: The retrospective picture of the Holocaust historian is exclusively based on a tiny part of Lévai's work that was published between 1945 and 1948 and disregards the fact that Lévai's historical interest transpired in relation to his First World War experiences, and that his engagement in historical documentation, his topic and style, the latter of which was indeed historical reportage, developed well before the Holocaust.⁴ This portrayal also marginalises the political aspect of Lévai's public activity – a problem that sharply arises with regard to the post-1948 period when Lévai participated in the communist campaigns during the Cold War that exposed West Germany in the name of anti-fascism. Yet, it would be misleading to simply treat him as a Nazi hunter. Although this interpretation is much closer to reality, it disregards Lévai's continual historical interest and historiographical ambition that differentiate him from the other activists of the cause.

Instead of deciding between the two exclusive interpretations of Lévai's present-day significance, the following study⁵ aims to reformulate the question in the title, thus contributing to the ongoing reconsideration of anti-fascism in cultural history and public memory.⁶ By focusing on Lévai's re-emergence on the international public scene at the end of the 1950s, I will show what conditions of possibility enabled Lévai to resume the work of historical documentation. I argue that Jenő Lévai was neither a historian nor a Nazi hunter but rather an anti-fascist (non-communist) activist who was engaged in historical documentation for both historical, political and judicial reasons.

4 Máté Zombory: A nemzeti tragédia narratívái. Lévai Jenő, az írás és a történelem (1932-1948) [Narratives of National Tragedy. Jenő Lévai, the Writing and the History], in: *Múltunk* (2018), no. 2, pp. 197-236.

5 This publication is the outcome of the research project »Jenő Lévai, Holocaust Documentation and the Second Wave of War Crimes Trials« supported by a grant from La Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah in Paris. Related research at the Yad Vashem Archive was supported by an EHRI Conny Kristel Fellowship (2022).

6 See Zoltán Kékesi, Máté Zombory: Antifascist Memory Revisited. Hungarian Historical Exhibitions in Oświęcim and Paris, 1965, in: *Memory Studies* 15 (2022), no. 5, pp. 1087-1104; Kata Bohus, Peter Hallama, and Stephan Stach (eds.): *Growing in the Shadow of Antifascism. Remembering the Holocaust in State-Socialist Eastern Europe*, Budapest, Vienna, New York 2022; Markus Wegewitz: *Antifaschistische Kultur. Nico Rost und der lange Kampf gegen den Nationalsozialismus 1919-1965*, Göttingen 2023.

Changing times – the mid-1950s

Coming from an assimilated Jewish family, Lévai developed an impressive career as a journalist and publisher in the interwar period. He began publishing on topics related to history in the early 1930s as a reaction to his experiences in the First World War as a prisoner of war (POW) between 1914 and 1920. Because of the so-called second anti-Jewish law in 1939, he qualified as a Jew and was deprived of his publishing house and journals. Due to his status as a war veteran, however, he was permitted to continue working for a magazine that qualified as »Jewish« – a point he complained about throughout his life. Following the war, between 1945 and 1947, Lévai worked on a report for Hungary's official preparations for the Paris Peace Treaty as the expert on the persecution of Jews in Hungary. The synthesis of this appeared as a book in 1948 under the title *Zsidósors Magyarországon. Az üldözések kora* (Jewish Fate in Hungary. The Era of Persecutions).⁷ This book served as the basis for his *Black Book on the Martyrdom of Hungarian Jewry*,⁸ compiled and translated by Lawrence P. Davis⁹ and published the same year by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at a Zürich-based publishing house. This, together with his many state-supported missions abroad, provided Lévai with valuable contacts with institutions and individuals engaged in the history and justice of the Jewish tragedy. As a result, his personal archival collection significantly grew.¹⁰

The Stalinist takeover seriously impacted Lévai's work but not irrevocably. In 1951, he was on a list of residents to be relocated to the Hungarian countryside from his apartment in a Rose Hill villa on the Buda side of the city – yet he was eventually able to remain there with his wife.¹¹ Lévai was also partially affected by the internal purges at the state-security services that followed a couple of years later. In the 1953 anti-Zionist proceedings, one accusation against the former members of the Jewish Council in Budapest was that they had concealed their own responsibility in committing anti-popular crimes (»crimes

7 Jenő Lévai: *Zsidósors Magyarországon. Az üldözések kora* [Jewish Fate in Hungary. The Era of Persecutions], Budapest 1948.

8 Jenő Lévai: *Black Book on the Martyrdom of Hungarian Jewry*, Zurich 1948.

9 Yad Vashem Archives (YVA), O.15-525, 7, Jenő Lévai's expert witness testimony in the case Albert Bruce Belton against Pilvax Printing Co., Randolph Braham, Tibor J. Waldman, and World Federation of Hungarian Jews and World Federation of Jews of Hungarian Descent, Inc.

10 Unfortunately, Lévai's archive has been lost. In the early 1990s, historian Tamás Stark compiled a list of what remained of Lévai's archive at the Institute of History at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, entitled *The Lévai Collection*. I am grateful to János Dési for providing me this list.

11 Jenő Lévai's appeal against being forcefully translocated, 1951. The Lévai Collection (Stark inventory), Box 1.

against the people»¹² against Jews by commissioning Lévai to write a book on the Budapest ghetto.¹³ Though his name was on a custody proposal dated 1 March 1953,¹⁴ Lévai himself was ultimately never arrested.

By late 1957, Lévai had resumed his work of historical documentation – he took »a longer research trip« to Switzerland and then to France.¹⁵ His research might have been related to the Israeli affair stirred up around Rezső Kasztner, who as representative of the Relief and Rescue Committee, an informal Zionist organisation, had negotiated with Eichmann in 1944 in Budapest. In 1953, the Israeli Minister for Trade and Industry – as Kasztner's employer – brought a case of slander against an Israeli of Hungarian origin who publicly accused Kasztner of collaborating with the Nazis. The verdict of the trial went against Kasztner, and the judge, Benjamin Halevi, stated that the accused had »sold his soul to the devil«. Kasztner was shot dead on an open street on 3 March 1957. In 1958, the Supreme Court reversed the judgment and found Kasztner not guilty on all counts.

Following the first-instance verdict in 1955, there happened to be considerable international demand for documents about the Nazi-Zionist talks in Budapest in 1944. Not only did the head of the Soviet embassy in Tel Aviv and the representatives of the Israeli Communist Party request potentially revealing documents from Hungary that would compromise Zionism and the Israeli government,¹⁶ but so did Kasztner's defence counsel.¹⁷ Given that the Hungarian authorities did not find any useful archival material in that matter,¹⁸ it is not impossible that one reason for Lévai's mission abroad was to collect potentially compromising documents on the Nazi-Zionist negotiations in 1944. He was an expert in the case, having essential contact with those who could give access to further material. In 1946, during his stay in Switzerland, he reported on the 22nd Zionist Congress in Basel and conducted research on the

12 On this legal category, introduced by the ministerial decree related to the people's jurisdiction in 1945, see Tamás Hoffmann: Crimes Against the People – a Sui Generis Socialist International Crime?, in: *Journal of the History of International Law* 21 (2019), no. 2, pp. 299–329.

13 Jenő Lévai: *A pesti gettó csodálatos megmenekülésének hiteles története* [The Authentic History of the Miraculous Escape of the Pest Ghetto], Budapest 1946.

14 See Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára [Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security] (ÁBTL), V-101890/6/A.

15 Újabb dokumentumok a nácik magyarországi rémuralmáról [New Documents on the Nazi Reign of Terror in Hungary], in: *Magyar Nemzet*, 31. I. 1958, p. 2.

16 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára [Hungarian National Archives] (MNL-OL), XIX-J-1-j-Izrael-30/c-006326/2-1955 (11.d.), Note: Anyagkérés a Kasztner perhez [Request for Material for the Kasztner Trial], Tel Aviv, 12. 8. 1955.

17 MNL-OL, XIX-J-1-j-Izrael-30/c-006326/4-1955 (11.d.), Shmuel M. Tamir's letter to the Hungarian Legation in Tel Aviv, 5. 11. 1955.

18 *Ibid.*, János Veres to the Hungarian Legation in Tel Aviv, 26. 12. 1955.

1944 Swiss press campaign against the deportations from Hungary.¹⁹ Carl Lutz, Swiss Vice-Consul in Budapest from 1942 to 1944²⁰, and George Mantello (György Mandel), former First Secretary of the El Salvador Consulate in Geneva from 1942 to 1945,²¹ were among Lévai's most precious contacts in Switzerland.

Indeed, in his letter to Israeli journalist József Halmi, dated 5 May 1957, Lévai asked for information about the Kasztner affair.²² He asked Halmi whether the papers from the trial had been published, or whether there were reports about it available; he intended to know the whereabouts of Kasztner, Andor Byss [sic!] and Moshe Krausz, who, particularly the latter two, in his opinion would send him the related documents in their possession. Both Biss, member of the Relief and Rescue Committee, and Krausz, manager of the Palestine Office in Budapest, were key witnesses of the Nazi occupation in Hungary. Lévai also asked Halmi for any published material related to his »topic: Jewish fate in Europe«. He explained his request by way of a glimmer of hope, which had recently arisen, that his last book would appear in German and Hebrew: »I would like to correct my book, whether and where it is necessary.« In return, he offered his help in any way and promised to send Hungarian books that Halmi would eventually need. At the same time, Lévai also reached out to Siegfried Roth, Director of the World Jewish Congress's European Division in London, to get support for the publication.²³ Of Hungarian origin, Roth had survived the war in Budapest as well.

The mid-1950s proved to be a turning point in the history of Holocaust documentation. Against the backdrop of the changing international political context, the demand for historical documents on the Jewish genocide grew significantly. The need for such information was not only bolstered by the international echo of the Kasztner affair, but the 10th anniversary of the victory over fascism, the Federal Republic of Germany's rearmament and membership into NATO, the ongoing processes of reparations and the relaunch of war-crimes-related criminal investigations all played major roles as well. As a result, the mid-1950s saw a series of documentary publications on the history of the six million victims of the genocide. Gerald Reitlinger's *Final Solution* appeared

19 See Jenő Lévai: *Zsidósors Európában*, Budapest 1948.

20 Theo Tschuy: *Dangerous Diplomacy. The Story of Carl Lutz, Rescuer of 62,000 Hungarian Jews*, Grand Rapids 2000.

21 David Kranzler: *The Man Who Stopped the Trains to Auschwitz: George Mantello, El Salvador, and Switzerland's Finest Hour*, Syracuse/New York 2000.

22 YVA, O.38-279, 33, Lévai to Halmi, 5. 5. 1957.

23 Zsidó Múzeum és Levéltár [Jewish Museum and Archives], Beneschofsky Iлона hagyatéka, 1. doboz, Iratszám 8, XIX-278/8, 1-6, Siegfried Roth to Iлона Beneschofsky, 15. 7. 1957.

in German (1956), Léon Poliakov and Josef Wulf published their documentary volumes *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden* (1955) and *Das Dritte Reich und seine Diener* (1956) and, most importantly from Lévai's perspective, the memoir of Joel Brand (Brand Jenő), who had been a leading member of the Zionist Relief and Rescue Committee in Budapest in 1944 and a witness during the »Kasztner trial.«²⁴ Brand's book appeared in English two years later²⁵ and aroused a controversy in the British public that Siegfried Roth reviewed in the Hungarian Israeli press.²⁶

One judicial procedure was pivotal for Lévai's international comeback. In 1956, an investigation against thirteen German citizens was initiated at the Hessen State Prosecutor's Office in Frankfurt am Main.²⁷ The District Court issued an arrest warrant for Adolf Eichmann and his deputy in occupied Hungary, Hermann Krumej, among others, on 24 November.²⁸ On 1 April 1957, Hermann Krumej was arrested for the first time, which echoed in the international press. By this time, spring 1957, Hansernst Grabert, the investigating judge in the case, had already accessed the most important literature available at the time on the anti-Jewish persecutions in Budapest in 1944. Besides the so-called Kasztner report, Reitlinger's book and Brand's memoir, he had gotten hold of Lévai's *Black Book*²⁹, which was being used at the time as source material in a restitution case in Stuttgart.³⁰ By late October, the investigative authority received the name of George Mantello, who had testified in a case against Franz Rademacher in Bamberg, as a possible witness.³¹ On 4 December, Grabert called Mantello on the telephone to ask him to testify against Krumej.

24 Gerald Reitlinger: *Die Endlösung. Hitlers Versuch der Ausrottung der Juden Europas 1939-1945*, Berlin 1956; Léon Poliakov, Joseph Wulf: *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden*, Berlin 1955; idem: *Das Dritte Reich und seine Diener*, Berlin 1956; Alexander Weissberg: *Die Geschichte von Joel Brand*, Köln, Berlin 1956.

25 Alex Weissberg: *Advocate for the Dead. The Story of Joel Brand*, London 1958.

26 Siegfried Roth: *Vita az angol sajtóban a Joel Brand-könyv körül [Controversy in the British Press over the Joel Brand Book]*, in: *Új Kelet*, 20. 6. 1958, p. 5.

27 Werner Renz: *Die Krumej-Hunsche-Prozesse. 1962, 1964/1965, 1968/1969*, in: Katharina Rauschenberger, Werner Renz (eds.): *Henry Ormond – Anwalt der Opfer. Plädoyers in NS-Prozessen*, Frankfurt am Main 2015, pp. 137-149.

28 Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Wiesbaden (HHStAW), Abt. 461, Nr. 33532 (Bd. II d.A.), Bl. 1968-169, Haftbefehl des Amtsgerichts (AG) Frankfurt am Main vom 24. 11. 1956.

29 HHStAW, 461, 33534, Krumej, Hermann u. a.: *Hauptakten Band 4*, Bl. 554, Hansernst Grabert to Edward Kossoy, 8. 5. 1957.

30 HHStAW, 461, 33533, Krumej, Hermann u. a.: *Hauptakten Band 3*, Bl. 397, (illegible) (Stuttgart) to Dr. [Arnold] Buchthal (Frankfurt am Main), 6. 4. 1957.

31 HHStAW, 461, 33537, Krumej, Hermann u. a.: *Hauptakten Band 7*, Bl. 1119, Verfügung, 24. 10. 1957.

Mantello apparently agreed and additionally told Grabert about Lévai as a possible and willing witness who was residing in Basel at the time.³²

It remains unclear on behalf of which institution Lévai had travelled to Switzerland and France. No traces of the trip could be found in the archives of the Foreign Ministry nor at the Office of Church Affairs. Lévai apparently acted separately from the Jewish Community in Budapest.³³ His having had contact with the Ministry of the Interior is unlikely as well. In 1959, the Hungarian state-security service »was concerned with former journalist Jenő Lévai with an operative purpose«, so it is likely that, at least until that point, Lévai was not employed as an informer. The Committee for the Persecutees of Nazism, a subdivision of the Hungarian Partisan Alliance, might be an option because it had been active in questions related to the Nazi occupation – particularly in terms of reparations – since its formation in 1957. Yet, they left unanswered the request of Hermann Langbein, leader of the *Internationales Auschwitz Komitee* (International Auschwitz Committee, IAK), who was in search of compromising material against Krumej on 5 March 1958.³⁴ What is certain is that Lévai managed to travel to Switzerland with the help of Mantello, who had provided, from his own funds, the amount of foreign currency necessary to obtain a visa to Switzerland.³⁵ Since the Hessen State Prosecution approached Lévai when he was already in Basel, Lévai's trip must have been backed by a Hungarian institution. It is unlikely, though not impossible, that Lévai had travelled in connection to the Frankfurt case against Krumej.

Lévai conducted extensive research in Switzerland. Following a short trip to the *Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine* (Centre for Contemporary Jewish Documentation, CDJC) in Paris, he gave a sworn testimony against Hermann Krumej at the Swiss-German border in Lörrach on 17 December 1957.³⁶ He also provided the investigation with the whereabouts of witnesses and possibly received photocopies of investigative material in exchange.³⁷

Importantly, the Hungarian authorities also played an active role in bringing Krumej to justice. The engagement of the state was crucial since without

32 HHStAW, 461, 33538, Krumej, Hermann u. a.: Hauptakten Band 8, Bl. 1279-80, Hanserst Grabert to Lévai (Hotel Schweizerhof, Basel), 5. 12. 1957.

33 Zsidó Múzeum és Levéltár, Benoschofsky Ilona hagyaték, 1. doboz, Iratsomó 8, XIX-278/8, 1-6, Siegfried Roth to Ilona Benoschofsky, 15. 7. 1957.

34 Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (AT-OeStA), AVA Nachlässe NZN E/1797, Hermann Langbein to Ödön Gáti (NÜB) 30. 10. 1958.

35 HHStAW, 461, 33538, Krumej, Hermann u. a.: Hauptakten Band 8, Bl. 1318, George Mantello to Hanserst Grabert, 16. 12. 1957.

36 HHStAW, 461, No. 33538. Krumej, Hermann u. a.: Hauptakten Band 8, Bl. 1320-1335.

37 Part of investigative material on Krumej and Hunsche, about 30 items, photocopies of 20 x 25 cm size, 1957, in German. The Lévai Collection (Stark inventory), Box 3.

it an individual actor would not have been able to act effectively. For historical and Cold War political reasons, the West German judicial procedures against the members of the Eichmann special unit that was sent to Budapest counted as significant in Hungary.³⁸ The national press reported on Krumej's arrest, and the National Office of Hungarian Israelites and the Committee for the Persecutees of Nazism issued a call for witnesses.³⁹ In the summer of 1958, the World Jewish Congress approached the Hungarian authorities and asked for evidence for the investigation against Krumej and Hunsche,⁴⁰ because »[e]vidently, the significant part of the documentary material and the witnesses are to be found in Hungary.«⁴¹ The press reported on Krumej's re-arrest in autumn 1958, then on his re-release, which was followed by the World Jewish Congress' call for witnesses to testify. This time, Hungarian state authorities moved into action: During September and October 1958, four witness statements incriminating Krumej were recorded,⁴² which, along with original documents and copies of the minutes of early post-war people's tribunals, were sent to the prosecutor's office in Frankfurt.⁴³

Return from death

Lévai's first public appearance in the 1950s preceded his contact with the investigatory authorities in Frankfurt. On 6 December 1957, it was the *Jüdische Rundschau Maccabi* (Jewish Review Maccabi), a German-French Jewish weekly in Basel, which announced Lévai's comeback on its cover page in a solemn tone: »The expert of the Nazi era known throughout Europe, Jenő Lévai, re-

38 See Máté Zombory: Status Competition for the Historical Legacy of World War II. Eastern Europe and the Second Wave of War Crimes Trials, in: *Journal of Cold War Studies* (forthcoming).

39 Ki tud Krumejról a tömeggyilkosról [Who Knows about Krumej, the Mass Murderer] in: *Új Élet*, September 1957, p. 6; György Kecskeméti: A náciizmus magyarországi üldözöttei szervezetének célkitűzései [Objectives of the Organisation of Persecutees of Nazism in Hungary], in: *Új Élet*, 15. 2. 1958, p. 2.

40 Grabert extended the investigation against Otto Hunsche in May 1957. Renz: Die Krumej-Hunsche-Prozesse.

41 MNL OL, XIX-A-21-a-K-80-1958, Aide memoire.

42 These were later included in the documentation on Eichmann and his peers in Hungary; see ÁBTL A-643/1, Tartalomjegyzék Adolf Eichmann és társai bűncselekményeit dokumentáló anyagokhoz [Table of Contents for Material Documenting the Crimes of Adolf Eichmann et al.].

43 Dr. Ilona Benoschofsky: Vádirat Krumej ellen [Indictment against Krumej], in: *Új Élet*, 15. 5. 1963, p. 1.

turned to Basel last week after a break of several years.«⁴⁴ The article gave a short summary of Lévai's activities in Switzerland. It highlighted his presence at the Zionist Congress in 1946 in Basel and called the readers' attention to his books *Zsidósors Európában* (Jewish Fate in Europe) and the *Black Book*. The unnamed journalist, probably the Editor-in-Chief Adrien Blum, cited the »well-known writer, whose death had already been assumed in the Western world«. Lévai justified his trip to Switzerland as a scholarly endeavour; meanwhile, several other books had appeared on the Nazi era, so the time had come for him to recast his old reports in the light of new evidence. Lévai presented himself as an historian as opposed to a witness (which he had also been at the time of the events he was reporting on). »I am anxious to give the helpers and rescuers in distress their rightful place of honour and to limit others who claim unjustified merits to their true role.« This primarily referred to Joel Brand, whose recent book, according to Lévai, contradicted the »documentary evidence«. Lévai said he saw too much significance being attributed to the activities of Brand and co., and he thought Kasztner's role to be overstated. »In my work, which will soon be published in several languages, I will also deal with these problems using original documents and correct J. Brand's statements« – thus concluded Lévai's explanation.⁴⁵

Lévai mentioned, as a »personal remark«, Poliakov and Wulf's book, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden*, which he had had access to on the day of the interview. He resented that the authors had taken several chapters and photographs from his pre-1949 books without indicating the source. In fact, Poliakov and Wulf did mention him in relation to the disappearance of Raoul Wallenberg as »the communist Jenő Lévai [who] adopts the Soviet version«.⁴⁶ Notably, Lévai did not refute the communist label *per se*: »But to call me »communist Jenő Lévai« is completely inaccurate. I would not consider this designation as an honour violation if it corresponded to the truth.« He refused to be communist based on the fact that he had »always been interested in history writing« rather than politics.

While Lévai presented himself as noncommunist in a Jewish paper, he appeared as non-Jewish before the German investigators a few days later. In Lör-rach, he introduced himself as a writer and a famous journalist who had established close contact with the Jewish community due to his »Jewish paper«

44 Erinnerung aus einer Schreckenszeit, in: Jüdische Rundschau Maccabi, 6. 12. 1957, p. 1.

45 While Lévai was consistently critical of Brand and his wartime role, his attitude towards Kasztner changed over time. An analysis of their relationship would exceed the boundaries of this article.

46 Poliakov, Wulf: *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden*, p. 419.

during the early 1940s.⁴⁷ Yet, certain political aspects of contemporary history did in fact count as significant in the eyes of the »objective scholar«. On 3 January 1958, Lévai reported on the Federal Republic.⁴⁸ Even if he was only allowed to enter the border station to give his testimony, he felt the need to share his impressions about the country. In the first part of the report, Lévai deals with the damaging of Jewish cemeteries in the FRG. Why would this happen in 1957? The only explanation, lamented Lévai, is that, »even after 12 years, the poison of Goebbel's propaganda is still in the souls of some people«. He argued further that, even if the youth is not affected *per se*, it is still in the hands of those who »represent a permanent danger to the democracy«. As evidence, Lévai describes in detail the affair of the antisemitic teacher, Ludwig Zind, that he had just read about in *Der Spiegel*.⁴⁹ For Lévai, the case as inherently political: »I was not surprised that in West Germany Jew haters and murderers are running around freely, that such individuals are in state positions, but I was surprised that in 1957 a German ministry does not consider such beasts as a »permanent danger to the children«.⁵⁰

Lévai saw a deep contradiction in FRG politics: They were offering 10.000 DM for help finding the vandals of the Jewish cemetery while leaving »the same vandals« in office.

The second part of Lévai's article, entitled »Old »Acquaintances« from Hungary in West Germany«, deals with another aspect of the problem of »Nazi poison«. One reason for his travel was, as he explained, that rumours had reached him the previous year that mass murderers and their accomplices who had deported and killed half a million Jews from Hungary were still at large in the FRG, and some of them were even wealthy and pensionable. Lévai listed the representatives of the Nazi occupation in Hungary, with a particular interest in those who avoided justice: he named leading SS officers (Otto Winkelmann), members of Eichmann's special unit (Hermann Krumei, Otto Hunsche, Franz Novak), those active in economic looting (such as Kurt Becher) and people from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Edmund Veessenmayer, most notably). »All [these] individuals active in

47 HHStAW, 461, 33538, Krumei, Hermann u. a.: Hauptakten Band 8, Bl. 1320-1335.

48 Kurzer Besuch in der Bundesrepublik. Eindrücke von einer kurzen Reise von Jenő Lévai (Budapest, z. Zt. in Westdeutschland), in: Jüdische Rundschau Maccabi, 3. 1. 1958, p. 1.

49 Israel wird ausradiert, in: *Der Spiegel*, 17. 12. 1957. On the Zind case, see Andreas Lörcher: *Antisemitismus in der öffentlichen Debatte der späten fünfziger Jahre. Mikrohistorische Studie und Diskursanalyse des Falls Zind*, Dissertation, Universität Freiburg im Breisgau 2008.

50 Kurzer Besuch in der Bundesrepublik. Eindrücke von einer kurzen Reise von Jenő Lévai (Budapest, z. Zt. in Westdeutschland), in: Jüdische Rundschau Maccabi, 3. 1. 1958, p. 1.

Hungary were not soldiers, but mass murderers, their accomplices, as well as robbers.« At the end of his article, Lévai devoted special attention to three people, carefully indicating their current position in German society: Krumej, a pharmacist living near Frankfurt, Hunsche, a paper manufacturer, and Becher, a merchant in Bremen, the latter even dealing with Israel at the time.

These public appearances at the end of 1957, over the course of one month, represent the interrelated aspects of Lévai's public activity that was so characteristic of his post-1948 work: history writing, justice and cold war politics. Lévai's final journalistic piece in *Jüdische Rundschau Maccabi* that was related to his research trips to Switzerland and France was a detailed description of his testimonial contribution to the Krumej case, which he published with Grabert's permission.⁵¹

His trips to Switzerland and France constitute a turning point in Lévai's career as they provided him international visibility, multiple contacts and access to sources. At the same time, Cold War tensions surrounding the two Germanys increased the demand for historical sources and knowledge of the Third Reich. The »second wave« of war crimes trials, or at least the investigations in the FRG, provided a social arena for the circulation of historical knowledge (witnesses and documents). The public affairs surrounding the morally outrageous presence of former Nazis living and working in plain view within the Federal Republic of Germany offered Lévai the possibility to publish both internationally and domestically. His contribution to the procedure in Frankfurt paired well with the simultaneous publication of the cases under investigation.

Hunting for and analysing documents of Nazi Fascism

From a journalistic point of view, the criminal procedure on Krumej provided Lévai an almost inexhaustible resource for his topic in which a larger audience was also interested. Not long after his return to Budapest, the national daily of the Patriotic People's Front, *Magyar Nemzet* (The Hungarian National), reported on his research abroad. Lévai told them about the newly found documents, his testimony to the West German prosecutors and that he had succeeded in discovering »a whole range of acquaintances« from Hungary in West-Germany during this time.⁵² Given the public's interest and the Cold

51 Jenő Lévai: Frankfurt am Main: Aktennummer 4a Js. 586-56, in: *Jüdische Rundschau Maccabi*, 9. 5. 1958, p. 2.

52 Újabb dokumentumok a nácik magyarországi rémuralmáról [New Documents in the Nazi Reign of Terror in Hungary], in: *Magyar Nemzet*, 31. 1. 1958, p. 2.

War political implications in the issue, the Budapest correspondent of the official East German party organ *Neues Deutschland* (New Germany) reviewed the article in *Magyar Nemzet* two days later.⁵³ The author spoke of Lévai as »one of the victims of the fascist persecution of the Jews in Hungary« who had testified in Frankfurt and called for the arrest of the members of Eichmann's special unit who were still at large in West Germany. The article briefly introduced Krumej, Becher and Hunsche to the German reader in the usual rhetoric of juxtaposing their former crimes with their present-day functions.

The first piece Lévai authored in the Hungarian press, entitled »The History of Nazi Fascism«, appeared in March 1958 in the national daily *Népszabadság* (People's Liberty), the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party's newspaper.⁵⁴ In it, Lévai introduces himself as one »who hunts and analyses the documents of Nazi fascism«; he further justifies his public statement by claiming that the recently found documents shed new light on Nazism and its objectives. The first part of the article discusses the racial theory of the Third Reich and the role attributed to Hungarians in the Nazi new world order. He then argues that fascism was not a matter of the past as »Europe and the world are still reeling under the weight of this terrible nightmare«. Lévai gives two reasons for this: first, »the social order that bred Hitlerism persists«, and second, »the ›re-education‹ of Hitler and his accomplices infected relatively broad sections of the German population«. The second argument is familiar from the columns of the Basel journal as are the examples he gives for the presence of fascism in West Germany, i. e., the Zind case, the damaged cemeteries and the release of Krumej (without mentioning his name). The second part of the essay, which was published the following day, contains a long and detailed list of war criminals at large in West Germany. The examples he gives are not restricted to Hungarian history, rather the scope of the list is pan-European.

A considerable novelty in this programmatic article is the emphasis given to fascism's imperialistic nature: The *Endlösung* (Final Solution), the gradually developed plan to exterminate the Jewish race, was »only a means to the intended ›great end‹: to reorder and conquer the world«. Accordingly, the article accentuates the economic aspect of »Nazi fascism«: Those in power »continue to be supported by the same tycoons, foreign and domestic, who helped and financed Hitler to power, who profiteered on the war and the millions of dead, and who still see the best way to ensure profit in arming to the teeth«. It is noteworthy that Lévai's essay, with the small part about the Jewish question

53 SS-Mörder unter Bonner Schutz. Von unserem Budapester Korrespondenten Werner Kolmar, in: *Neues Deutschland*, 2. 2. 1958, p. 5.

54 Jenő Lévai: A náci fasizmus történetéhez [The History of Nazi Fascism], in: *Népszabadság*, 28. 3. 1958, p. 2, and 29. 3. 1958, p. 5.

as a means to the Nazis' end having been redacted, also appeared in the Western emigrant Hungarian press, the weekly, *Kanadai Magyar Munkás* (the Canadian-Hungarian Worker). This version even reached Grabert in Frankfurt, though – quite astonishingly – paged as a *Népszabadság* issue.

Through his article on the history of Nazi Fascism in March 1958, Lévai came back to the public as an anti-fascist activist of historical documentation. Krumeý's renewed arrest in August 1958 provoked Lévai to publish a few more articles, notably in the biweekly of the Hungarian Jewish Community, *Új Élet* (New Life), but the patterns of publication remained the same. After many years, Lévai once again assumed a public role. This role still grounded him in historical documentation; the difference this time, however, stemmed from the changing political context.

Upon his return to Budapest, Lévai reported his involvement with the West German procedure to the Ministry of Justice.⁵⁵ Over the course of a few years, he had (again) become an expert of the Nazi era for the officers of the state administration. He nurtured close ties to the state and party authorities and worked separately from the Jewish community. He also remained in contact with the judicial authorities in Frankfurt.

A series of targets – Krumeý, Oberländer, Globke and Eichmann

Between November 1959 and May 1960, Lévai conducted an extensive press campaign. In the November and December issues of *Új Élet*, he published three pieces about Hermann Krumeý's deeds in occupied Hungary. The introductory note asserted that the author had recently returned from another research trip abroad with new evidence against the former SS officer.⁵⁶ Though the details of his research abroad are unknown, it was presumably connected to the Krumeý case in Frankfurt.

In the issue following his final piece on Krumeý, Lévai chose Theodor Oberländer as his next target.⁵⁷ The editor's note frames the new topic as a con-

55 Lévai Jenő: Ötszáz ezer magyar zsidó életét kéri számon Frankfurtban SS Obersturmbannführer Hermann Krumeý [Five-Hundred Thousand Hungarian Jews to be Held Accountable for SS Obersturmbannführer Hermann Krumeý in Frankfurt], in: *Új Élet*, 1. 9. 1958, p. 4. See also, HHStAW, 461, 33538, Krumeý, Hermann u. a.: Hauptakten Band 8, Bl. 1362-3, Lévai to Grabert, 5. 1. 1958.

56 Jenő Lévai: Hermann Krumeý bűnlajstromáról. Egy »berlini kereskedő« igazi portréja [On Hermann Krumeý's Criminal Record. A True Portrait of A »Berlin Merchant«], in: *Új Élet*, 1. 11. 1959, 15. 11. 1959, 1. 12. 1959.

57 Jenő Lévai: Náci-tömeggyilkosok összefogása Nyugat-Németországban. Az Oberländer-ügy magyar vonatkozásai [Nazi Mass Murderers' Union in West Germany.

Continuation of his previous articles: It developed as an answer to the readers' question as to why Krumeý had not yet been convicted. Lévai wrote on the alleged »Hungarian aspects of the Oberländer affair« in the framework of the bigger issue of the »Nazi mass murderers' union in West Germany«. The articles accuse the head of Federal Ministry of Displaced Persons, Refugees and War Victims, among others, as implicated in the Kamianets-Podil'skyi massacre of August 1941 and the Babyn Yar massacre of September 1941. Lévai connected Krumeý to Oberländer by stating that the former received financial compensation as a persecuted Sudeten German from the latter. He also shifted back to the letters to the editorial board: »We think this answers the question of our readers who, after our series of articles on Krumeý's criminal record, wondered how this killer could be at large. In the same way that Minister Oberländer can be, in the same way that more than 1.000 Nazi blood judges are still active in the judiciary, in the same way that SS and Gestapo officers are again being considered in the first place for positions in the West German police.«

It is yet unclear to what extent Lévai was linked to the public attack on Oberländer, organised by the *Ausschuss für Deutsche Einheit* (Committee for German Unity, ADE).⁵⁸ As the reference to the »Nazi blood judges« shows, Lévai openly used the information distributed by the ADE.⁵⁹ He formulated his major charges against Oberländer as additional points to the ADE's twelve counts published during the campaign. As a matter of fact, the East German body included the accusations of the »famous Hungarian historian Jenő Lévai« in its »Brown Book« brochure on Oberländer in 1960.⁶⁰ What is more, Lévai himself made no secret at all of his role in the campaign. He regularly referred to the ADE's press conferences and publications, including to his appearance in the »Brown Book«. ⁶¹ At the same time, Lévai also sent the second piece of his article series to the Central Office of the Land Judicial Authorities for the

The Hungarian Aspects of the Oberländer Affair], in: *Új Élet*, 15. 12. 1959, 1. 1. 1960, 1. 15. 1960.

58 See Heike Amos: *Die Westpolitik der SED 1948/49-1961*, Berlin 1999, pp. 258-267.
59 On the »Blood Judges« campaign, see Annette Weinke: *Die Verfolgung von NS-Tätern im geteilten Deutschland. Vergangenheitsbewältigungen 1949-1969 oder: Eine deutsch-deutsche Beziehungsgeschichte im Kalten Krieg*, Paderborn, München 2002, pp. 76-82; Marc von Miquel: *Ahnden oder amnestieren? Westdeutsche Justiz und Vergangenheitspolitik in den sechziger Jahren*, Göttingen 2004, pp. 23-81.

60 *Ausschuss für Deutsche Einheit: Die Wahrheit über Oberländer*, East Berlin 1960, p. 137.

61 Jenő Lévai: Göbbelstől tanult propaganda-fogások a nyugat-német kormányban [Propaganda Devices Learned from Goebbels at the West German Government], in: *Új Élet*, 1. 5. 1960, p. 3.

Investigation of National Socialist Crimes in Ludwigsburg.⁶² Director Erwin Schüle took the issue seriously and asked the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Justice for permission to contact the author of the article in order to ask for material about the perpetrators in the Kamianets-Podilskiy massacre. The fact that Lévai contacted the Central Office with his *Új Élet* article demonstrates his seriousness about the charges. Just as his deliberate references to the ADE actions support the hypothesis that he in fact agreed with the overall purpose of hunting down former Nazis in the FRG.

Due to the Oberländer revelations, Lévai's international visibility, mainly in the Eastern bloc, considerably increased. The *Berliner Zeitung* (Berlin Newspaper) reviewed Lévai's first two articles in turn on its cover page, and *Neues Deutschland* (New Germany) picked up Lévai's accusation of responsibility in the Kamianets-Podilskiy massacre as well.⁶³ According to *Új Élet's* review, the Berlin-based *Der Morgen* (The Morning) and the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* (Leipzig People's Newspaper) also disseminated Lévai's charges against the West German minister, just as the Polish, the Czechoslovak and the Soviet presses did.⁶⁴ On the waves of this international public reverberation, Lévai exposed further public figures in West Germany: Foreign Office functionary Otto Bräutigam, West Berliner police officer Kurt Krummholz and Eberhard Taubert, consultant for »Psychological Combat Management« in the Federal Ministry of Defence.⁶⁵

62 Bundesarchiv (BArch), B 162 Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen, Generalakten 9-12 (»Ungarn«), Schüle an das Justizministerium Baden-Württemberg, Entwurf, 12. 1. 1960.

63 Oberländer wütete in der Ukraine, in: *Berliner Zeitung*, 30. 12. 1959, p. 1; Oberländers Bande füllte Bombentrichter mit Ermordeten. Enthüllungen über Blutbad von Kamenez-Podolsk, in: *Neues Deutschland*, 30. 12. 1959, p. 2; Neue Blutspuren Oberländers, in: *Berliner Zeitung*, 5. 1. 1960, p. 1.

64 See the editor's note for Lévai's third and final article in *Új Élet*, 15. 1. 1960, p. 3. and 15. 2. 1960, p. 3.

65 Jenő Lévai: »Der Fall Bräutigam« Tömeggyilkos kitüntetése Nyugat-Németországban [»Der Fall Bräutigam« Decoration of a Mass Murderer in West Germany], in: *Új Élet*, 1. 2. 1960, p. 3; Jenő Lévai: »Der Fall Krummholz« Nyugatberlini rendőrségi vezető – Magyarországon nyílvántartott háborús főbűnös [»Der Fall Krummholz« West Berlin Police Chief – Principal War Criminal Registered in Hungary], in: *Új Élet*, 15. 2. 1960, p. 3; Jenő Lévai: Kik szervezték meg a világ minden részén az antiszemita kilengéseket [Who Organised the Antisemitic Riots around the World], in: *Új Élet* 1. 3. 1960, pp. 1 f.; Jenő Lévai: A németországi antiszemita világszervezet egykori magyar csatlósai Méhely Lajostól – Endre Lászlón át – Horthy Miklósig [Former Hungarian Henchmen of the German Antisemitic World Organisation from Lajos Méhely – through László Endre – to Miklós Horthy], *Új Élet*, 1. 4. 1960, p. 5; Jenő Lévai: A film a hitleristák hazugsághadjáratának szolgálatában. Hogyan készült a »Jud Süss« a »Der ewige Jud« és a többi náci »műalkotás«? [Film in the Service of the Hitlerist

On 1 May 1960, the final article of the press campaign, entitled »Propaganda devices learned from Goebbels in the West German Government«, was aimed at Hans Globke. Globke, Konrad Adenauer's State Secretary and Chief of Staff, had been the main target of the communist campaigns for a long time, the ADE having published its first anti-Globke brochure as early as 1956.⁶⁶ In Lévai's account, Globke was a devout Nazi party member who served at the Ministry of the Interior in the Third Reich and wrote, together with Wilhelm Stuckart, the Nuremberg Laws, among various other racial laws and decrees. It is here that Lévai formulated one of the most emblematic charges against Globke. On the basis of Carl Ludwig's book on Swiss refugee politics between 1933 and 1945,⁶⁷ Lévai highlights Globke's responsibility for marking passports of Jewish Reich citizens with a »J«. Lévai learned about this report in the *Jüdische Rundschau Maccabi*, which had discussed it extensively following the publication of Ludwig's book in 1957. Giving an explanation to the title of his article, Lévai asserts that Globke had been appointed director of the newly created *Koordinierungsstelle für die Informationspolitische Arbeit der Bundesregierung* (Co-ordination Office for the Information Policy Work of the Federal Government), »which is the equivalent of Goebbels's propaganda ministry«. With this ending, he concludes the entire series of revelations that he brought forth in late 1959: »We started this series of articles by Oberländer«, Lévai asserts and boasts that his statements had been included in the »Brown Book« against the FRG minister.

Though Lévai framed his press campaign as an attack on public figures implicated in National Socialism who were still at large and in public positions, the range of the whole series of articles was wider. The campaign in *Új Élet* started in fact with Krumej in November 1959 and ended smoothly with Lévai's article on Adolf Eichmann in mid-June. Thus, a direct line can be drawn from Krumej through Oberländer, Globke and Eichmann. Doing historical research on the Holocaust (in the case of Krumej, for instance) and the accusation of FRG politicians in the communist-led anti-fascist campaigns were clearly not two separate spheres of Lévai's public activity.

Having access to the international press and book market constituted a significant component of Lévai's comeback in 1957. He was able to connect to the anti-FRG campaigns via the ADE's various publications and press conferences that had been circulating the anti-fascist charges since early 1956.

Campaign of Lies. How were »Jud Süss«, »Der ewige Jude« and other Nazi »works of art« Made?, in: *Új Élet*, 15. 4. 1960, pp. 1 f.

66 Ausschuss für Deutsche Einheit: Rassenschande-Rassenschänder: Hans Globke, East Berlin 1956.

67 Carl Ludwig: Die Flüchtlingspolitik der Schweiz seit 1933 bis 1955. Bericht an den Bundesrat zuhanden der eidgenössischen Räte, Bern 1957.

Moreover, he was able to find out who were the main targets, against whom he was able to provide additional charges, largely in relation to the history of Hungary. Thus, he did not simply repeat the SED accusations, but provided supplementary historical documentation in order to add more weight to them. It is quite likely that Lévai was in direct contact with the Committee for German Unity, given how well informed he was. In any case, that does not change the fact that Lévai had access to all the necessary information on the different aspects of West German »neofascism«. According to his publications, his relationship to the ADE was explicit and supportive. There is no proof of his collaboration with the East German state security at the Stasi Records Agency.⁶⁸

In all probability, Lévai did not simply agree with criminally punishing former perpetrators of the Jewish genocide but rather willingly supported the political cause to eliminate the compromised individuals from public service. His Basel publication that criticised the FRG for inaction against the still-poisonous Goebbels propaganda in the minds of German citizens fell outside the scope of both the East German and the Hungarian communist leadership. Similarly, his contact with the Central Office proves Lévai's genuine anti-fascist engagements. Even though his intentions are, of course, unknown, it is certain that he presented himself as being engaged with the West German authorities. His engagement was anti-fascist, but it was not, however, communist. We can believe the way he presents himself in the *Jüdische Rundschau Maccabi* article that announces his comeback in which Lévai rejects the communist label on factual and not ideological grounds. His non-communist anti-fascism mainly differed from the official communist line in that Lévai always argued from a historical point of view with a focus on the Hungarian aspect of fascism, and with a strong emphasis on antisemitism.

»From the cradle in Munich to the grave in Berlin«
An unpublished manuscript

A constitutive component of Lévai's comeback was his reintegration into the international network of experts and witnesses of the Jewish genocide, particularly of its final phase in Hungary. He carefully managed his existing contacts

68 Research (ref. number 5711/18Z) at the Behörde des Bundesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU, today part of the Bundesarchiv) did not reveal any records on Lévai. Susan Lüdecke (BStU) to the author on 2. 5. 2018.

and established new ones: He had personal contacts in Switzerland and in the GDR, institutional contacts in Frankfurt am Main, East Berlin (not only the press but also Deutsches Institut für Zeitgeschichte), Paris (CDJC), Warsaw (Institute for Jewish History) and Jerusalem (Yad Vashem). Lévai contacted Reitlinger in order to correct the British author's mistakes with regards to his chapter on Hungary.⁶⁹ He also eventually succeeded in getting in touch with the key witnesses, Andor Biss and Joel Brand.⁷⁰ The witnesses and experts of »his topic« were the reference points for Lévai's public position; they were the nodes of the international network in which he attempted to return – not those recognised as Nazi hunters (Tuviah Friedman, Simon Wiesenthal and, later, the Klarsfelds). Lévai's position was closest to Hermann Langbein's,⁷¹ who contacted his Hungarian counterpart in relation to the case against Hermann Krumei and co. in Frankfurt on 11 May 1959.⁷² However, Lévai's historiographical interest differentiated him from the others.

A number of signs indicate that Lévai was indeed working on a new book. He told one of the state-security informants in March 1959 that he was »working on a book of greater importance than ever before« that would be published, inter alia, in Jerusalem and from a non-Marxist perspective.⁷³ According to another report dated April 1959, Lévai was working on a 6-volume book that would be published in Paris and Jerusalem, given that he was »well connected with these institutes«.⁷⁴ This reference suggests that Lévai had discussed the idea of publication at the CDJC, and that he was in contact with the Yad Vashem. As the note on the report indicates, the study of the state security »with operative purpose« established that Lévai had indeed solicited for a passport in order to travel to Israel to negotiate the publication.

Which book exactly was Lévai working on at the end of the 1950s? The model must have been his world-famous *Black Book*: a publication of a similar nature that comprises the results of the research he had conducted over the previous ten years. As he explained in the foreword to the manuscript of his *Eichmann in Hungary* in 1960, »My large-scale major work in preparation, with the temporary title, »From the Cradle in Munich to the Grave in Berlin« essentially

69 Jenő Lévai: Avant-propos, in: *L'église ne s'est pas tue. Le dossier hongrois 1940-1945*, Seuil, Paris 1966, pp. 17f.

70 Jenő Lévai's correspondence with Andor Biss (West Berlin) and Joel Brand (Zurich) on Rudolf Kasztner's Jewish rescue operation, »Blood for Goods«-talks with Eichmann, summer 1944, The Lévai Collection (Stark inventory), Box 7.

71 Katharina Stengel: Hermann Langbein: Ein Auschwitz-Überlebender in den erinnerungspolitischen Konflikten der Nachkriegszeit, Frankfurt am Main 2012.

72 AT-OeStA, AVA Nachlässe NZN E/1797 Langbein, Hermann, Depot (18. 5. 1912-24. 10. 1995), Hermann Langbein to Lévai, 11. 5. 1959.

73 See ÁBTL, M-37478/147, Report of »Xavér« on 13. 3. 1959.

74 ÁBTL, M-21589, Report of »Doktor« on 9. 4. 1959.

covers the era of Horthy fascism: it discusses Hungary's participation in the great conspiracy of Nazism against the Soviet people and its regime, communism.⁷⁵ He also stated that the book »From the cradle in Munich to the grave in Berlin« was prepared for Yad Vashem when he received a request for a documentary volume on Eichmann. He thus picked out everything that concerned Eichmann from the material of the manuscript, which he then set aside. Three years later, in his *Yad Vashem Studies* publication, Lévai probably referred to this work, in preparation by Yad Vashem, under the working title »The History of Hungarian Jewry During the 25 Years of Horthy's Regime (1919-1944)«.⁷⁶

The book, however, was never published. In Stark's inventory of Lévai's collection, there are three titles that might stand for Lévai's work.⁷⁷ The very little that can be deciphered from these is that Lévai framed his subject, the counterrevolutionary regime of Regent Miklós Horthy (1919-1944), as part of the history of fascism with a focus on antisemitism. From this anti-fascist stance, he addressed the Hungarian aspect of fascism, as manifest in his periodisation, which is neither confined to the Second World War nor to the Nazi rule in Germany.

The chances for publication came soon thereafter, when on 23 May 1960, Israeli Prime Minister Ben-Gurion announced the capture of Eichmann. Beyond the Cold War ideological relevance for the leadership in Hungary, a country deeply affected by Adolf Eichmann's activity, leaving the entire issue unaddressed was not an option.⁷⁸ Lévai's first post-1948 book, *Eichmann in Hungary*, appeared in English, German and French in 1961 as part of the foreign policy strategy that the People's Republic of Hungary followed in the Eichmann affair.⁷⁹ Lévai's scholarly work during the 1960s remained inseparable from the judicial and political aspects of his public activity.

75 MNL OL, XXXII-10, 13. tétel.

76 Jenő Lévai: The Hungarian Deportations in the Light of the Eichmann Trial, in: *Yad Vashem Studies V* (1963), pp. 69-103.

77 Editor's report on the book, At the Munich cradle, n.d. [1960s], The Lévai Collection (Stark Inventory), Box 1; Jenő Lévai: Szegedtől Auschwitzig. Negyedszázad a náci-fascizmus nyomása alatt (From Szeged to Auschwitz. A Quarter Century under Nazi-Fascist Pressure), book manuscript, about 140 pp., *ibid.*, Box 5; Jenő Lévai: Szegedtől Auschwitzig (From Szeged to Auschwitz), book manuscript, about 1000 pp., *ibid.*, Box 11.

78 On Hungary's role in the international Eichmann affair, see Zombory: Status Competition for the Historical Legacy of World War II.

79 Máté Zombory: Documentation historique pendant la guerre froide: L'histoire du livre de Jenő Lévai, Eichmann en Hongrie (1961), in: *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah* (2021), no. 2, pp. 231-255.

Conclusion

By the end of the 1950s, the most important aspects of Lévai's public activity had been developed: an internationally acknowledged status in the early historiography of the Jewish catastrophe due to his *Black Book*; embeddedness in the Hungarian and international network of actors and institutions interested in bringing former Nazi perpetrators to justice or in the history of their atrocities; a large and ever-growing private archive of related material; and a position in post-Stalinist Hungary that enabled him to travel and study abroad. This last feature suggests that the Cold War provided him with space to work and publish because of the renewed political and ideological interest in the Nazi persecution of the Jews. The fact that Lévai took part in revelatory campaigns against prominent figures with tainted pasts living in the Federal Republic of Germany might easily be interpreted as the price he had to pay for the opportunity to work on the history of the Holocaust. However, as I have argued in this article, this interpretation does not really hold since it relies on a reduced scope of sources. His image as a Holocaust historian relies on the exclusion of his entire activity in the communist-led anti-fascist campaigns against the FRG, which were, to some degree at least, well-grounded. Presenting Lévai as a Holocaust historian also marginalises his active participation in criminal procedures. Taking Lévai's overall Cold War public activity into account makes his role far more complex. Then the question arises: how to »reconcile« his scholarly, political and judicial activities? If we restore the original anti-fascist framework of his work, the seeming contradictions between history-writing, justice and politics disappear. This requires, however, revisiting the concept of anti-fascism as a historically adequate and thus pluralist concept.

The »long 1960s« proved to be yet another flourishing period in Lévai's life. He continued to make sensational revelations on public figures as an attack on the continual hold of fascism on West German society, e.g., Karl Werkmeister and Alexander Török; he contributed to criminal procedures against former perpetrators whom he had named as early as January 1958 as »old acquaintances from Hungary«: Krumej, Hunsche, Eichmann, Novak, Becher and Winkelmann; he was also engaged in a criminal procedure related to the restitution of the looted property of the Hatvany family; and he continued to publish scholarly works as the direct outcome of his anti-fascist political and judicial activism: books such as *Eichmann in Hungary*, *Hungarian Jewry and the Papacy* and *A fekete SS »fehér« báránya* (The »White« Lamb of the Black SS), and essays in *Yad Vashem Studies*, in the *Wiener Library Bulletin* and in Braham's book series *Hungarian-Jewish Studies*.