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# ASPECTS FROM THE LIFE OF ROMANIAN AND HUNGARIAN JEWS DURING THE YEARS 1945-1953

**Anca OLTEAN***

**Abstract.** *The Jews of Romania and Hungary who returned home from the Holocaust faced a series of difficulties amongst which we single out: to resume property of their houses and goods; a poor state of health after the deportation; the vast majority of them were in no shape to make a living. They oscillated between integration in the societies created by the communists, and immigration to Israel whenever the communist regimes from these two countries were more permissive. They were rather victims of the communist regimes, their expectations were not met in the communist states and the ones who managed to get out had lost all their assets, apartments, and jobs when they applied for emigration.*

**Keywords**: *Jews, Hungary, Romania, communism, integration, emigration, propriety, Zionism*

Dennis Deletant (Deletant, 2006) draws a picture of Romanian society after the war. He describes the conditions when the communists took the power: in Romania after the change of regime from August 23, 1944, the communists became the ruling class and by the abdication of King Michael, in December 1947, the new communist regime was already in place. Important members of historical parties were accused to be fascists and of collaboration with the Axis Powers, although often they were not guilty. At the same time, old collaborators of the regime lead by Ion Antonescu were invited to join the communist government[1]. The trials of war criminals from Iaşi and Bucharest

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[1] Stelian Tănase, *Elite şi societate. Guvernarea Gheorghiu Dej 1948-1965*, Editura Humanitas, Bucureşti, 2006, p.55 asserts that Romanian Communist Party included in its ranks also legionaries: "Some of the ones who changed their political orientation from fascism to communism were sincerely converted: they followed

were opening a new path, notwithstanding that some of the rightfully accused managed to escape conviction. In the years 1945-1953, the very period that makes the subject of our research, the dependency on the Soviet Union was total. It was the consequence of the agreements signed by the Allies at Teheran and Yalta, which set out a 90% Soviet influence in Romania. An important fact, although the respective years were the years of an imported communism and not of the national one, very few voices condemned the dependency on USSR. In the Stalinist period, the Romanian Communist Party recruited an important number of members from the national minorities which were not sufficiently integrated in the previous epochs or in the interwar period time and could not assert their rights in society equally well as the rest of them. The communism with its claims of equality offered them this new chance. "The communist party situated itself above the limit of national and political community, in the non-integrated areas of the Romanian society, where it established its basis of assault. (...) The categories and the groups, marginal in society, deprived categories, ethnical minorities etc. were the privileged environment from where the communists recruited their adherents. (...) In the second half of the years 1940, the non-integrated categories in the previous political order will be mobilised by the communist elite in order to reach their political objectives. The majority of the adherents were people who did not appear until then on political scene" (transl.) (Tănase, 2006: 31). Among the ethnical minorities attracted by the communism an important role is with the Jews who did not succeed to integrate themselves fully, only partially, in the politics of the previous epochs, being constrained to play a marginal role in society. In the opinion of Tănase, "Two main groups were attracted by the communism in Romania from ethnical reasons: one was that of <<rejected people>>, without a territorial basis or a clear ethnical identity (in Romania the Jews were the main group from this category); the second group was formed from irredentists of the neighbouring states which were unhappy to be included in Romania and with their situation. For the Jews, the universal ideology of communism was promising a new identity which surpassed both ethnical and national spheres" (Tănase, 2006: 35). The dependency on USSR became obvious after signing the convention of armistice, at September 12, 1944, when Romania undertook the obligation to send on the front 12 divisions of infantry to fight on allied side; that gave to the Soviet troops the right to march towards West through Romanian territory. In the same time, it undertook the obligation to separate herself from the collaboration with the fascism that was promoted during the

the fascism because they believed in its vague promises of social revolution, and now they saw that their perspectives were better on communist side. Others were old fascists which liked to beat their co-nationals: they beat "the leftist" when they were on fascist side, and now they were ready to beat their "reactionaries" in the name of the communists". (transl.)

war." Articles 13 and 14 stipulated the arrestment of war criminals and the disintegration of fascist organization. Whenever the Soviet authorities found necessary, the censorship was introduced. The territorial provisions admitted the annexation of Bessarabia and of the Northern Bucovina by the Soviet Union and annulled the Vienna Award which had given to Hungary the North – West of Transylvania" (Deletant, 2006: 54). The first Sănătescu Government takes shape; it functions during the period August 23 – November 2 1944, the majority of ministerial positions being taken by professional militaries. On October 2 1944, the National Democratic Front[2] is founded; it included the Communist Party, and the Social Democratic Party. The Sănătescu Government came next after the Rădescu Government. On March 1, 1945, the Soviet representative, Vîşinski, informed King Michael that Petru Groza was the Soviet favourite. Under the threat that Romania will cease to be an independent state unless she will sustain Groza's candidature, King Michael accepted on March 6 1945 the creation of the Groza Government. In the new government where FND had 14 out of the 18 positions in the cabinet, the majority was held by the communists.

In August 1945, King Michael declared a "Royal strike" and asked Minister Groza to resign, in the context of the repressions happening in the whole country against the political adversaries of the communism. But the Allies did not help the King in a concrete manner, but asked from the Groza Government to add two more representatives in the Government, one belonging to the Peasants Party, and one Liberal. The King accepted for the Groza Government to go on after the inclusion of Emil Haţieganu from the National Party of Peasants, and of Mihail Romniceanu from the National Liberal Party.

In November 19, 1946 general elections take place. The communists needed the parliamentary majority and, in consequence, they falsified the poles results. As a consequence, 348 deputies were elected as representatives of the governmental block, which included the communists, while the opposition had 66 mandates.

In Deletant's opinion, most members of the historical parties had nothing to do with the Holocaust, they were accused unfairly by the communists of having had fascist orientation. After signing the Treaty of Paris on February 10, 1947, the political adversaries of the communists continued to be incriminated as fascists, notwithstanding the truth. Following the communist threath that there would be a civil war, King Michael was forced to abdicate on December 30, 1947. In the same day the Popular Republic of Romania was officially proclaimed. On February 4, 1948, the Romanian Republic signed a treaty of friendship and collaboration with the Soviet Union. On February 1948

[2] FND

the Romanian Party of Workers was created. A special attention was given to the ideological education which was meant to contribute to the consolidation of socialist construction. In April 1948 a Constitution is adopted following the Soviet pattern. In June 1948 the industrial enterprisers, banks, insurance companies, mines and transport enterprisers were nationalized. In March 2, 1949 the agrarian reform entered in force, took over the remaining lands - a total of less than 50 hectares. The collectivisation finished in 1962. The books thought dangerous for the new regime were forbidden and the education was the subject of a new law, effective August 1948. This is how all foreign schools were closed, including the ones administrated by religious cults. The schools that had previously belonged to the Jewish Community were taken out of the equation. Teaching religion in schools was forbidden. While the Greek-Catholic Church was closed, the Roman Catholic Church was allowed to exist. The Chief Rabbi of Romania, Moses Rosen, asserts the existence of a Jewish community and of the existence of a Jewish religion during the communist years (Rosen, 1991). Although the activity of the Synagogues and of the Jewish Communities was not so intense as it had been before the war, these continued to exist, including people involved in the Judaic cult, whom the chief rabbi stopped from emigration because their existence in the country was vital for survival of the Judaic Cult. They were a lot of believers who continued to go to the Synagogue, in spite of the fact that the Security[3] infiltrated among them, trying to get their sources of information in an attempt to conquer the "Jewish streets".

On August 4, 1948 the Law of religious cults was signed and thus the Ministry of Culture could involve in problems regarding the organisation and functioning of the cults. According to this law "religion was practiced in harmony with the Constitution, internal security, public order and general morality". (Deletant, 2006: 94)

Deletant asserts that at the construction of Dunăre – Marea Neagră canal worked also Zionist leaders. A current practice of the communist political power was forced labour. At the beginning of the 50's, the labour camps housed around 80 000 people from all over the country out of which 40 000 were exploited for the construction of the Dunăre-Marea Neagră canal: "No matter of its purpose, the project needed the largest mobilisation of forces from the labour camps where the political dissidents from the entire society were concentrated. The people with higher education were working together with peasants who had been stripped of their land, with Orthodox priests and Unitarian priests, with Serbians from Banat and Saşi from Transylvania, all being victims of infringements of human rights, which followed the programme of the Romanian regime of political and economic revolution" (Deletant, 2006: 115). At this canal worked

[3] Former Romanian Secret Services

also Zionist leaders, while those Jews who were suspected of Zionism and who were still free were being followed, interrogated and persecuted.

After the political act from August 23, 1944, the Jewry hoped at restoration of their civil rights, the restitution of the properties from before the war and the possibility to have access to professions that were inaccessible to them during the war: "An official decree from December 14, 1944 abolished the <<racial laws>> previously adopted. But the decree restoring the full citizenship of Romanian Jews failed to establish the status of refuged Jews from the annexed territories. After many delays and negotiations, an agreement was achieved at the end of 1946, between the Romanian Ministry of Justice (then secretary of Communist Party, Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu) and the leaders of the Jewish Community for guarantying the citizenship for the refugee persons who in 1938 did not have the documents necessary for this"(Meyer, Weinryb, Duschinsky, Sylvain, 1953: 518). In the same time, the Jews resumed their jobs, partially and with difficulty[4]. The deported people and the refugees had to accept modest jobs.

**Table 1** The table below shows the numerical evolution of the Jewish population in Romania before and after the war[5]:

| **Region** | **1939** | **1941** | **1942** | **1947** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Romania | | | | |
| Present boundaries | 478, 042 | 466, 128 | 427, 296 | 428,312 |
| Oltenia | 3,523 | 2, 841 | 2,484 | 3,406 |
| Muntenia | 94, 216 | 114, 470 | 108,761 | 163,144 |
| Moldova | 160, 330 | 135, 730 | 121, 131 | 150, 651 |
| Dobrogea (without South Dobrogea) | 3, 185 | 2,885 | 2,239 | 3,279 |
| Southern Bucovina | 23, 844 | 18, 140 | 179 | 17.388 |
| Transilvania (without Northern Transylvania) | 18, 929 | 15, 720 | 15, 122 | 15, 847 |
| Northern Transylvania | 148, 294 | 151, 125 | 152, 228 | 44, 706 |
| Banat | 14, 043 | 14, 626 | 14, 009 | 15, 963 |
| Crişana | 11, 678 | 10, 591 | 10, 497 | 13 , 928 |

[4] Peter Meyer, Bernard D. Weinryb, Eugene Duschinski, Nicolas Sylvain, *op.cit*, p.518 show that a decree from December 14, 1944 established that all properties previously belonging to Jews that are now in the possession of the state or in the posession of any buyer is regarded as belonging to the title holder who had been previously stripped from his/her propriety and thus returned to him/her. But another paragraph of the law stipulated that the Jews cannot receive their before-April 1945 properties back if in those locations there were now factories, schools, shops, and if the Jewish owners did not lived there before deportation.

[5] The table was detailed in Peter Meyer, Bernard D. Weinryb, Eugene Duschinsky, Nicolas Sylvain, *The Jews in the Soviet Satellites*, Syracuse University Press, 1953, p. 516.

Radu Ioanid showed that it is wrong to consider that the number of communist Jews in Romania was high, showing that in 1933, from a total of 1655 of communist members, only 364 were Jews and this represented 22,6% (Ioanid, 2005: 75). Also Ioanid shows that in February 1946, the Jews represented only 5,3% of the party members. (Ioanid, 2005: 76)

As in Hungary, the Jews had particular reasons to adhere to communism. In 1945 the option for communism, meant a vigilant attitude against fascism, and because of this they feared the worst. Most of them could not feel animosity towards the Soviet army or the Russians, because these were the factors which set them free from the Antonescian regime. Many Jews traumatised by the horrors of Holocaust became important personalities of the communist party; moreover, they got involved in the Romanian Security, they would fight against the political opponents of the communism.

**Table 2.** The next table shows the number of people involved in the service of Security at its creation, in 1948, grouped on ethnicity[6].

| Ethnic | Number/per cent of people involved in Security |
|---|---|
| Romanians | 3.334 (83,9%) |
| Jews | 338 (8,5%) |
| Hungarians | 247 (6,2%) |
| Russians | 24 (0,6%) |
| Yugoslavians | 13 (0,3%) |
| Others | 17 (0,4%) |
| Total | 3.973 |

In 1949, the Romanian communists started a brutal campaign against Zionist leaders. What was interesting was the fact that although in the period that makes the subject of our study a great number of Jews immigrated to Israel, although the Romanian state was willing to sell its Jews, and Romania was a state from Eastern Europe where almost all Jews emigrated during the communist period, the Zionist leaders who tried to persuade the Jewish population using the vision of emigration, and to accelerate the pace of emigration, were imprisoned, interrogated and tortured starting with the year of 1949[7]. From 1949 until 1959 around 250 people were interrogated and

[6] The table was detailed in the book of Radu Ioanid, *Răscumpărarea evreilor. Istoria acordurilor secrete dintre România şi Israel*, Editura Polirom, 2005, p.76.

[7] Teodor Wexler, "Procesele sioniştilor", în Romulus Rusan (ed), *Anii 1954- 1960. Fluxurile şi refluxurile stalinismului*, p. 380 shows that anti-Zionist measures started since 1948: "In fact, the Zionist leaders were followed by the "Securitate" since 1948 and the Embassy of Israel was bugged with tens of microphones. Moreover, since 1947, not only *Scânteia*, but also *Unirea*, newspaper of C.D.E., in fact the

sentenced to prison or hard labour. The campaign is resumed in 1954, although Stalin had died in 1953. Radu Ioanid illustrated very well this tendency of the Romanian communist party to allow emigration, but to oppose Zionism: "In August 1949, the Secretary of Romanian Communist Party reached a consensus regarding the emigration of the Jews. The party will allow the emigration but, in the same time, will intensify the propaganda against it, publishing letters from Palestine which described the <<miserable conditions>> from there" (transl.) (Ioanid, 2005: 83). The Israeli historian Avny, investigated and judged the Zionist trials, describes the conditions where the Zionists were investigated: "The investigator was as a rule an officer of inferior rank, second lieutenant or lieutenant. Behind him, in a usual office, was the one who led the investigation. The investigator came with already prepared questions, already formulated. He brought the answers that he intended to obtain. Because the investigated person had a sense of what would follow, he did not agree with the answer that was requested of him; and then he got threatened, he was called *servant of imperialism*, *of knave*, or *leader at Zionist latrine*, if the investigator felt that this way he would obtain positive results. The investigation lasted always for 8 hours (with the exception of the cases when something unexpected came up, something unpredictable. The investigation would end, to be then resumed after a day or two, or when the investigators were interested in naive stories, the basis for accusations. Between a declaration and another followed days of pause. Getting on the nerves of the accused or making him to feel that he annoyed the investigator and he had to be punished". (transl.) (Wexler, 2000: 383).

In Hungary, the Jews were facing difficulties at the end of the war. Before the Holocaust, their number ranged between 756 000 and 800 000 in the extended Hungary, shows Tamás Stark in his study *Hungarian Jewry during the Holocaust and after liberation*. From these almost 600 000 Jews died during the Nazi and Hungarian persecutions. Budapest was an important train hub for the returned Jews. Once arrived in Hungary they saw that their difficulties continued. They could not regain possession of their old houses, nor did they have the money to survive. They were helped by the international organisation Joint Distribution Committee. Hungarian antisemitism was a feeling that did not appear out of the blue, it had been growing in time. The interwar period was a just a phase, including the Numerus Clausus Law which limited the number of Hungarian students in universities and which was in force during

Jewish section of P.C.R., wrote about the "imperialist-Zionist" agency. Thus Gheorghiu – Dej was only trying to clean his hands, lying that the Zionists were not interrogated or sentenced for being Zionists. After March 1, 1952, the interrogation took violent forms, the prisoners having to face the entire arsenal of the terror. On March 31, 1954 the Military Tribunal in Bucharest sentenced the first rank of Zionists".

those years. In Hungary, antisemitism did not just disappear after the war. Most Hungarian Jews chose assimilation by the Hungarian communist state in spite of the persecutions which they had suffered before. A new system appeared at the horizon, the communism which promised equality for everybody in the Hungarian state, no matter of their race. Many Jews accepted this system and chose to keep secret the fact they were Jews and they did not tell their children about their heritage.

**Table 3.** The hypothetical number of Hungarian Jews at liberation X 1000[8].

| **The hypothetical number of Jews at liberation X 1000** | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Budapest | Provinces | Total in present territories | Subcarpathian Region | Northern Transylvania | Northern Territories | Southern Territories | Total for Hungary during the time of the war |
| Jewish population after the deportation | 217 | 57 | 274 | 19 | 13 | 11 | 4 | 321 |
| People lost during forced labour together with people killed or deported during Szalasi and emigrants | 67 | 22 | 89 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 97 |
| Population at liberation | 150 | 35 | **185** | 17 | 17 | 8 | 3 | **224** |

Ferenc Fejto in his book *Magyarság, zsidoság* (Hungarians, Jews) showed that Hungarian Jews which returned from deportation were around 160 000-190 000 (Fejto, 2000: 282). According to the data supplied by Támas Stark about the Jews returned from deportation in Hungary during the years 1945-1946, it is showed that before April 30, 1945, 9000 Jews returned, while for the total of the year 1945, returned 82, 144 of Jews. In 1946, the returned Jews,

[8] The table was detailed in Tamás Stark, *Hungarian Jewry during the Holocaust and after liberation* in *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Division B, The history of the Jewish People, volume III, Modern Times, Jerusalem 1994, p.250.

according to his data were 1187. The total combined for the years 1946 and 1945 was of 83 331. (Stark, 2000: 79)

**Table 4.** The estimated number of Hungarian Jews in 1945-1946 x 1000[9]

| Number of estimated Jews in 1945-1946x1000 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total of present territories | Sub-Carpatian Region | Northern Transylvania | Northern territories | Southern Territories | Total for wartime Hungary |
| Number of liberated Jews | 185 | 17 | 11 | 8 | 3 | 224 |
| Number of returned Jews | 85 | 18 | 30 | 7 | 1.5 | 141 |
| The total sum of Jews | 270 | 35 | 41 | 15 | 4.5 | 365 |

According to Tamás Stark the hypothetical number of Hungarian Jews at liberation X 1000, was detailed in the next table. We see that the total number of Jews at liberation from present Hungary was 185 000 of people, while the Jews found under Hungarian administration which survived were 224.000.

The returned Jews chose the assimilation by the new Hungarian state. They suffered traumas more profound than the Jews under Romanian administration. It is hard to understand why Hungarian Jews chose to assimilate in state created by the communists when they suffered so much.

The assimilation of Jews translated in the change of names, mixt marriages or converting to Christianity. So, for the Jews in Budapest, according to the churches who received them, 5521 of Jews converted to Christian religion in 1944 or 3385 of Jews converted to Christianity according to the data of Jewish Community, while in 1945, 388 of Jews converted to Christianity according to the Churches who received them or 261 according to the data of Jewish communities (Viktor Karady Apud Tamas Stark, 2000: 84). Viktor Karády shows that in a smaller number converted to Christianism, Jews in interwar period and during the wartime period. (Stark, 2000: 84)

[9] The table was detailed in Tamás Stark, *Hungarian Jewry during the Holocaust and after liberation* in *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Division B, The history of the Jewish People, volume III, Modern Times, Jerusalem 1994, p.250.

At the end of the war, the Jewish population lived in conditions of poverty, fear, misery. They did not have sufficient food and shelter. The number of Jewish kids after the Holocaust was very small and they were affected by the lack of food and clothing. In Hungary, the number of Jewish kids under 14 years old was of 7 712. (Wasserstein, 1996: 36) The international organization Joint Distribution Committee helped with food and medicines the Jews from communist states. For instance, Joint spent over 10 million dollars in Hungary during the first year of war. They were helped by the Joint over 200.000 of Jews in Romania, 120 000 in Hungary, 65 000 in Poland and 42 000 in Austria. (Wasserstein, 1996: 36).

After the war, the situation of the Jews from Hungary was precarious. Communities disappeared from provinces and the returned ones found their places occupied (Gyurgyák, 2001: 581). In 1947, Joint Distribution Committee recorded 263 of Jewish communities in Hungary, a number that until 1980 reduced to 75. (Gyurgyák, 2001: 586) The leaders of communities and rabbis who survived to the Holocaust helped the re-organization of communities.

Both in Hungary and in Romania Jewish organizations were constituted, after the war. A Jewish organization which was Zionist too and that existed in Hungary after the war was Pirche Agudat Jiszrael. Orbán Ferenc (Orbán, 2006: 80) quoted the leader of this organization, Groszberg Slomo, who describes in his memoires a few of the activities which took place in the framework of this organization. Thus, there was a hostel for boys with a reading room and a kindergarden for smaller children. With the help of Joint, trips were organized for the children. A school for the children was organized, and the hostel for daily activities was transfered to Csorna.

An important problem of the time was the issue of Jewish property approached by Steven Roth (Roth, 1997: 733-753). By the decree 200/1945 M.E. from March 17, 1945 the confiscations from fascist period were considered illegal and the deprivations of rights were annulled. The agrarian and horticula property, asserts Roth, was not given back if it was under the provision of the agrarian reform and of nationalization of the land. Roth showes that other goods could not be recuperated as mobile goods, equipments, stores of Jewish factories and shops were destroyed, the deposits of money lost their value after the inflation, the goods confiscated by the fascists were never returned. At November 15, 1946 a National Fund of Rehabilitation was created. For comparison, from the Jewish Community from Oradea, we have the information that, also in Romania, the goods of the people deported in Holocaust were taken over by this fund. Many houses and appartments passed under the administration of this fund in Romania, but there were exceptions. In Czechoslovakia, the properties of those who went missing entered the property of the state and, in consequence, a great part of the Jewish community entered the state property.

In the work *The Jews in the Soviet Satellites*, the authors Peter Meyer; Bernard Weinryb, Eugen Duschinsky, Nicolae Sylvain (Meyer, Weinryb, Duschinski, Sylvain, 1953), the problem of restitution of Jewish property in Hungary and Romania is approached. In Hungary, the Jews who returned from the concentration camps found their houses occupied by the adherents of the fascist regime, their property distroyed, their shops robbed (Meyer, Weinryb, Duschinski, Sylvain, 1953: 402). In spite of the precarious situation, most Jews from Hungary were not Zionists and decided to remain in Hungary especially because immediately after the war the communist government promised to maintain the private property. The land did not return to Jewish owners, only the proprieties smaller than 100 *pogoane*[10]. The communist slogan was that the land is of the people who worked it and it was considered that the Jews never involved in working the land. The Jews had to bear difficult times in Hungary also with the restitution of the appartments from the city which belonged to Hungarian Nazis and whom the new regime tried to attract. (Meyer, Weinryb, Duschinski, Sylvain, 1953: 404).

After 1945 and for a short time emigration was possible. But also here, as in Romania, the Zionist leaders were persecuted and imprisoned. Raphael Patai showes, that in 1945-1947 between a third and a forth of the Hungarian Jews who survived in Hungary left the country, 28 000 in Israel which, together with the ones who emigrated in Western Europe and overseas a total of 56 000 Jews emigrated. (Patai, 1996: 597). According to Gyurgyák János, in 1945-1947 approximatively 60 000 of Hungarian Jews chose the path of emigration. (Gyurgyák, 2001: 586)

Religion was excluded from school education, and the Jewish schools entered the property of state. The Hungarian antisemitism did not end in the same time with the Holocaust. As in Poland, in Hungary, antisemitism peaked to pogroms. In May 1946, in Hungarian locality Kunmadaras an antisemite action took place. 2 Jews were killed, and 18 hurt (Patai, 1996). Miskolc witnessed an antisemite action where the Zionist leader Mátyas Rákosi asked the death of Jewish sellers which were working on black market. (Patai, 1996)

In what concerns the adherence of Jews to communism, the explanations are complex. An explanation would be that the Jews did not perceive the presence of the Red Army in Hungary as a negative aspect; on the contrary, for them its presence was a factor which determined the end of deportation. Another explanation of the Jewish adherence to communism would be that the new system offered to the Jews the chance to integrate after an increasing anti-Semitism which culminated with the Holocaust. They were Jews who became members of the high communist nomenclature and were so severe that some considered that it was about a revenge of non – Jews against

[10] Approx. 50 hectares (n.t.)

the Jews. Another ellement would be, as Ferenc Fejto shows, that the Jews were more educated that the non – Jews and could take over the jobs from state administration (Fejto, 2000). Because they were uncompromised ellements in the fascist regime, they were an important source of racolation for the communists. (Fejto, 2000: 283).

Victor Karady in his study "*Les Juifs, la modernité et la tentation communiste. Esquisse d une problématique d histoire sociale*" (Karady, 2006: 85-105) tries to explain why the Jews were in favour of communism after the war. The author tries to explain this adhesion for its character of modernity, for their attraction of separating from the past, to accepted new ideas. The laicity, the scientific atheism of communism, the collectivism, were other ellements of attraction for the Jews. (Karady, 2006: 104-105) In other words, the communism offered to Jews the chance of a new life.

Arieh J. Kochavi, in his study *British Diplomats and the Jews in Poland, Romania and Hungary during the communism takeovers* shows that at the end of WW II, with the exception of the Soviet Union, there were important communities of Jews in other states of the Soviet bloc as Romania, Poland and Hungary. (Kochavi, 1995) The article describes the situation of the Jews from the three countries between the years 1945-1947 as reflected in the reports of British diplomats, as Great Britain was trying to stop a possible wave of emigrants that came from these countries. In 1945, more than 100 000 Jews registered in Bucharest with the intention to immigrate to Palestine, those being encouraged by the Red Cross. (Kochavi, 1995) In Hungary, the Jews who returned from concentration camps and came back found it impossible to reorganize their community and religious life. This aspect motivated the Zionists to try to emigrate in Palestine. (Kochavi, 1995) More Jews were present in Hungarian political life: Matyas Rakosi, an important leader of the Communist Party, Erno Gero, Minister of Transport, Josef Revai, a prestigious journalist, Zoltan Vas, the Mayor of Budapest. (Kochavi, 1995)

## A few considerations concerning the situation of Hungarian Jewry in the first years after the war reflected in the work of Raphael Patai, *The Jews of Hungary. History, Culture, Psychology*.

For the period that followed at the end of the war, Patai approaches the problem of Jewish emigration from Hungary. This problem was important, as Hungarian Jews had a lot to suffer because of fascism and of cooperation of Hungary with the Axis Powers. In spite of this problem, Patai underlines that the number of Jewish emigrants from Hungary remained low in comparison with the Jewish emigration from neighbouring countries. (Patai, 1996: 613)

Patai estimates that in 1945 the Jewish population from Hungary was between 150 000 and 200 000. Among these, 56 000 Jews emigrated during in

1945-1947. (Patai, 1996) But most of the Jews who survived, namely two thirds, decided to remain in Hungary.

Another important aspect underlined by Patai is that, after 1950, emigration was stopped by the communist dictatorship. The creation of Israel was ignored by the Hungarian communists.

Another problem existent in Hungary in the years 1945, underlined by Patai, are the discussions around the Jewish problem and of the Holocaust, respectively to make the Jewish sufferings public and to assume Hungarian responsibility for it. The author showed that during 1945-1948, the Jewish problem and the crimes comitted against the Jews were the subject of public debate in Hungary, debate reflected by the articles, pamphlets and books published on this topic. During 1948-1958, the Hungarian government prohibited the publication of books on this topic ((Patai, 1996: 615). Moreover, the communists did not acknowledge that the Holocaust was directed against the particular group of the Jews, but they considered that is was about a persecution of fascists directed against their opponents. This aspect is reflected also in the view of Romanian communists.

Both in Hungary and in Romania, there were Zionist leaders who militated for emigration of Jews in Israel. In both countries, these were persecuted and imprisoned. Patai mentions the Rajk trial who had many victims from the Jews side and that was followed by the persecution of Zionist leaders (Patai, 1996: 616). In those years, the Hungarian Jews were forbidden to maintain connections with the Jews from abroad.

Patai tries to explain what the reasons were for the Jews' adherence to communism. So he offers an explanation considered important by many authors, namely that the Jews received the Soviets as liberators not as enemies of Hungarian ethnics (Patai, 1996: 624).

Although they had the feeling that they were different, the Jews did not reject the assimilation in the Hungarian society. Many Jewish survivors pledged allegiance to communism. Another motivation of Jewish adherence to communism underlined by Patai is the fact that the communists considered the Jewish problem and the anti-Semitism as being bypassed. Moreover, they considered that the communism regime was incompatible with antisemitism, while the capitalism favoured its proliferation. (Patai, 1996: 625)

More than the Christians, shows the author, they took the newly created jobs. The persecution of Jewry did not exclud the Jewish bourgeoisie who were a considerable number and who had been deported too. (Patai, 1996: 626)

In the same time, in the first years after the war, the Hungarian antisemitism found new possibilities of expression. There were problems with the restitution of Jewish houses occupied by Hungarians during fascism and whose owners refused now to give them back.

A campaign carried out against the Jewish traders on black market, showes Patai, culminated with anti-Jewish manifestations just like the ones directed against the Jewish sellers from Miskolc. Antisemite manifestations took place at Diósgyor where the miners were engaged in manifestations against the Jewish traders on black market. (Patai, 1996: 627).

Antisemitism was increased by the fact that important leaders of the Communist Party had Jewish origins, like Mátyás Rákosi, Ernö Gero, Josef Revai, Zoltan Vas.

The author Raphael Patai stands out by his objectivity and understanding of social and psychological motivation of the Jewry to integrate and to accept the communism. The picture of the Jewish society after the war achieved by Patai is a complex one, detailed, and emphasizes all the important ideas that were discussed within this field of study concerning the destiny of Jewry after the war. He is a good psychologist and knows the Jewish world in detail.

As a conclusion of our paper we can say that the destiny of the Jewry after the war was far from being good. They were confronted with a series of problems ranging from physical illnesses, precarious material situation and the difficulty to regain posession of their houses, the persecution of their economical and cultural elites, and their imprisoning, all the way to aspects like their allegiance pledged to the new regime, i.e. the communism, and their assimilation to the Hungarian society, or on the contrary, the opposite situation, i.e. their emigration (mostly to Israel) when the communist Hungarian regime was more permisive with Zionism, their own form of social activism.

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