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FORUM: "PATRIOTIC HISTORY" AND THE (RE)NATIONALIZATION OF MEMORY

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The Illiberal Memory Politics in Hungary

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In June 2021, the mayor of the small Hungarian village of Hajdúbagos unveiled the statue of Admiral Horthy, praising him as a democrat who "fought equally against communism and fascism." The unveiling celebration was followed by a quick re-veiling because waste oil had been poured over it the night before.[1] This statue is not the first of the controversial Admiral Horthy (1868–1957), leader of interwar Hungary who, as an ally of Nazi Germany, was also responsible for the swift deportation of 430,000 Hungarian Jews after 19 March 1944. There have been several attempts to erect a monument for Horthy as a symbolic act to re-evaluate his life, responsibility and, more importantly, his legacy. Unlike previous attempts though, where the statues ended up on private property after lively public debate, this one in Hajdúbagos remains standing on public property, albeit under the radar of national and international observers, following the examples of other small villages, such as Perkáta, Harc, Nemeshódos, Bodaszőlő and Kálóz.

In the past few years, Hungary has been portrayed as a negative example of memory politics in both mainstream and academic press, charged with being the "ground zero" for a paradigm change in World War II memory politics that was echoed in Poland when the right-wing populist PiS government passed its infamous law on criminalizing certain perspectives in historical research.[2] In an earlier publication, I listed the elements of this paradigm change in Holocaust memorialization, and it is worth reiterating here that they include: nationalization of a hitherto transnational narrative, de-Judaization, competing victimhood, establishing new terminology, double speek, and anti-intellectualism.[3] These elements are present in different contexts but nowhere else are they exhibited so prominently as in Hungary. The erection of statues of Horthy, this paper argues, demonstrates that this paradigm shift is taking place without recourse to original ideas and yet is nonetheless successfully reshaping memory discourse.

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[1] Horthy Miklósnak állitottak szobrot Hajdúbagoson, *haon.hu* 12 June 2021: https://haon.hu/kultura/helyi-kultura/horthy-miklosnak-allitottak-szobrot-hajdubagoson-5361836/?fbclid=IwAR3ABkDhklfnsPq_eXT3CZYAIk1STI4nGA5Og94JVfvQaM3Na4FNDKbRUAY.

[2] Ljiljana Radonić, "'Our' vs. 'Inherited' Museums. PiS and FIDESZ as Mnemonic Warriors," *Südosteuropa* 68, no. 1 (2020): 44–78.

[3] Andrea Pető, "Bitter Experiences' Reconsidered Paradigm Change in Holocaust Memorialisation," *Heinrich Böll Stiftung*, 1 July 2019: https://www.boell.de/en/2019/06/28/bitter-experiences-reconsidered-paradigm-change-holocaust-memorialisation; Andrea Pető, "Shame Revisited in the Memory Politics of Illiberal States," in *Shame! and Masculinity*, ed. Ernst von Alphe (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2020), 103–13.

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Institutional Changes: Discredit, Delegitimize, Empty and Construct

The illiberal Holocaust historiography, which came with the elimination of thirty years of Hungarian history writing after 1989, developed gradually.[4] From 2010, the state increasingly reached into all spheres of public life: legal, economic, cultural, and educational, requiring unquestionable loyalty from its citizens.

The reshaping of historical discourse was also manifested in four institutional changes in Hungarian academic life within a short period of time. First, the Hungarian state nationalized and centralized the research institutes of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS), following the Russian model of institutional reform. The leadership of HAS had just 54 min to review the proposal.[5] Second, the Hungarian authorities forced the Central European University into political exile from Budapest to Vienna.[6] Third, the Hungarian government proposed a decree to remove a well-regarded two-year MA programme in gender studies from the accredited study list.[7] Fourth, the largest universities and all their assets have been transferred to private foundations. Not only have they lost their autonomy, but appointments in these intuitions no longer follow the previous procedure regulated by the Hungarian Accreditation Committee. Now that the universities have transformed their institutional structure, their operations depend on rectors who are chosen and appointed by the government. Previously gained academic credentials are neither required or valued and have even raised suspicions of disloyalty.[8] This is in line with other illiberal attacks to education freedom around the world, such as the closing the Institute of Philosophy in Belgrade and the European University in St. Petersburg, or the appointment Turkish president Erdoğan's friend as president of Boğaziçi University.[9]

The past years of Viktor Orbán's rule can be also seen as the golden age of Hungarian commemoration culture, with interventions centred around the memorial years of the 1956 revolution, the deportation of Hungarian Jews in 1944, and the 1920 Treaty of Trianon according to which Hungary lost two-thirds of its territory. Academically, there have been almost unlimited resources available to historians exploring the history and memory of these events. First, there were almost unlimited resources available for all three commemorative years.[10] Compared to overall budgets for commemoration between 2002–10, enormous amounts of money were spent on exhibitions, monuments, conferences, and publishing. It is difficult to ascertain, however, how cost-intensive these politics of memory really were. As far as the Holocaust memorial year (2014) is concerned,

[4] Andrea Pető and Ildikó Barna, "'Unfettered Freedom' Revisited: Hungarian Historical Journals between 1989 and 2018,"" *Contemporary European History* 3 (2021).
[5] Alison Abbott, "Hungarian Government Takes Control of Research Institutes Despite Outcry," *Nature,* 8 July 2018: https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-02107-4.
[6] Michael Ignatieff, "Academic Freedom is Under Threat in Europe," *New York Times,* 2 April 2017.
[7] The program enjoyed consistently high enrolment and excellent placement records. See Andrea Pető, "Academic Freedom and Gender Studies: An Alliance Forged in Fire," *Gender and Sexuality Journal* 15 (2020): 9–24.
[8] Zsolt Enyedi, "Graft Fears as Hungary Completes University Privatisation," *Times Higher Education*, 30 April 2021: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/graft-fears-hungary-completes-universityprivatisation.
[9] Justin Weinberg, "Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory in Belgrade Under Government Attack," *Daily Nous*, 26 May 2020: https://dailynous.com/2020/05/26/institute-for-philosophy-social-theory-in-belgrade-government-attack/; Charlotta Gall, "Prestigious Istanbul University Fights Erdogan's Reach," *New York Times*, 1 February 2021.
[10] For more on the 1956 Memorial year, see Andrea Pető, "Roots of Illiberal Memory Politics: Remembering Women in the 1956 Hungarian Revolution," *Baltic Worlds* 10, no. 4. (2017): 42–58. For more on the Holocaust Memorial Year: Andrea Pető, "The Lost and Found Library," *Memory at Stake* 9 (2019): 72–82.

the deadline for the disclosure of its budget was postponed to the spring of 2017. Afterwards, since the latest change in the legislation, this previously public data is no longer accessible, even after a lengthy and costly official freedom of information requests.

There was a clear government plan to discredit, delegitimize, and defund existing institutions critical of its activity, while the government opened new parallel institutions loyal to them trying to replace the critical ones. This process also happened in the case of the Jewish religious organizations. The Jewish communities, which represent only a small proportion of the third largest Jewish population in Europe, also commemorated the Holocaust before the Holocaust Memorial Year, holding a day of prayer and worship at the memorial plaques on the walls of the ghettos. In contrast to the well-thought-out government policy with a strategy, the plan of the Jewish organizations was to commemorate the anniversary of seventieth anniversary of the deportations of the Hungarian Jews in1944 in the same way as before but "only better." This process of destroying previous memorial practices and narratives by discrediting, delegitimizing and defunding them unfolded in the following stages. First, by supporting the United Community of Hungarian Israelites, a small, orthodox organization with a large international network, the government created an authentic, unquestionably Jewish looking representation of Jews in Hungary: men with long beards, black coats, and hats where the large majority of Jews, opposing the government's policies are assimilated. With this move, the government established an alternative to the previously hegemonic Alliance of Hungarian Jewish Communities, the organization which took a stand against Orbán at home and abroad. In addition, the government's politics of memory incorporated a new victim group in the Holocaust narrative: the Romani. By introducing the new term of "indirect genocide" for the Roma victims of the Holocaust, the government's aim was to transform the moral relationship between minority and majority with adding a new victim group without reflecting either on structural reasons of discrimination, nor reasons of previous omissions.

Second, the Hungarian state created and lavishly funded new history research institutes, such as the Veritas Historical Research Institute, the Committee of National Remembrance, the Clio Institute, the Research Institute and Archives for the History of Regime Change, the Rubicon Institute, the Institute for Hungarian Studies and, most recently, the Institute of St. Stephen. These institutes have no quality assurance as they function without adhering to generally accepted scientific standards: publishing often without footnotes, hiring candidates without doctoral degrees or track records of producing relevant research. It is no surprise that the "scientific" work of these institutions is only noticed when their staff make outrageous claims like the oft-quoted professional opinion of Sándor Szakály, the director of the Veritas Institute, who in 2014 attempted to introduce the expression "police action against aliens" for a 1941 massacre when thousands of Jews were killed with the active participation of Hungarian authorities.[11]

Third, the formerly diverse Hungarian history textbook market has been reduced to one single, state-approved textbook. The Hungarian History Teachers' Association is fighting a rear-guard action in the textbook debate. Its members were the ones whose previously successful textbooks were withdrawn from circulation by state intervention.

[11] Andrea Pető, "Paradigm Change in Holocaust Remembrance: Instrumentalizing Conservatism," in *Conservatism and Memory Politics in Russia and Eastern Europe*, ed. Katalin Miklóssy and Markku Kangaspuro (forthcoming).

The debate about the new textbooks revolves around the interpretation of medieval Hungarian history and the twentieth century. The new National Core Curriculum, which was conspicuous for its different approach to history, for example, sought to place greater emphasis on the victorious battles of the Árpád period (tenth to fourteenth centuries). Another new feature was the focus on medieval history because of the question of Hun-Hungarian and Turkish-Hungarian kinship as opposed to the previously consensual Finno-Ugric origins of the Hungarians. Since the 1990s, this has become part of the far-right subculture, one of the most famous features of which is the use of the Székely (Sekler) runic script. This script is most probably of Turkish origin and it is a specific alphabet and spelling of the Hungarian language before the Conquest of the Carpathian basin and to embrace Christianity. In the 2000s, the far right, pro-Russian Jobbik Movement for Hungary brought this historical subculture into the mainstream with the annual Kurultaj (meeting of the nomadic tribes) celebrations in Bösztör and Bugac in southern Hungary. The well visited event and its target audience, however, have also caught the eye of FIDESZ they took it over as in 2018 László Kövér, the President of the Parliament, and in 2019 the Minister of Human Capacities, which includes the portfolio of culture Miklós Kásler, gave the opening speech. The policy of "opening to the East" and the pronouncement of "Kipchak kinship" (a branch of the Altaic language family of the Inter-Roman languages) is indicative of a change of direction in Hungarian foreign policy. Nowadays, the names of all villages and towns across Hungary are also inscribed in runic script. This development shows how, within a short period of time, an idea was transferred from the margins of memory activism to the mainstream of the state-sponsored memory politics.

In the twentieth century section of the textbook, the greatest controversy was sparked by the Trianon peace treaty that ended the First World War, as the new textbook blames the free-masonry intrigue for Hungary losing the war and with it seventy-five per cent of Hungary's territory. In the heated debate, György Szabados, the medievalist who wrote the new textbook, stated that:

> there has never been and can never be expected to be a full professional consensus on early Hungarian history. Anyone who says this is either so ignorant of research or is deliberately untruthful. Therefore, no textbook can be held to account for consensus! What can be called to account is the following: a realistic historical reconstruction based on sources and literature, in the spirit of the principle of "as it were."[12]

This controversy at first sight looks like a debate among historians, however, it takes place under extremely asymmetrical conditions. The proponents of the state-supported position have completely unequal access to resources and institutional facilities, while the proponents of the other position languish in difficult financial conditions and personally attacked in government sponsored media outlets.

All these developments in illiberal memory politics: to discredit, delegitimize and defund and to construct, I argue, is not the political mastery of lying and deception but the *modus operandi* of the illiberal regime that fundamentally changed the memorialization of the Holocaust. A side effect of this new illiberal memory politics is the proliferation of statues of Horthy in small villages.

[12] "Szabados György reagálása a TTE októberi vitájára," 4 January 2021: https://tte.hu/szabados-gyorgy-reagalasa-a-tte-oktoberi-vitajara/.

The Beginnings of the Paradigm Change

The current combative and invasive memory politics was launched during the first Orbán government (1998–2002), with the institutionalization of the "double occupation" ideology. The House of Terror Museum, opened in 2002 in Budapest, equated the Nazi and the Soviet occupation, and conflated Hungarian collaboration with these regimes.[13] After Orbán's next electoral victory in 2010, the government quickly promoted a historical canon that created new truths about World War II and the "double occupation" of Hungary.

In 2011, the Hungarian Parliament passed the Fundamental Law of Hungary, replacing the constitution. Its preamble states: "We date the restoration of our country's self-determination, lost on the nineteenth day of March 1944, from the second day of May 1990, when the first freely elected organ of popular representation was formed." Herewith, Hungary caught up with other former communist states, especially the Baltic States which, after the end of the Cold War, started to promote the memory of "double occupation," and to increasingly rely on the concept of victimhood in their memory politics.[14] By canonizing double occupation, the Hungarian government fundamentally changed the politics of remembrance: it shifted responsibility to the occupiers and made invisible not only the collaboration with Germany but also Hungarian actions in Sub-Carpathia occupied by the Hungarian army in 1939.[15] New memorials like the Monument of Victims of German Occupation in Budapest's Szabadság square, which place full responsibility for the Holocaust on the Germans, were erected overnight, despite social protests and without public approval.[16] The Statue still stands despite internal and international protest.

The codification of the "double occupation" impacted two key debates about the history of the Holocaust in Hungary. The first was about the start of racial persecution: was it in 1920 with the *numerus clausus* law, which placed a cap on the percentage of Jewish university students, or with the restrictive anti-Jewish legislation from 1938 onwards, or with the German occupation on 19 March 1944, after which 430 000 Hungarian Jews were deported?[17] The response to this question is connected to the second debate. Was racial persecution in Hungary an autochthonous state policy implemented without German intervention, did it happen in collaboration with Germany, or were the racial policies executed by the Germans only? According to the illiberal answer, it was Germany's sole responsibility with the involvement of a few underclass Hungarian collaborators. This answer is basically the same as the one that the anti-fascist communist historiography provided prior to 1989.

[13] Anna Manchin, "Staging Traumatic Memory: Competing Narratives of State Violence in Post-Communist Hungarian Museums," *East European Jewish Affairs* 45, nos. 2–3 (2015): 236–51.

[14] Jie-Hyun Lim, "Afterword. Entangled Memories of the Second World War," in *Remembering the Second World War*, ed. Patrick Finney (London, New York: Routledge, 2018), 249–56.

[15] Raz Segal, "Becoming Bystanders: Carpatho-Ruthenians, Jews, and the Politics of Narcissism in Subcarpathian Rus," *Holocaust Studies* 16. nos. 1–2 (2010): 129–56.

[16] Sándor Horváth, "Goodbye Historikerstreit, Hello Budapest City of Angels: The Debate about the Monument to the German Occupation," *Cultures of History Forum*, 12 April 2015: https://www.cultures-of-history.uni-jena.de/debates/hungary/goodbye-historikerstreit-hello-budapest-city-of-angels-the-debate-about-the-monument-to-the-german-occupation/; István Rév, "Liberty Square, Budapest: How Hungary Won the Second World War," *Journal of Genocide Research* 20, no. 4 (2018): 607–23.

[17] Mária M. Kovács, The Numerus Clausus in Hungary, 1920–1945, in *Alma mater antisemitica*, ed. Regina Fritz, Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, and Jana Starek (Vienna: New Academic Press, 2016), 85–112.

Using history for present political aims is not new. Reminiscing about the glory of old days fills the void left by the hopelessness of the present, something that recognizable in newly-neoliberalized Eastern Europe. I am arguing here that this is not nostalgia but a new memory politics. The illiberal politics of memory is also successful because its proponents invoked the very norms and practices that are known to derive from the Holocaust model of memory, such as the declared need to acknowledge the victims. The power of the illiberal politics of memory lies precisely in the fact that it not only weakens the system by exploiting the frameworks, institutions, and values of the previous paradigm, but also builds its own system.

Three Pathways to Post-Truth in Illiberal Memory Politics

The Hungarian government's taking over of memory politics has been documented by several authors.[18] However, the existing literature does not interpret the connection of these processes to the creation of post-truth. I claim that there are three plausible frameworks of interpretation of Orbán's memory politics: distortion, revisionism, or paradigm change.

Of the three, distortion is the most popular and institutionalized explanation, especially given that the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance also used it to account for recent developments in Hungary and globally. According to Paul Simmons:

> Holocaust distortion does not deny that the Nazis and their collaborators sought to murder the Jews of Europe but still it significantly misrepresents the historical record. For example, the numbers of victims might be grossly under-estimated; the numbers of helpers and rescuers inflated; difficult parts of a country's own national history might be overlooked or omitted (for example, holding only Hitler and the leading Nazis responsible, downplaying the role of collaborators and the widespread complicity of many ordinary people in the genocide).[19]

However, this definition does not answer a key question: why would someone distort certain facts? The concept of distortion assumes there is one truth and those who are distorting it are just not smart and can be educated to learn and accept the truth. How difficult can this be in the case of interpreting past events?

The second framework considers the motivation of those who change the interpretative framework. Aviezer Tucker's typology of historical revisionism presents three strategies: (a) significance-driven: when there is a change in what historians find significant in history; (b) evidence-driven: when new evidence is discovered; (c) value-driven: when historical events and processes are re-evaluated due to a new system of values becoming hegemonic.[20] The process of Hungarian Holocaust memory's alteration is an

[18] Henriett Kovács, Ursula Mindler-Steiner, "Hungary and the Distortion of Holocaust History, The Hungarian Holocaust Memorial Year 2014," *Politics in Central Europe* 11, no. 2 (2016): 49–72; Andrea Pető, "Non-Remembering' the Holocaust in Hungary and Poland," in *Poland and Hungary Jewish Realities Compared,* ed. François Guesnet et. al., special issue, *POLIN* no. 31 (2019): 471–80; Ferenc Laczó, "Totalitarianism without Perpetrators? On Fidesz's Current Politics of History," in *Brave New Hungary: Mapping the "System of National Cooperation*," ed. János Mátyás Kovács and Balázs Trencsényi (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 29–50.

[19] Paul Salmons, "Countering Holocaust Denial and Distortion Online," 9 March 2021: https://paulsalmons.associates/blog/mapping-holocaust-denial-and-distortion-online.

[20] Avizier Tucker, "Historiographic Revision and Revisionism" in *Past in Making: Historical Revisionism in Central Europe*, ed. Michal Kopeček (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008), 1–15.

example of a value-driven revisionism. New, illiberal values are becoming hegemonic and are being institutionalized in education, textbooks, research institutes, and research projects supported by Hungarian and EU taxpayer's money without any transparency or professional control.[21]

I explain recent developments in Hungarian memory politics in terms of a paradigm change. This interpretative framework not only accounts for the motivations but also how the previous, antifascist Holocaust canon was hijacked by the illiberal government and replaced by the cult of Admiral Horthy. As recent research on the Holocaust in Hungary has focused on fight against Holocaust deniers, no attention has been paid to how knowledge about the Holocaust was produced. Therefore, the Holocaust narrative did not move from the position that there is one and only truth and did not acknowledge that "truth continue(s) to be a social process that is theoretically mediated."[22] How did the previous truth regime contribute to the post-truth of illiberal memory politics?

The New Form of State Requires a New Truth

Political scientists reflecting on Orbán's series of electoral victories were forced to reconsider not only their analytical toolkit but also their concepts in order to understand this new phenomenon, which they called "competitive authoritarianism," "illiberal state," or "mafia state," to list but a few.[23] With Polish sociologist Weronika Grzebalska, I compared Hungary and Poland and argued that this new form of governance stems from the failures of globalized (neo)liberal democracy.[24] Based on its *modus operandi*, we called this regime an "illiberal polypore state" because it feeds on the vital resources of the previous political system while simultaneously contributing to its decay by setting up parallel institutions and channelling resources to them. The polypore state works with what is referred to as "mnemonic security."[25] The translation of history and its application, as well as their identity-shaping effects are becoming geopolitical factors.

Why an illiberal polypore state uses memory politics to keep the power is well-known, but descriptive analyses have missed one crucial point: how such a state operates. The illiberal state does not have original ideas; everything used as value has already been invented previously, but what is new is both the modus operandi and the fact that these values are only important on the surface to obscure the real purpose: the need to maintain the system. The illiberal state is an assemblage of previously existing and well-functioning ideas like nostalgia and anticommunist nationalism. It uses existing concepts, frameworks, and institutions for its own purpose. It creates a parallel world and only keeps the original institutions, values, and spaces as resources for its own existence. And

[21] Andrea Pető, "Revisionist Histories, 'Future Memories': Far-Right Memorialization Practices in Hungary," *European Politics and Society* 18, no. 1 (2017): 41–51.
[22] Shelley Budgeon, "Making Feminist Claims in the Post-Truth Era: The Authority of Personal Experience," *Feminist Theory* (forthcoming).
[23] Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 6 (1997): 22–43; Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy* 1, no. 2 (2002): 51–65; Matthijs Bogaards, "How to Classify Hybrid Regimes? Defective Democracy and Electoral Authoritarianism," *Democratization* 16, no. 2 (2009): 399–423; Bálint Magyar, *The Post-Communist Mafia State* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2016).
[24] Weronika Grzebalska and Andrea Pető, "The Gendered Modus Operandi of the Illiberal Transformation in Hungary and Poland," *Women's Studies International Forum* 68 (2018): 164–72.
[25] Maria Mälksoo, "'Memory Must be Defended': Beyond the Politics of Mnemonical Security," *Security Dialogue* 46, no. 3 (2015): 221–37.

in that parallel world similar rules apply as those in *Alice in Wonderland*: "'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in a rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.'" The meanings are *ad hoc* and independent from previous points of reference as they only maintain their own world, such as when Horthy is celebrated as a "democrat" in a speech given by the mayor of Hajdúbagos when the recent statue was unveiled.[26] This is a statement that even the most far right views would not have dared to make until very recently.

Experience is the basis for the creation of knowledge and the starting point of getting to know the world around us. Many were shocked to note the recent emergence of the post-truth phenomenon, in which the content does not matter, only the framework. This is characteristic of the memory politics of the illiberal polypore state. It exploits and appropriates various aspects of the European liberal democratic project – institutions, procedures, concepts, funding opportunities, strategies, civil society adjustment mechanisms, and policies. Illiberal forces only use these to maintain their power. Due to the character of their governance, instead of calling these regimes "illiberal democracy," it is more accurate to refer to them as "illiberal democracyploitation." It is one made cheaply and for the easy profit of the illiberal camp, relying on time-worn formulas despite hyperbolic revolutionary claims made by illiberal politicians, as well as based on misappropriating and eroding the very democratic procedures to which illiberals owe their rise to power.

The objectivist truth paradigm as a framework for history writing was necessarily strengthened in Central Europe after 1989. After 1989, memory studies' shift towards the truth paradigm was to counteract the systematically manipulative historiography under communism. The category of memory was placed at the centre of scholarly investigations and during this memory boom alternative personal stories and new methods, such as oral history resurfaced. "Truth" became a personalized matter localizing the individual as a subject of history writing. The story and the interpretation became true because of the authenticity and the experiences of the narrator. The conviction was that political freedom made it possible to access the "truth" of history because political manipulation was no longer imposed.

A distinction must be made between conservative criticism and illiberal criticism. Conservative critique, often driven by an authentic and humble religiosity, is a critique of communism. Of course, this includes family policy. But the illiberal system is fundamentally different, for it values and social policies are just fig leaves to cover up the real goal, which is nothing less than the enrichment of a circle of friends.

With the neoliberalization of Eastern Europe after 1989, the state and its institutions, including social security, education, and health care, became weakened, leaving many citizens questioning whether this was really the only alternative. EU accession, with its promise that these countries would have a standard of living equal to their Western neighbours, was particularly disappointing. As neoliberalization brought with it the vulnerability and economic exploitation of individuals, more and more people turned to communal ideologies promising security, pride, and a sense of belonging.

[26] Horthy Miklósnak állitottak szobrot Hajdúbagoson, *haon.hu* 12 June 2021: https://haon.hu/kultura/helyi-kultura/horthy-miklosnak-allitottak-szobrot-hajdubagoson-5361836/?fbclid=IwAR3ABkDhklfnsPq_eXT3CZYAIk1STI4nGA5Og94JVfvQaM3Na4FNDKbRUAY.

Previously inaccessible archives were opened and a period of "archive fever," as described by Derrida, commenced.[27] Historians and the public believed that the truth and its explanations are there, somewhere in the archive, and the good historian will find it.

However, this conviction opened the gate for conspiracy theorists who claim that some archives, i.e. the ultimate sources of "truth," were hidden from the professionals by unidentified powers. Illiberal memory politics uses this argument but replaces the communists who hid or even destroyed the archives with liberals and cosmopolitans. The history of the Holocaust has become particularly vulnerable in the paradigm change as it was based on the normative, exclusivist true/false framework without any negotiation about the content.

The historiography of the Holocaust could move forward substantially if it analyzed the causes, institutional forms, and main actors of oblivion. The post-1989 turn in historiography looked at the event through a true/false framework that also contributed to the populist turn in historiography as it made history writing a form of defenceless post-truth. Truth and relevance are always socially mediated and the belief of having the monopoly of interpretation is always temporary. The re-interpretation of Horthy's role is happening on the ruins of the destroyed research infrastructure in the Hungarian humanities. History writing is a social practice which is deeply political. In the parallel reality created by the illiberal polypore state, the well-being of the country's citizens depends on accepting the post-truth whatever that should be then they are becoming a part of. The correlation between experience and knowledge is complex while rejecting the "two extreme poles of absolutism (or perfect knowledge) and relativism" by investigating the relationship between those two poles is the only tool we have against post-truth.[28]

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Notes on Contributor

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[27] Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression," *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995): 9–63.
[28] Sylvia Walby, "Against Epistemological Chasms: The Science Question in Feminism Revisited," *Signs* 26, no. 2 (2001): 503.