

Symbolism in Stone: An Analysis of the 2014 Szabadság Tér Monument and the Manipulation of Memory

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Abstract:

This thesis critically analyses the 2014 neo-classical Szabadság Tér statue in Budapest, Hungary, and argues that its intended function is that of manipulating its audience into adopting a myth of the German occupation of Hungary during the Second World War. Erected overnight, the Szabadság Tér monument purports to be a memorial to all victims of the German occupation of Hungary, however, a growing number of individuals in Budapest have protested against the monument's misrepresentation of this harrowing chapter of Hungarian history. By conducting a thorough semiotic analysis of the statue's symbolic features alongside an explanation as to how such symbolic features have the power to mislead those who behold them, this thesis considers the manner in which the Szabadság Tér statue, and the connotations attached to its symbolic features, exercises the power to reshape the interpretations individuals have of the past. Through the symbolic juxtaposition of Hungary and Nazi Germany alongside culturally recognised semiotic features, the Szabadság Tér monument presents a mythical version of the German occupation of Hungary, one where Hungary is seen as a blameless victim and Nazi Germany an aggressive predator. In coercing Hungarians into appropriating this historically inaccurate myth, the Hungarian state likely seeks to alleviate much of its own culpability for the events of the Hungarian Holocaust, and in turn lay culpability with Germany and the Nazi regime. This thesis will consider the Szabadság Tér monument a medium by which the Hungarian government seeks to impose an altered account of history upon the statue's audience, with the doctoring of historical awareness regarding the German occupation of Hungary as its primary function.

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Chapter 1- Introduction:

Historical monuments offer historians a rich avenue of scholarly inquiry due to their symbolism. By including symbolic features alongside representations of historical reality, monuments are capable of subtly manipulating how their audience understand historical events. As an example one need only consider the use of statues depicting emperors, among other important figures, in Roman Antiquity. The overwhelming majority of the Roman Empire would live their entire lives without ever seeing an emperor in person. In a world before mass media and near instantaneous communication, statues and coins often served as the official image of important figures such as emperors and senators.¹ However, it is important to understand that the artificial representation of these individuals cannot provide an accurate, or even unbiased, rendering of reality. Emperors were often depicted with or alongside certain features that served as a symbolic link to aspects of their rule. An example of such tendencies can be seen with the statue of Emperor Trajan, housed in the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden; it provided an official image of Trajan for those who would likely never see him personally. The Trajan statue features many symbolic embellishments that sought to encourage its ancient audience to consider Trajan in a certain way.² To do this the statue makes use of symbolic features that both identify Trajan and construct a positive image of him.³ The influence that biased and politically motivated representations, such as the statue of Trajan, have over the way individuals perceive reality is a contentious debate. It is the duty of the historian to consider such artifacts critically in order to ascertain their individual level of veracity, however, it is crucially important to maintain an understanding of the nature of such artifacts.

The neo-classical Szabadság Tér statue in Budapest invites similar analysis.⁴ Erected overnight on the 20/21 July 2014, the Szabadság Tér ('Liberty square') monument was designed to be a memorial for victims of the German occupation of Hungary during the

¹ Chenault, R. (2012). p. 105.

² *De Romeinse Keizer Trajanus*. Available: <https://www.rmo.nl/museumkennis/klassieke-wereld/romeinen/de-romeinse-keizer-trajanus/>. Last accessed 27/11/2018.

³ *De Romeinse Keizer Trajanus*. Last accessed 27/11/2018.

⁴ The monument in question does not have an official name and so is referred to as the 'Szabadság Tér monument' or the 'Szabadság Tér statue', named after the square in Budapest where it is located. When referring to other monuments within the Szabadság Tér, the year of construction will be included so as to be precise as to which monument is being referenced.

Second World War.⁵ The main inscription on the memorial reads “*A Német Megszállás Aldozatainak Emlékműve*” (“A Monument for the Victims of the German Occupation”), which is situated on the main façade of the monument.⁶ Although the design avoids direct reference to the Holocaust its material form has sparked protest. A growing number of Hungarians and visitors to the statue argue that the symbolic features included are historically inaccurate. The controversy stems from the symbolic juxtaposition of Germany and Hungary, which are represented by an eagle and the Archangel Gabriel respectively. The monument’s inscription is situated between Archangel Gabriel and the eagle, with the eagle perched atop the inscribed stone. Those in opposition to the statue claim it attempts to portray Hungary as nothing more than a victim. This is despite the known involvement of the Hungarian state in exposing Hungarian Jews, Romani and homosexuals to the horrors of the Holocaust.

Former Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány claims that the monument is an attempt to falsify the Hungarian state’s role in the Holocaust by its current Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Gyurcsány argued that “[...] he [Orbán] is desecrating all Jewish, Roma and gay victims of the Holocaust [...]”, while also stating that the Szabadság Tér monument is “[...] characteristic of the regime that it did not dare set up the statue of falsehood during the day.”⁷ Critics who oppose the statue claim that it seeks to absolve the Hungarian people and state of their role in the deportation and murder of almost half a million Jews during the German occupation.⁸ The heated debate surrounding the statue has been an on-going issue since its unveiling on 22nd July 2014, dividing Hungarians based on their views regarding the relationship between the Holocaust and the Hungarian State. The initial and secretive erecting of the memorial prompted quick protest, some of which resulted in the egging of the statue. Dorka Czenkli, columnist for the Magyar Narancs, stated: “[...] it [the statue] is

⁵ Péter Párkányi Raab is credited as being the sculptor and designer of the Szabadság Tér statue, however, those who protest against the statue believe Viktor Orbán’s government to be behind the design of the monument.

Máté, P. (2015). Translation by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

⁶ Please see figure 1.

⁷ Gyurcsány, F. cited in: Czenkli, D. (2014). Translated by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.) Euractiv. (2014).

⁸ Euractiv. (2014).

ignominy that has been stiffened in stone and metal.”⁹ Posted along the fence in front of the Szabadság Tér monument are dozens of pages and photographs that communicate the reality of the German occupation; one where the Hungarian state and its agents had a central role in the persecution of its own people. One such page states: “My mother was killed in Auschwitz. Thank you “Archangel” Gabriel.”¹⁰ This short message refutes the myth presented by the Szabadság Tér monument by providing evidence against it. By sarcastically thanking Archangel Gabriel despite the death of the author’s mother, the Hungarian state’s inaction in response to the extermination of Hungarians is criticised. This message provides a glimpse into the tension and dispute surrounding the statue as many Hungarians whose families were directly affected by the Holocaust feel the Hungarian State is culpable to a large degree. Despite the careful wording of the memorial’s inscription to avoid making any direct reference to the Holocaust, this topic has been at the centre of the disagreement with many of those against the statue arguing that the Szabadság Tér monument seeks to ‘falsify the past’ through coercive symbolism.¹¹

Current Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s government has been described as an ‘illiberal democracy’, which despite maintaining a democratic guise has sought to “[...] systematically dismantle institutional checks and balances, making real turnovers in power increasingly difficult.”¹² This slide of Fidesz into increasingly undemocratic measures to maintain power has resulted in criticism against Orbán actions.¹³ Protestors against the Szabadság Tér monument believe both the statue itself and the manipulative

⁹ Czenkli, D. (2014). Translated by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

¹⁰ Erőss, Á. (2016). Photo 5a, p. 249.

Interestingly, this message is originally in English. Presumably this is an attempt to reach a wider number of people who view the statue and thereby undermining its coercive intent to a greater degree.

¹¹ Czenkli, D. (2014). Translated by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

Máté, P. (2015). Translation by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

¹² Muller, J. W. (2014). p. 15-17.

Krekó, P and Enyedi, Z. (2018).

Viktor Orbán was also Prime Minister of Hungary during both the design and erection of the Szabadság Tér monument, although it has proven difficult to link it to Orbán definitively.

¹³ Fidesz, or the Hungarian Civic Alliance (‘Magyar Polgári Szövetség’) is a Hungarian political party led by Viktor Orbán and known for its conservative, nationalist and populist characteristics. Translated by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

myth that the statue presents of the German occupation of Hungary are characteristic of Orbán's illiberal style of governance.¹⁴

In recent years the portrayal of the past through the medium of statues and monuments has been drawn into the public eye. The 'Rhodes Must Fall' campaign argued for the removal of a statue memorialising Cecil Rhodes (1853-1902) for his donations to the University of Cape Town. This demand was issued in response to the moral reputation of Cecil Rhodes, who was seen as a relic of the colonial past. The call for the decolonisation of education in South Africa was successful in removing the statue in 2015 and bears great similarities to the current Szabadság Tér monument controversy.¹⁵ The 'Rhodes Must Fall' campaign encouraged the widespread realisation that monuments, although designed to represent the past they seek to depict, also represent the morality and political views of the time they were created. Lawrence Goldman details the rationale behind the desire to remove such monuments:

“To pull them down is not only to dispute the historical legacy of the subject but to take issue with those who supported the memorial. It is also to take issue with an earlier interpretation of the past, one that we may no longer agree with.”¹⁶

The notion of removing monuments designed during the morally distinct past is echoed with the existence of 'Szoborpark' in Budapest. This park is an open-air museum that features removed and relocated Soviet-era monuments and statues. Some protestors have called for the removal of the Szabadság Tér monument and for its relocation to the Szoborpark, where relics of the dictatorial regimes of the past belong.¹⁷ Unlike the 'Rhodes Must Fall' campaign, the protest against the Szabadság Tér monument revolves around its manipulation of the memory of the past, rather than its moral perspective on the past. This aspect of the controversy surrounding the Szabadság Tér monument links it to Henry Rousso's 1987 '*Vichy Syndrome*', which refers to the interpretive model by which the German occupation of France is remembered in France.

¹⁴ Czenkli, D. (2014). Translated by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

¹⁵ Goldman, L. (2018). p. 125-127.

¹⁶ Goldman, L. (2018). p. 126.

¹⁷ Czenkli, D. (2014). Translated by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

For further reading concerning the Szoborpark, please see: Foote, K, E. Tóth, A and Árvay, A. (2000). '*Hungary after 1989: Inscribing a New Past on Place.*'

Rousso argued that collective memory is a result of forgetting as much it is about remembering when he details the way France memorialises its struggle against Nazi Germany.¹⁸ Essentially, in its memory of the Second World War, France disassociated itself with Vichy France, labeling all its collaborative actions as criminal. The official memory of the Second World War became one of defeat and then rebirth through its heroic resistance. This is an idealized memory of the past that does not accurately account for the nuanced reality of events. The Szabadság Tér monument similarly to the ‘Vichy Syndrome’ theory proliferates a myth of the past that overstates the positive.



Figure 1 – Szabadság Tér Statue.¹⁹

¹⁸ Scullion, R. (1999). p. 11-13.

¹⁹ Photo from the author’s own collection. (Photo taken February 20th 2019).

1.1 – Methodological Approach and Historiography:

The principal question central to this body of work is: how does the Szabadság Tér statue, and the connotations attached to its symbolic features, exercise its power to reshape the interpretations individuals have of the past? ²⁰ In order to provide an adequately nuanced answer to this research question, two additional sub questions will be answered in individual chapters. These sub questions will directly relate back to the main research question and are as follows:

Sub Questions:

- 1) What are the symbolic features shown on the Szabadság Tér statue and what connotations do these features possess?
- 2) Do the connotations attached to the Szabadság Tér monument's symbolic features have the power to influence the interpretation individuals have of the past?

Initially a comprehensive analysis of Hungary's alliance with, and eventual occupation by, Nazi Germany will be conducted, as this will provide a crucial base by which the accuracy of the statue's symbolism will be compared. The focus of this historical overview is specifically targeted to highlight anti-Semitism within Hungary and the dynamic relationship between Nazi Germany and Hungary. The chapter 'Symbolism in Stone' will address Sub Question One and investigate the symbolism of the Szabadság Tér statue through the application of Roland Barthes' theories of '*denotations*', '*connotations*' and '*myths*' to explore the symbolic messages within the Szabadság Tér statue. ²¹ Barthes discusses the role of the 'sign' in the marketing of commodities and concludes that these signs constitute a seemingly unspoken yet still communicated aspects of marketing, which relies on connotations. ²² Barthes' theories will be implemented to analyse the Szabadság Tér statue's underlying symbolic themes, such as

²⁰ The term 'connotation' is used in conjunction with Roland Barthes ideas and will be used extensively to refer to the underlying meanings that are attached to both linguistic and visual signifiers. Please see figure 2.

Allen, G. (2003). p. 42.

²¹ Allen, G. (2003). p. 50-51.

²² Barthes, R. (2013). p. 217.

The term 'sign' is here used as Barthes understood it, that of the associative total of both the signifier and signified.

Barthes, R. (2013). p. 221-222.

the depiction of the Hungarian State as an angel and the symbolic links this form encourages.

The Chapter ‘Coercive Connotations’ analyses the power that these symbolic features have to shape its audiences’ interpretations of the past. Durkheim, in his work ‘*Suicide*’ (1897), argued that ‘social facts’, being external to the individual, are a reality and that they possess a coercive force over human action.²³ Durkheim’s analysis of social facts helps explain the Szabadság Tér monument’s potential to influence how people perceive the past. Barthes’s ideas regarding the marketing of commodities also provide an additional avenue by which to scrutinise the monument’s manipulative power. The chapter ‘Althusser and the Politics of Control’ elaborately discusses the main research question and refers back to each of the sub questions in its argumentation. This study analyses the power of the Szabadság Tér statue to influence how people interpret the Hungarian Holocaust and German occupation. Additionally, the notion that the Szabadság Tér statue constitutes an attempted misrepresentation of the *historia res gestae* to alter the interpretations people have of the past will be explored.²⁴ To achieve this, a theoretical approach has been adopted within this thesis so as to explain how this shaping of interpretations can be considered a form of subtle manipulation by the Hungarian State. The theory of ‘*Ideological State Apparatuses*’, detailed by Louis Althusser, is also utilised in this work’s argumentation as an example of the ways in which the symbolic features of cultural artifacts, along with their inherent and coercive nature, can be manipulated to achieve certain political agendas. Althusser’s ideological state apparatuses refers to state controlled entities, such as the scholastic, political, news and cultural apparatuses, that are able to exercise a coercive power over their audiences. Within this section, the Szabadság Tér statue is considered as an ideological state apparatus.²⁵

Deborah Cornelius’ ‘*Hungary in World War II: Caught in the Cauldron*’ (2011) will be used due to its scholarly overview of Hungarian political history both leading up to and

²³ Leezenberg, M. (2018). p. 245.

²⁴ ‘*Historia res gestae*’ is used here to refer to actual historical reality, as opposed to ‘*historia rerum gestarum*’, which refers to what people think or write about historical reality. One could consider the Szabadság Tér monument as an instance of *historia rerum gestarum*, as it is not historical reality itself but does seek to represent it.
Paul, H. (2015). p. 3.

²⁵ Althusser, L. (2014). p. 75.

during the Second World War. Furthermore, various articles regarding a wide range of aspects of Hungarian-German relations and the Hungarian Holocaust will be referenced within this thesis to contrast Cornelius' account with alternative perspectives. The personal memoirs of Miklós Horthy (2000), a key Hungarian political figure throughout the Second World War, will be used where productive as a primary source. However, the subjective nature of Horthy's memoirs, along with the uncertainty of how long after the discussed events its text was written, necessitates careful consideration as to the truth of details this source includes. Recent Hungarian news publications that discuss the controversy of the Szabadság Tér statue, although non-academic, will be utilised extensively. A number of Hungarian language websites ('*Magyar Narancs*', '*24.hu*' and '*Origo*') have been cited for information regarding both the erecting of the monument, and the controversy surrounding it.²⁶ This information is currently almost non-existent in English and where it is available it is far from being sufficiently referenced. For this reason, this thesis will reference various Hungarian media sources, which have been professionally translated by Gabor Jonas, a registered member of the *National Register of Public Service Interpreters*.²⁷

1.2 – Theoretical Overview:

Within the analytical sections of this thesis (Chapters 3, 4 and 5) various theoretical perspectives will be adopted so as to better understand the Szabadság Tér monument's power to manipulate its audience. Roland Barthes' theories regarding 'connotations' and 'myths' present a productive theoretical framework by which to conduct a semiotic analysis of the monument's symbolic features. In '*Mythologies*' (2013) Barthes details the term 'myth', by which he is referring to any type of speech provided it is conveyed by a discourse. This thesis argues that the Szabadság Tér monument creates its own 'myth' regarding the Second World War and, through the connotations attached to its symbolic features, has the power to coerce its audience into a certain understanding of history.²⁸ Building upon Ferdinand de Saussure's (1857-1913) understanding of

²⁶ The information from the Magyar Narancs, 24.hu, Origo websites were all translated by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

²⁷ Please see '<http://www.nrpsi.org.uk>' for additional information.

²⁸ Here the word 'speech' is used in the same understanding as Barthes, that is, not solely a linguistic medium, but also visual. This terminology will be implemented in order to argue that the Szabadság Tér monument seeks to create its own 'myth' regarding the Second World War. Barthes, R. (2013). p. 219.

language as a system of signs, and his distinction between the *signifier*, the ‘acoustic image’ or utterance of a word, and the *signified*, the mental meanings linked to the sign, Barthes was able to critically analyse the connotative meaning behind cultural materials.

²⁹ This is made clear when Barthes states how a “[m]yth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message [...]”. This highlights Barthes’ focus on the underlying themes of symbolic features and their power over consumers. ³⁰ As opposed to Saussure’s focus on language, Barthes focused on visual mediums and argued that visual signs, like linguistic signs, consist of two layers of meaning, the denotational and the connotational. Denotation refers to the actual meaning of a sign; this can be considered the dictionary definition of a linguistic sign, but a visual sign’s connotation is derived from a collective culture-specific understanding of the sign. ³¹ In addition to using Barthes’ theories during the semiotic analysis of the statue, his ideas will be used to prove that the symbolic features of such artifacts, and the connotations attached to them, have the power to manipulate their audience.

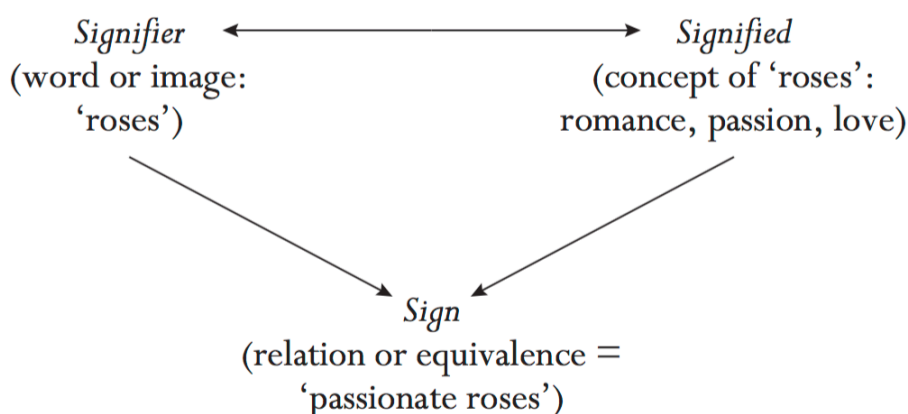


Figure 2 – Diagram showing the relation between ‘Signifier’, ‘Signified’ and ‘Sign’, Diagram originally from Allen, G (2003). ³²

²⁹ Leezenberg, M. (2018). p. 253,261.
Please see figure 2.

³⁰ Barthes, R. (2013). p. 217.

³¹ Allen, G. (2003). p. 50-51.

³² Allen, G. (2003). p. 42.

To analyse the power of the Szabadság Tér monument to coerce its audience, Barthes' ideas and methods surrounding the marketing of commodities are also used to argue that these connotations can influence the interpretation individuals have of the past. Barthes sought to understand how the underlying meanings of signs exercised a coercive influence over consumers. An example to illustrate this includes pasta packaging, which often incorporates the colours green, white and red into the design of the packaging. Barthes argued that this conscious design of the packaging was used in the effort to lend an aura of '*Italianicity*' to the commodity. As pasta is traditionally from Italy, the subconscious association of this brand of pasta with Italy lends the product a degree of legitimacy and supposed quality.³³

When consider the Szabadság Tér monument an intentionally manipulative memorial, Louis Althusser's theory of '*Ideological State Apparatuses*' provides a perspective by which to understand this function. Althusser's '*On the Reproduction of Capitalism*' (1970) builds upon the Marxist belief that ideology is a 'false consciousness' that is wielded as a means to control the exploited masses. Similar to Marx, Althusser believed ideology to be a tool implemented by the dominant classes to prevent the exploited classes from reaching awareness regarding the exploitation they suffer.³⁴ The economic 'base', and resultant class struggle that stems from each class' relation to the production of materials, remained the main driving force behind history for Althusser; however, Marx's explanation of ideology's role within the 'superstructure' remained underdeveloped and Althusser's work was principally concerned with analysing the role of ideology from a structural Marxist perspective.³⁵ It is Althusser's focus on the means by which the bourgeoisie encourage the proliferation of this 'false consciousness' that warrants its inclusion within this study, for his theory of

³³ Barthes, R. (1977). p. 33-35.

³⁴ Althusser, L. (2014). p. 157.

³⁵ Althusser, L. (2014). p. 53-55,173.

Marx believed that "[t]he history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles", by this he means that all relevant human history is rooted in the relationship between various classes within society and their relationship to the means of production. This is referred to as the economic 'Base', the main driving force behind history. Contrastingly, the 'Superstructure' refers to the societal systems that serves to maintain the power of the dominant classes, exemplified by culture and ideology. In its classic example, Marx, along with Althusser, see the Superstructure as a tool to maintain the false consciousness that serves to pacify the exploited working classes.

Marx, K and Engels, F. (2002). p. 10.

Leezenberg, M. (2018). p. 211-213.

'Ideological State Apparatuses' offers a productive analytical framework through which to scrutinise the Szabadság Tér monument's coercive potential. Althusser made the distinction between two groups of state apparatuses, the *'Repressive State Apparatuses'* (RSAs) and *'Ideological State Apparatuses'* (ISAs). Both repressive and ideological state apparatuses refer to institutions, or to what Althusser calls 'political realities', that are used by the state to exercise coercive force over the subordinate classes and to maintain the false consciousness that ensures their continued passivity. The distinction between RSAs and ISAs lies in their method. RSAs rely on overt and visible coercion through use of the government, police force, military and the judicial system. These apparatuses often use the threat of physical force, fiscal sanctions or imprisonment to achieve obedience and conformity among the exploited classes.³⁶ ISAs however, exercise a covert coercive power that serves to maintain the false consciousness of the masses. Examples of ISAs include churches, the media and educational institutions.³⁷ Althusser also developed the concept *'interpellation'*, which outlines the important role of ideology in how ISAs operate. For Althusser, the function of ISAs is to disseminate ideologies that reinforce the control of the bourgeoisie while ensuring the continued obedience of the exploited classes and although with a clear Marxist political agenda, his focus on state apparatuses that rely on subtle coercion to manipulate is of direct importance to the Szabadság Tér monument. As interpellation refers to process by which ISAs seek to force the internalisation of the dominant class' ideology upon their audiences, this theoretical approach allows for an analysis of the Szabadság Tér monument that acknowledges it as a coercive tool.³⁸

“We shall go on to suggest that ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way as to ‘recruit’ subjects among individuals (it recruits them all) or ‘transforms’ individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) through the very precise operation we call *interpellation* or *hailing*.”³⁹

The belief that the Szabadság Tér statue was purposely designed with this desire to ‘recruit’, or coerce, is an issue many protestors refer to when contending against the

³⁶ Althusser, L. (2014). p. 75.

³⁷ Althusser, L. (2014). p. 75.

³⁸ Althusser, L. (2014). p. 189-191.

³⁹ Althusser, L. (2014). p. 190.

statue's attempted '[...] falsification of history'.⁴⁰ While class struggle was of primary importance for Althusser, here ISAs will be referred to only with regard to their covert method of coercion and not as a bourgeois means of control. Althusser's theories will aid in the analysis of the Szabadság Tér statue's power to manipulate history in the minds of its audience; however, the monument will not be considered an artifact that attests to the Marxist understanding of ISAs as ensuring the continued exploitation of the proletariat.

⁴⁰ Máté, P. (2015). Translation by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

Chapter 2 - Historical Context:

Although the controversy concerning the statue is strongly connected to Hungary's role in the Holocaust, the statue was not designed to be a Holocaust memorial, but a memorial to all Hungarians lost during the Second World War. The changing political relationship between Hungary and Germany therefore shaped some of the conditions of creation and reception of the monument. Although the statue commemorates all Hungarians who lost their lives during the German occupation of Hungary, the controversy and contestation about how it does this arises from Hungary's role in the Holocaust.⁴¹

2.1 – Hungary After the Great War:

In 1918 groups throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire began to coalesce and support proto-national separatism.⁴² This development accorded with the tenth of President Woodrow Wilson's (1856-1924) *Fourteen Points* (1918), which stated that: "The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity to autonomous development."⁴³ Czechoslovakia declared its independence on 28th October 1918, just prior to the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This was later validated by the Treaty of Trianon (1920), which served to officially end conflict between the Allies and the Kingdom of Hungary in addition to the dividing of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, something that would reshape the political climate of Eastern Europe for many years to come.⁴⁴ The Treaty of Trianon reduced the area of Hungary from 282.000 to 93.000 square kilometers; the largest portions of the lost territory were ceded to Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.⁴⁵ The Treaty of Trianon and these successor kingdoms reduced Hungary to a landlocked and weakened state surrounded by an alliance of hostile nations that became known as the '*Little Entente*'.⁴⁶ Deborah

⁴¹ Máté, P. (2015). Translation by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

⁴² Reisser, W, J. (2009). p. 232-233.

⁴³ Arthur, S. Link et al. (1984). p. 536.

⁴⁴ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 7.

⁴⁵ Kinder, H and Hilgemann, W. (2003). p. 164-165.
Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 25-26.

⁴⁶ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 33.

Cornelis details the outrage the Hungarian citizens felt in response to the harsh Treaty of Trianon:

“For the next twenty years the main goal of foreign policy was to achieve some form of revision of the treaty. It was unfortunate that although several of the most prominent leaders did not expect complete revision of the treaty, the propaganda of the period – *Mindent vissza!* (Everything back!) and *Nem, nem, soha!* (No, no, never!) – created in the population the belief that total revision was the only possibility.”⁴⁷

It is through this Hungarian desire to regain lost territory that Hungary and Germany would begin to cooperate with one another.

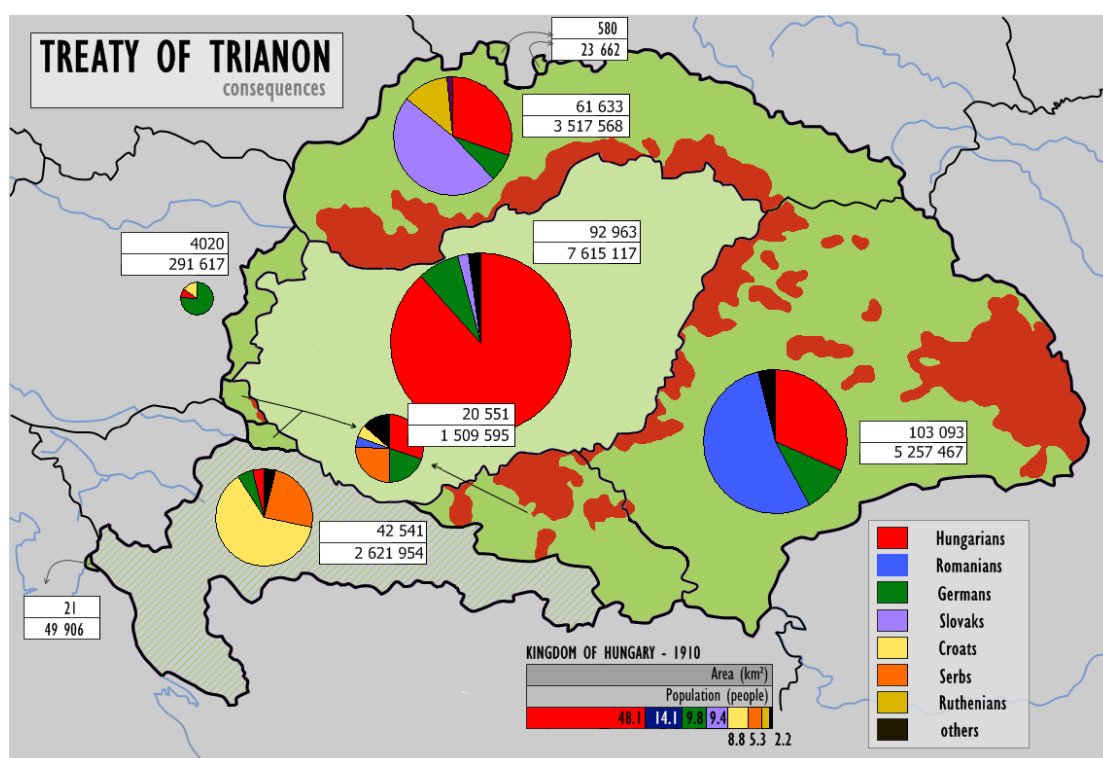


Figure 3 – Map showing truncated Hungary and the ethnic population of each territory after the Treaty of Trianon (1920). Post-Trianon Hungary is shown centrally in light green, while the territories lost to Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia and Austria are shown in dark green.

Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trianon_consequences.png

Last accessed: 21/02/2019⁴⁸

Reisser, W, J. (2009). p. 231-232.

⁴⁷ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 27.

⁴⁸ Trianon Consequences. (2010).

2.2 - The White Terror and Early Anti-Semitism

Béla Kun's (1886-1938) Communist Party of Hungary allied itself with the Hungarian Social Democratic Party and was able to secure power and create the Hungarian Soviet Republic in March 1919.⁴⁹ What set the Communist Party of Hungary apart from their political opposition was their support from both returning soldiers and the younger intelligentsia, along with their loyal fighting force. This paramilitary arm of the Communist Party was a strong political tool in response to the formation of the Little Entente and their aggressive occupation of Hungarian land prior to the finalisation of the Treaty of Trianon.⁵⁰ In an effort to solidify its own rule, the Communist Party, and their paramilitary force, the so-called 'Lenin Boys', murdered hundreds of the nation's suspected counter-revolutionaries. This event came to be known as the 'Red Terror.'⁵¹ However, the public outrage in response to the Red Terror and the looming threat of advancing Romanian forces led Béla Kun and many of his allies to flee.⁵² The failure of the Communist regime and the outrage in response to the Red Terror resulted in a strong aversion towards Communism, but also towards the Jewish, as the majority of the leaders of the Hungarian Soviet Republic were Jewish. This resulted in Judaism becoming stigmatised for the supposed role it had in the Red Terror.⁵³

The French, who feared the spread of Bolshevism, sanctioned counter-revolutionary action under Admiral Miklós Horthy (1868-1957).⁵⁴ In vengeance for the revolution

The Treaty of Trianon (1920) is so named after the location at which it was signed, the Grand Trianon Palace at Versailles.

Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 7.

⁴⁹ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 18.

Gerwarth, R. (2008). p. 179-181.

⁵⁰ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 16-17.

Bodo, B. (2010). p. 703.

⁵¹ Gerwarth, R. (2008). p. 193-194.

Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 19.

⁵² Reisser, W, J. (2009). p. 245-246.

⁵³ Bodo, B. (2010). p. 703-704.

⁵⁴ Miklós Horthy is a controversial figure that, through his actions during the White Terror (1919-1922) and his later inaction during the Hungarian Holocaust, facilitated the persecution of Hungarian Jew both before and during the German occupation. This has resulted in Horthy sometimes being labelled an anti-Semitic. On the other hand, Horthy occasionally went to great lengths to stop the deportation of Jews from Budapest. Miklós Horthy represents the nuanced reality of the history of Hungary and serves to undermine the Szabadság Tér monument's one-sided representation of events.
Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 23-26.

and its Red Terror, counter-revolutionary paramilitary groups murdered hundreds of Jews, peasants and workers, which came to be known as the ‘White Terror’.⁵⁵ The White Terror (1919-1922) and the anti-Semitic values it represented would serve to further bolster German and Hungarian relations ever more in the proceeding years. The historian Bela Bodo highlights how both the Red and White terrors “[...] colored the political behaviour of the aristocracy and its political representatives, especially in their attitudes towards fascism, in the 1930s and 1940s.”⁵⁶

2.3 - The Road to a German-Hungarian Alliance:

The 1938 German annexation of Austria created a very uncertain future for Hungary, as the nation was now completely surrounded by dangerous powers with the threat of a German occupation becoming a very real concern. The daring move by Germany encouraged the consolidation of the extreme Right around the new Arrow Cross party, whose popularity and influence continued to rise.⁵⁷ The culmination of this rise of the Right wing was a memorandum, the results of which suggested that a new law be passed to benefit the Christian middle class but to the detriment of the Jewish population. The First Jewish Law (1938), according to Cornelius, was introduced as a method to “[...] pacify the increasingly strident Right”, although it is unsure whether more anti-Semitic motivations were also important factors.⁵⁸ In addition to the First Jewish Law, Hungary benefited from the First Vienna Award (1938), made possible through the good will of Nazi Germany, which saw most former Czechoslovakian

⁵⁵ Miklós Horthy, former admiral of the Imperial Habsburg Navy, was elected in March 1920 as regent of the Kingdom of Hungary and would remain as the head of the Hungarian military throughout the Second World War.

Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 23,24,26.

⁵⁶ Bodo, B. (2010). p. 703, 723–724.

Bela Bodo argues that the Hungarian government’s methods of dealing with the Hungarian Right extremists, such as the Arrow Cross, and the treatment of Jewish citizens was based on experiences from during both the White and Red terrors. “[... The] final lesson revolved around the policy towards Jews, in which humanitarian considerations had been strictly subordinated to domestic and foreign-policy concerns, such as economic stability, foreign public opinion, revision of the borders and national security issues.” (Bodo, B. (2010). p.723-724.) Bodo suggests that the Hungarian aristocracy and political representatives felt that the welfare of Hungarian Jews was subordinate to the national desire to regain all territory lost through the Treaty of Trianon, along with other goals.

⁵⁷ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 70-72.

⁵⁸ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 73-74.

As aforementioned, Hungary experienced a period of widespread violence towards Jews during the ‘White Terror’ of 1919-1922.

territory inhabited by Hungarians returned to Hungary.⁵⁹ Many Hungarians praised German pragmatism; through cooperation with Hitler, Hungary had achieved what negotiations with the Allies could not.

When Pal Teleki (1879-1941) became the Prime Minister of Hungary in 1939 he found himself with powerful opposition from both the pro-German military leadership and the extreme Right, centred around the Arrow Cross Party.⁶⁰ In the same year Pal Teleki passed the Second Jewish Law (1939). More stringent than the first, the Second Jewish Law concerned those who were 'ethnically' Jewish, rather than those who were by faith alone. This meant that many more Hungarians would be affected and would no longer be able to vote, nor were they eligible for public office.⁶¹ Hungarians, influenced by the Arrow Cross Party, moved ideologically and politically closer to Nazi Germany by enacting laws that reflected Nazi values. In doing so they hoped to build their alliance with Germany and gain back the land lost through the Treaty of Trianon.⁶²

⁵⁹ Presseisen, E. L. (1960). p. 360.

Carpathian Ruthenia was not included in the territorial changes of the First Vienna Award, yet was later occupied by Hungarian forces on 18th March 1939.

Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 102-104.

⁶⁰ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 101.

Many Hungarians viewed an alliance with Germany as a means to achieve the nation's shared revisionist goals, pointing to the disputed northern territories regained through the first Vienna Award as proof of German power.

⁶¹ Turda, M. (2013). p. 561.

Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 106.

Don, Y. (1986). p. 66.

Jews were able to vote if they could provide evidence of their ancestors' continuous residence from 1867 onwards. This was designed to distinguish between newly immigrated Jews and long-term Hungarianised Jews.

Deborah Cornelius and Marius Turda discuss Teleki's Second Jewish Law (1939) in contrasting ways. Cornelius suggests Teleki was not an anti-Semitic and only passed the law to satiate both Nazi Germany and extreme right currents regarding the treatment of Jews in Hungary. Turda however, argues that Teleki's law was a means to achieve his eugenic and social welfare goals for the nation.

⁶² Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 109.

It is unclear why Teleki passed this new Jewish Law; however, Cornelius contends that it was again in an effort to both pacify the extreme-Right and to prevent German interference with the treatment of Hungarian Jews. Regardless of Teleki's intentions, the extreme-Right, who advocated an unconditionally pro-German foreign policy, secured greater representation for themselves and soon became the major opposition to Teleki's government.

This can, to some extent, be attributed to the Second Jewish Law preventing Hungarian Jews from voting, which further served to politically strengthen the extreme Right.

Cornelius' portrayal of Pal Teleki is overall quite positive. However, due to the Second Jewish Law (1939) he remains a controversial figure who is often labelled as an anti-Semitic figure. Interestingly, those who pointed out Teleki's controversial past protested against a memorial statue of Pal Teleki. The statue was later removed, which highlights how one-dimensional Cornelius' recount of the Second Jewish Law is.

Teleki attempted to preserve Hungarian neutrality and was cautious of over-committing to an alliance with Nazi Germany, but due to the fact that the Little Entente surrounded Hungary, German appeasement continued to be of paramount importance. Germany again wished to include Hungary in their aggressive foreign policy, continuously requesting Hungarian military assistance in their planned invasion of Poland. Teleki refused on moral grounds.⁶³ Instead Germany signed a non-aggression pact, known as the 'Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact', with the Soviet-Union, a move that shocked all of Europe.⁶⁴ With the Polish military losing rapidly to the advancing Wehrmacht, and later the forces of the Soviet Union, Polish refugees, many of whom were Jewish, poured into Hungary. Hitler considered the hospitality Hungary afforded these refugees as a breach of their neutrality. This resulted in greater difficulty for the Hungarians to refuse German demands in the future and soon Germany, due in part to new economic blockades on Germany by Britain, viewed Romania and Yugoslavia as possible strategic targets.⁶⁵

After a successful Soviet ultimatum to Romania regarding the disputed region of Bessarabia, and sensing Romanian weakness, Hungary renewed its claims over the Transylvanian territories. The Axis powers of Germany and Italy agreed to arbitrate and concluded their decision with the Second Vienna Award (1940), which saw Romania forced by the Axis powers to cede part of Transylvania to Hungary.⁶⁶ All the while the political influence of the Hungarian military leadership, exemplified by Chief of the General Staff Henrik Werth's desire to expand the military and to improve relations with Germany, opposed the policies of Pal Teleki.⁶⁷ Ever fearful of greater dependency on Germany and wishing to maintain the option of siding with the Allies, Teleki agreed to a treaty of eternal friendship with Yugoslavia in 1940, renouncing the Hungarian claim to its pre-Trianon southern territories. Regardless of this treaty, Hitler requested

Avakumović, I. Ingraio, C. Ablonczy, B and Ozsváth, Z. (2010). p. 341.
Bodo, B (2010). p. 724.

⁶³ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 133-136.

Hungary and Poland had a long history of friendship and due to this, Hungary strove to maintain neutrality should war break out between both Germany and Poland.

⁶⁴ Gompert, D. Binnendijk, H and Lin, B. (2014). p. 83.

⁶⁵ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 117-119.

⁶⁶ Reisser, W, J. (2009). p. 244.

⁶⁷ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 129-133.

Hungarian support in his upcoming attack on Yugoslavia, with the return of the lost Hungarian territories offered as an incentive. Despite strong support for assisting the German attack from Regent Miklós Horthy, Teleki protested against this obvious betrayal of their new ‘eternal friends.’⁶⁸ Unknown to Teleki, Chief of the General Staff Werth was covertly cooperating with the German military and plans for a joint invasion were under way. On learning about Werth’s actions and the nation’s betrayal of the treaty of eternal friendship with Yugoslavia, Pal Teleki, Prime Minister of Hungary, committed suicide early in the morning of April 3rd, 1941.⁶⁹

The military annexation of parts of Yugoslavia realised the extent of the Hungarian revisionist goals of the inter-war period. Almost the entirety of the lost territory was now returned, along with the huge number of ethnic Hungarians living in such territories. However, Hungary’s allegiance to Germany, and resultant opposition to the Allies, was now committed.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Additionally, even allowing the German forces to pass through Hungary in order to attack Yugoslavia was certain to anger the Allies, and perhaps even result in their declaration of war. Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 132-133.

⁶⁹ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 138-143.
Pal Teleki’s role as Prime Minister offers an interesting perspective on German – Hungarian relations during the Second World War. While the Szabadság Tér monument’s myth suggests the two nations were enemies in complete opposition to one another morally, Teleki serves as an example that attests to the many intricacies of the relationship between Germany and Hungary. Teleki sought to distance Hungary from Nazi Germany so as to maintain Hungarian political autonomy, however, he also passed the Second Jewish Law (1939), which resulted in the suffering of Hungarian Jews. This nuanced account of historical events serves to expose the falseness of the Szabadság Tér monument.

⁷⁰ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 145.

Hungarian Territorial Gains between 1938-1941

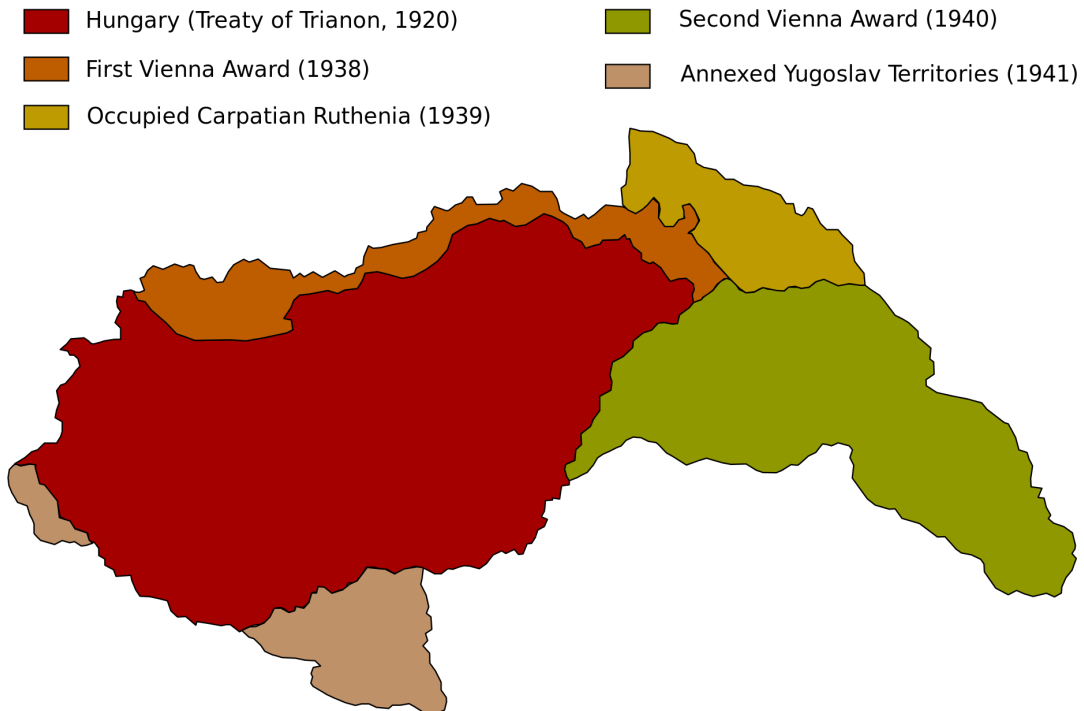


Figure 4 – Map showing Hungarian territorial gains between 1938 and 1941.

Available at: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TerritorialGainsHungary1920-41.svg>.

Last accessed 22/02/2019.⁷¹

2.4 - Barbarossa and Attempts to Defect:

Disregarding the German – Soviet non-aggression pact of 1939, Hitler launched his assault on the vast Russia steppe on 22nd June 1941.⁷² Expecting another blitzkrieg, reminiscent of much of Nazi Germany's earlier victories, Hungary entered into a state of war with the Soviet Union alongside their German allies.⁷³ Despite early successes the possibility of a Soviet victory became an ever-growing possibility with the great Soviet victories at Stalingrad (1942-1943) and Kursk (July 1943), along with the

⁷¹ Territorial Gains Hungary 1920. (2012).

⁷² Snyder, T. (2010). p. 165-166.

⁷³ Gompert, D. Binnendijk, H and Lin, B. (2014). p. 83.

Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 146.

This fact lies in complete opposition to the myth presented by the Szabadság Tér monument, which suggests the relationship between the two nations was one of opposition and conflict. The statue conveniently avoids referencing how Nazi Germany and Hungary were, for much of the war, close allies.

catastrophic defeat of the Hungarian forces at the Battle of the Don (April – October 1943), which saw approximately 50,000 Hungarian losses.⁷⁴ The catastrophic defeat at the Battle of the Don and continuous German defeats encouraged Miklós Kálay (1887-1967), then Prime Minister, to covertly contact the Allies and discuss the possibility of a Hungarian exit from the war and even a potential Hungarian defection to the Allied cause.⁷⁵ Despite disagreements on the Hungarian's willingness to conduct sabotage missions against German forces, the agreement reached was that when Allied forces reached Hungarian territory Hungary would publicly defect to the cause of the Allies and provide assistance against their former German allies.⁷⁶ The situation Hungary found herself in was a balancing act of doing just enough to prevent the German occupation of the nation, all the while refusing German requests to resume participation in fighting against the Soviet Union. Hitler soon learned of the Hungarian attempts to defect so set in motion 'Operation Margarethe', the planned military seizure of Hungarian territory. German forces would occupy Hungary on March 19th, 1944.⁷⁷ The Hungarian balancing act of seeking to appease Hitler while simultaneously maintaining Hungarian autonomy had come to an end. Now Hungary and its population were at the mercy of Nazi Germany.

2.5 - German Occupation and the Hungarian Holocaust:

On entering Hungarian territory, the German forces marched in a ceremonial manner, so as to avoid resistance. After all, many Hungarians knew Nazi Germany to be the principal ally of the nation.⁷⁸ Before long, signs of occupation were visible to the public as anti-semitism appeared on the radio and sudden restrictions on the movement of Jews were enforced.⁷⁹ The German plan envisioned the complete reorganization of the Hungarian economy in a way that would best benefit the Nazi war effort and by 29th

⁷⁴ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 209,231.

⁷⁵ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 200.

Like Pal Teleki, Kálay also understood the grave situation Hungary found herself in; the German occupation of the nation was a very real threat should they seek to defect.

⁷⁶ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 232-239.

Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 258,268.

⁷⁷ Gompert, D. Binnendijk, H and Lin, B. (2014). p. 14-15.

Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 277.

⁷⁸ Borhi, L. (2016). p. 14-15.

Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 277.

⁷⁹ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 283.

March 1944, it was decided that all able Hungarian forces were to be sent to continue the fight against the Soviets as soon as possible.⁸⁰ The occupiers set to work on the Jewish Question and under Adolf Eichmann's leadership Hungarian Jews who were unfit for labour work were systematically isolated, deported and exterminated.⁸¹ It was the 'Eichmann Kommando', some 200 to 300 personnel, who were tasked with carrying out this process, making Hungarian collaboration essential. A Jewish Council was established under the orders of Eichmann, which was intended to facilitate in the isolation of Jews in return for Eichmann's assurances that the Jews would not be harmed.⁸² The large percentage of Jews who passively submitted to these new measures can be attributed to the image of legitimacy attached to the new restrictions. As the true nature of the German occupation was still not publically understood, many assumed the new anti-Jewish measures to have been mediated through negotiations by Regent Horthy and therefore legitimate.

While it is arguable that Regent Horthy agreed to the deportation of some Jews, the realisation of the brutal treatment of the Jews stirred him to action. Horthy sought to prevent the brutality against the Jews by attaining exemptions from labour work and deportation for those Jews who were baptized or specialist professionals.⁸³ Horthy attempted to save the Jews of Budapest from deportation and was successful in the exemption of a small number of individuals and even in temporarily putting a stop to the Jewish deportations. Although some of Budapest's Jewish population were deported, the majority survived.⁸⁴ While Horthy's earlier actions and inactions hastened the deportation of Hungarian Jews, these later actions certainly served to prevent deportations. Eichmann, with regard to Horthy's actions against the attempted

⁸⁰ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 288,290.

⁸¹ The initial stage of anti-Jewish measures included the isolation laws and the confiscation of all Jewish assets. This was followed by the further isolation and collectivisation of Jews into ghettos, where they would wait for deportation and ultimately extermination.

Cornelius, D. (2011) p. 292.

Dossa, S. (1984). p. 169-170.

⁸² Dossa, S. (1984). p. 176-177

Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 292-293.

⁸³ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 304-305.

Horthy's role in the Hungarian Holocaust is once again contrary to the myth presented by the Szabadság Tér monument. Through his early inaction, he allowed for Hungarian Jews to be exploited, isolated and exterminated. While the Szabadság Tér statue would suggest that Nazi Germany was the sole culprit.

⁸⁴ Horthy, N. (2000). p. 274.

deportations, stated: “In all my long practice this is the first time such a thing has happened to me; this won’t do at all. It is contrary to all agreements.”⁸⁵

With Soviet forces arriving in Hungarian-controlled Transylvania the primary goal was now to secure an armistice with the approaching Red Army.⁸⁶ The decision to simultaneously make contact with the Soviets and to inform the German command of their intention to seek an armistice was made. This was an ill-fated decision as German agents began to arm and organise the extreme Right Arrow Cross Party.⁸⁷ Along with the carefully planned kidnap of Horthy’s son to ensure the Regent’s complicity, the German forces occupied Budapest, the Hungarian radio offices and barracks. With this successful coup the pro-Nazi Arrow Cross came to power, with Ferenc Szálasi (1897-1946) at its head.⁸⁸

2.6 - Arrow Cross Rule:

From October 16th 1944 Ferenc Szálasi was effectively the dictator of the Hungarian nation, due to his position as both Prime Minister and head of state.⁸⁹ Arrow Cross paramilitary forces loyal to Szálasi terrorised and arrested many of the Left opposition and the Jewish community. Oppression of the Jews intensified under Arrow Cross rule as many were forced into labour groups whose task it was to prepare the defence against the nearing Soviet forces, while others were isolated within ghettos or even killed. Under the Arrow Cross Party, and due to the desperate shortage of manpower in the Reich, thousands of Jews were moved to Germany to work. This necessity for a labour force spared the majority of Hungarian Jews from extermination. Other Jews in Budapest who were either exempt from or unfit for labour work were forcibly moved to a central ghetto, which was continually subjected to terror attacks by militant Arrow

⁸⁵ Horthy, N. (2000). p. 310-312.

⁸⁶ Horthy, N. (2000). p. 314,316.

⁸⁷ Sodaro, A. (2018). p. 60.
Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 328.
Horthy, N. (2000). p. 277-279.

⁸⁸ Sodaro, A. (2018). p. 72.

⁸⁹ Sodaro, A. (2018). p. 58.

Szálasi’s new foreign policy saw Hungary offering complete cooperation to Germany by providing for the famished German military materially. Despite Szálasi’s willingness to work with Nazi Germany, Soviet forces had already seized much of Hungary’s eastern territories, which limited the efficacy of Szálasi’s designs.

Cross members.⁹⁰ János Kovács, in his journal article 'Neo-Antisemitism in Hungary' (1946), details how 50,000 Jews were deported under Szálasi's leadership, while a further 35,000 were massacred or starved to death within the ghetto.⁹¹ The advance of the Red Army offered a promise of salvation for the Jews, although for the majority of the Hungarian population it was unclear whether Soviet occupation would be any more favourable than that of the Nazis.⁹²

While Germany was still considered an ally by many Hungarians, the Arrow Cross Party enjoyed much less respect. Angered by the illegitimate take over of the Arrow Cross and emboldened by the nearing Soviet forces, a new resistance movement was formed under the Hungarian Front. Meeting on 9th November 1944 at the Szabadság Tér, the resistance established its own leadership committee and declared itself the legal, unlike the Arrow Cross Party, representative of the Hungarian people. The resistance planned an armed uprising, to be timed with the Soviet advance on Budapest, which strove to hinder the German war effort and also to make contact with the Soviets in order to attain their support.⁹³ However, the Arrow Cross was aware of this clandestine group and their intents as their spies had infiltrated the insecure resistance meetings. On 22nd November 1944 the resistance members were caught unaware during a meeting at the home of a member, Vilmos Tartsay, when Arrow Cross members raided the meeting. The Arrow Cross Party was ruthless in the dealing of these conspirators, executing or imprisoning all those arrested and while other small resistance groups were still operating, the largest, the Hungarian Front, no longer existed.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Horthy, N. (2000). p. 298.

Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 335-339.

Many of the Hungarian Jews sent to work within Germany were forced to march on foot, resulting in the deaths of many. This caused an international outcry from neutral nations and from the papacy.

⁹¹ Kovács, J. (1946). p. 157.

⁹² Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 348.

⁹³ The Hungarian Front met at the very square where the 2014 Szabadság Tér monument is located. This connotatively links the square with notions of resistance against foreign aggressors, a theme which is echoed in the name Szabadság Tér 'Liberty Square'.

Translation by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

The plan to ensure Soviet cooperation was intended to avoid a situation similar to the Warsaw uprising, which was disastrously crushed by German forces with the Soviets choosing not to offer assistance.

Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 351-354.

⁹⁴ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 356-357.

The Siege of Budapest would last from 24th December 1944, when the first Soviet soldiers unexpectedly arrived on the western banks of the Danube, until the complete and unconditional surrender of the city on 13th February 1945. The siege was one of the most destructive of the Second World War and saw at least 80 percent of buildings and all five bridges over the Danube destroyed.⁹⁵ While the Second World War was far from over, Hungary was now subordinate to Soviet Russia.

The historical process discussed above paints a vastly more nuanced picture of Hungary's experience of the Second World War than any statue ever could. All of the events described are directly related to the anti-Semitic treatment of Hungarian Jews and the political relations between Hungary and Nazi Germany. The story of Hungary during the Second World War is not an archetypal narrative that is neither completely evil nor completely good, but is constituted by many opposing forces with contrasting actions and views.⁹⁶ Many Hungarians were indeed anti-Semites, while many others went to great risks to protect Jews. Equally, we have seen that not all Hungarians viewed Germany as an enemy, for much of the war Germany was the principal ally of Hungary, aiding in the fight against the true Hungarian enemy, Soviet Bolshevism.⁹⁷ With these considerations in mind we are able to see the inherently difficult task of historical monuments that seek to represent such intricate and diverse events in history. However, such monuments are not necessarily created with the accurate portrayal of the past as their primary function. The following chapters consider the Szabadság Tér monument's function to be one of manipulating its audience into adopting a doctored account of the German occupation of Hungary.

⁹⁵ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 365-367.

⁹⁶ The memory of the German occupation of Hungary is presented by Szabadság Tér monument as a simple conflict between two opposing forces. However, as has been proved, the reality was much more intricate. This again bears great similarities to Henry Rousso's *Vichy Syndrome* (1991), which presented the memory of occupied and collaborative France from a certain interpretative perspective that warped the understanding the French had of the historical reality of occupied France.
Scullion, R. (1999). p. 11-13.

⁹⁷ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 157.

Chapter 3 - Symbolism in Stone:

As discussed in the Theoretical Overview, Barthes' concern is centered upon the underlying cultural meanings attached to commodities and through their semiotic analysis he is able to critique consumer culture. His theoretical framework is useful for understanding the complexities of how the Szabadság Tér statue communicates underlying meaning, such as positive or negative connotations.

The site on which the monument stands, Szabadság Tér ('Liberty Square') has certain connotative meanings of its own. This square at the heart of Budapest features another older monument that commemorates the liberation of Nazi occupied Hungary by the Soviet Red Army (1946).⁹⁸ Both the 1946 Soviet memorial and the name of the square itself use the word liberation in their presentation of historical events, which paints a positive and glorious narrative of the attainment of the nation's freedom; in contrast the 2014 Szabadság Tér statue attests to the horrors of the German occupation of Hungary.

⁹⁹ The 1946 Soviet monument, the 2014 Szabadság Tér statue and the square's name are all examples of the politicisation and evocation of past events. Additionally, the Hungarian Front, the anti-Arrow Cross resistance fighters, met on 9th November 1944 at the Szabadság Square to establish its own leadership committee and to declare itself the legal representative of the Hungarian people.¹⁰⁰ The combination of these linguistic, symbolic and historical characteristics of the Szabadság Tér result in the inseparable connotative links between the Szabadság Tér and notions of conflict, liberty and occupation. By memorialising the 'liberation' of Hungary, both the Soviet monument and the Szabadság Tér itself connotatively juxtapose Hungary with Nazi Germany, an aspect that is repeated in the later 2014 Szabadság Tér statue, through visual symbolism attained through its juxtaposition of the two nations as an eagle and as the Archangel Gabriel.

The monument is located adjacent to a fountain built into the floor of the square. In the summer the fountain's jets sporadically fire water into the air, much to the delight of

⁹⁸ Please see figure 5.

⁹⁹ Erőss, Á. (2016). p.237-238, 245.

The 1946 Soviet memorial of the liberation of Hungary by the Soviet Red Army also has a controversial nature. Ágnes Erőss details how protestors also wish for the removal of the Soviet monument due to its politicised glorification of Communism's role in the Second World War.

¹⁰⁰ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 351-354.

passing children. Due to this fountain the area immediately in front of the 2014 Szabadság Tér monument regularly has children and their families enjoying the fountain.¹⁰¹ Additionally, the Szabadság Tér, being in the centre of Budapest and close to the banks of the Danube, is viewed by droves of passers-by everyday. This ensures that the Szabadság Tér monument is seen, and therefore able to exercise its coercive function on a larger number of individuals.



Figure 5 – Map showing important buildings, monuments and features of the Szabadság Tér (Liberty Square) in Budapest, Hungary. Photo originally from Erőss, Á. (2016).¹⁰²

3.1 – Angel:

With regard to the physical appearance of the Szabadság Tér monument, one of the more transparent uses of symbolism is the Hungarian nation's portrayal as Archangel Gabriel. Angels are synonymous with benevolence for many and are at the centre of Abrahamic iconography as the intermediaries between heaven and humanity. Ugo Volli (2014) details how angels are among the host of God and carry connotations of

¹⁰¹ Czenkli, D. (2014). Translated by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

¹⁰² Erőss, Á. (2016). Figure One. p.238.

ascension above the normalcy of humanity and instead exist in an elevated form of divine existence.¹⁰³ The Szabadság Tér statue specifically depicts Archangel Gabriel who holds a central role in Judaism, Islam and Christianity, where he serves as God's intermediary between the prophets David and Muhammad, as well as being the patron of Hungary.¹⁰⁴ Archangel Gabriel certainly carries many positive connotations for all those adhering to Abrahamic religions, yet Janine Coghlan (2012) also details that similar angelic figures are present in other religions, such as Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Taoism and Buddhism. Coghlan describes the shared understanding that these religions have of angelic figures, concluding that angels, for many, are "[...] spiritually more powerful and blissful than humans [...]"¹⁰⁵ The statue evokes the common association of angels among several major world religions, not to mention individuals who although not actively religious are nonetheless influenced by the iconography of these religions.¹⁰⁶ Most angels, including Archangel Gabriel, are often considered to be androgynous and the Szabadság Tér statue's angel continues this tradition with its vaguely gendered and soft-featured angel.¹⁰⁷

In addition to the positive connotations associated with angels, the smooth rounded features of the Szabadság Tér statue's depiction of Archangel Gabriel are physical features common with infants and therefore connotatively associated with vulnerability and innocence.¹⁰⁸ The association of round-featured faces with beauty is especially prominent in classical art, both in ancient Greek culture and in its revival during the Renaissance of the early sixteenth century, where early examples of the association of heavenly love with the naked woman were natural.¹⁰⁹ The inclusion of columns as part of the Szabadság Tér monument again makes this link with the classical world. The association of smooth features with connotations of vulnerability and innocence is

¹⁰³ Volli, U. (2014). p. S37.

Coghlan, J. (2012). p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ Máté, P. (2015). Translation by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

¹⁰⁵ Coghlan, J. (2012). p. 1-3.

¹⁰⁶ Archangel Gabriel is one of the two most powerful angels in Abrahamic religious lore and "[...] is the angel of annunciation, resurrection, mercy, vengeance, death [and] revelation."

Davidson, G. (1971). p. 117.

¹⁰⁷ Coghlan, J. (2012). p. 3.

Máté, P. (2015). Translation by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

¹⁰⁸ Aronoff, J. (2006). p. 88.

Please see figure 6 and 7.

¹⁰⁹ Burke, P. (2001). p. 38.

further reinforced by the body language of the archangel, which also suggests passivity. With closed eyes and open arms, the angel is positioned standing precariously beneath the threat of the eagle.¹¹⁰ Interestingly, one of Archangel Gabriel's wings is missing, instead being imitated by the flowing garment Archangel Gabriel is wearing.¹¹¹ This is likely a symbolic suggestion of Hungary's mutilation at the hands of Nazi Germany. The common symbolic understanding of angels, and more specifically Archangel Gabriel, presented above are all used as part of the Szabadság Tér monument in an attempt to create a myth regarding the Hungarian state's character during the German occupation of Hungary. However, Archangel Gabriel is not presented alone and is perhaps better understood through its juxtaposition with the Eagle representing Nazi Germany.

¹¹⁰ Schubert, T, W. (2005). p. 9-10.

¹¹¹ Please see figure 6.



Figure 6 - Szabadság Tér Archangel Gabriel. ¹¹²

¹¹² Photo from the author's own collection. (Photo taken February 20th 2019).



Figure 7 – Close up view of the Szabadság Tér monument’s Archangel Gabriel. ¹¹³

3.2 - Eagle:

Nazi Germany’s depiction as the skeletal eagle lies in almost complete opposition to Hungary’s Archangel Gabriel. While the eagle was appropriated by the Nazi regime into the Reichsadler insignia, which shows an eagle atop the swastika, here we are presented with a warped eagle reworked in order to prompt more negative connotations. ¹¹⁴ While the Nazis used the eagle to display the power and authority of the party, in its depiction as part of the Szabadság Tér statue it has been manipulated in order to encourage negative connotations among its audience. We are not presented with a graceful animal but a twisted and aggressive predator that looms menacingly above the heroic Archangel Gabriel. This symbolic coercion is achieved in part through the modifications of the wings into elongated bone-like appendages and the menacingly keen point of the eagle’s talons. ¹¹⁵ This sharp angularity of the eagle’s wings is once again in complete contrast to the smooth rounded features of Archangel Gabriel below. Many cartoon villains often feature such elongated and distorted appearances, which serve to highlight these characters as aggressive antagonists. Cartoon characters are often consciously constructed to communicate their morality through their appearance, a

¹¹³ Photo from the author’s own collection. (Photo taken February 20th 2019).

¹¹⁴ Narver, J. D. (1990). p. 86,93,98.

¹¹⁵ Please see figure 8.

tactic that is evidently clear in the difference between the characters of Mufasa and Scar in the film ‘*The Lion King*’ (1994).¹¹⁶ While Mufasa’s face has rounded and symmetrical features, suggesting benevolence, Scar’s face is comparatively more angular and therefore holding sinister connotations. Kristen Tait (2010) details how “[...] it is evident how he [Scar] is visually opposite of Mufasa: through the use of elongated hair and a distorted face, Scar’s demonic nature is revealed.”¹¹⁷ A study conducted by Watson, Blagrove and Moore (2012) into facial angularity and its connotative association with aggression among humans concluded in the confirmation that angular features convey negative connotations.¹¹⁸ The design of the eagle of the Szabadság Tér statue uses these pre-existing symbolic links in its effort to demonise the image of Nazi Germany, which when considered alongside Hungary’s Archangel Gabriel, presents a myth regarding the German occupation of Hungary and the relationship between these two nations during the Second World War. The former of these two themes is expressed more overtly through the inclusion of the year 1944 on the eagle’s ankle, the year of the German occupation of Hungary.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Tait, K, L. (2010). p. iv.

¹¹⁷ Tait, K, L. (2010). p. 93-94.

¹¹⁸ Watson, D, G. Blagrove, E and Moore, L. (2012). p. 3.

¹¹⁹ Cornelius, D. (2011) p.5.



Figure 8 – *Szabadság Tér Eagle*.¹²⁰

3.3 - Juxtaposition:

Much of the connotative potency of the statue stems from the juxtaposition between both Archangel Gabriel and the eagle overhead. The spatial positioning of the two figures also symbolically attests to the power relation between both Hungary and Nazi Germany, with the eagle being shown in a more powerful position, while Archangel Gabriel is shown as vulnerable.¹²¹ The eagle is positioned above and slightly behind Archangel Gabriel, which encourages the monument's audience to view the two figures as predator and prey. When considering the Szabadság Tér statue's use of vertical spacing, we can see how the statue could have been purposely designed on many levels to represent the power relation between Hungary and Nazi Germany during the Second World War, with Hungary being shown as the less powerful of these two nations.

One additional consideration is the highlighted features of both Archangel Gabriel and the eagle. The majority of both of these figures are a rusty bronze colour, while two

¹²⁰ Photo from the author's own collection. (Photo taken February 20th 2019).

¹²¹ See Schubert, T. W. (2005). p. 9-10.

specific features are a more reflective bronze that catches the eye. The highlighted feature for Archangel Gabriel is a crucifix atop a globe, known as the globus cruciger.

¹²² This symbol represents Christ's dominion over the globe, here attesting to Hungary's strong Catholic identity. ¹²³ In contrast to this symbolic link of Hungary to piety and religion lies the eagle's beak, symbolising German aggression and again making the connotative association between Nazi Germany and predatory characteristics. In summary, Hungary's depiction as Archangel Gabriel encourages Hungary to be perceived as vulnerable, innocent and passive, with the globus cruciger being highlighted to draw attention to the Hungarian Catholic identity. In direct opposition to this positive view of Hungary, Nazi Germany is shown as a villainous predator of superior power that looms out of sight of the passive and vulnerable Hungary. This myth of the German occupation of Hungary and the relationship between the two nations is drastically different from the highly nuanced historical reality of the German occupation of Hungary. While the myth presented by the Szabadság Tér monument suggests that Germany was a predatory threat to the passive Hungary, the statue's myth fails to account for the fact that for much of the Second World War these two nations were military allies. The Szabadság Tér monument would suggest that Nazi Germany was predatory when aiding in the Hungarian territorial reclamation through both the First and Second Vienna Awards. Additionally, the myth presented by the Szabadság Tér monument lays the blame for the horrors of the Hungarian Holocaust with Germany and the Nazi regime, which conveniently underplays the Hungarian state's role in the persecution of Jews, homosexuals and Romani. The question remains whether the Szabadság Tér monument's reframing of history has the power to mislead its audience in their understanding of historical events.

¹²² British Museum. (1868).

Please see figure 6.

¹²³ Although it may appear easy to disprove the notion that Hungarian identity is inextricably linked to religiosity, it is important to remember that the Szabadság Tér monument presents an idealised version of Hungarian identity as being linked with Catholicism. As the argumentation above has proven, the reality is always much more intricate than memorials suggest.

Chapter 4 - Coercive Connotations:

The collection of connotations attached to the Szabadság Tér statue present a framing of the Hungarian – German relationship during the Second World War. When considered alone, the connotations of the statue amount to nothing more than adjectives, such as vulnerable or aggressive, however, when considered as a whole they present a retelling of the events of the Second World War, with Germany being portrayed as the aggressive predator and Hungary the innocent victim. Nazi Germany, along with its radical Nazi leadership, is remembered as one of the principal belligerents of the Second World War and most narratives concerned with this conflict follow this status quo.¹²⁴ The Szabadság Tér monument is no exception to this and through its symbolic features it presents Nazi Germany as an aggressive and guilty nation. This account of history has the power to mislead those who see the statue, shaping their understanding of the Second World War.

As introduced within the Theoretical Overview, the consciously employed connotative symbolism of commodity packaging can influence the decisions made by individual consumers, a theory championed by Roland Barthes (1977). Therefore, similar symbolic coercion can occur through the medium of statues. Peter Burke (2001) builds upon Barthes' ideas regarding the conscious incorporation of these connotative features as a means to market commodities:

“It may be useful to employ the term ‘subliminal’ in a broader sense to refer to the way in which the mental image of a given product is built up by associating various objects with its visual image. The process is one of conscious manipulation on the part of the advertising agencies, their photographers and their ‘motivational analysts’, but it is largely unconscious to the viewers.”¹²⁵

Burke states that these visual signs do not present social reality, but are in fact special performances designed to coerce the audience through suggestive signs. In the context of the marketing of commodities this results in consumers being unconsciously encouraged to purchase a certain product through symbolic association, such as being

¹²⁴ Haase, C, Kraiker, C and Kreuzer, J. (2012). p.81.

¹²⁵ Burke, P. (2001). p. 95.

manipulated into assuming a products level of quality due to symbolic references included in its packaging.¹²⁶ The symbolism included in the Szabadság Tér memorial is also similar to what Burke would call a ‘special performance’. The special performance of the statue portrays a perspective of the Second World War that deviates from the *historia res gestae*, one where Germany and Hungary are shown as enemies, rather than strong economic and military allies. Much in the same way pasta packaging uses visual images and their connotative meanings to encourage sales, the Szabadság Tér monument attempts to distance Hungary from Nazi Germany, which is widely believed to be one of the major belligerents of the Second World War.¹²⁷

Irrespective of the need for impartiality and objectivity, much discussion regarding the Second World War demonises Nazi Germany and its radically fascist leadership for its role in both the Second World War and the Holocaust. This case has become the archetypical narrative form of talking about and remembering the Second World War and, as we can see with the case of Hungary and the Szabadság Tér statue, this is not restricted to Allied nations.¹²⁸ Despite Germany being the major ally of Hungary during much of the conflict, the Szabadság Tér monument follows the post-war tradition of demonising and blaming Nazi Germany. That said, the main inscription on the Szabadság Tér memorial, “*A Német Megszállás Áldozatainak Emlékműve*” (“A Monument for the Victims of the German Occupation”), carefully avoids referencing the Holocaust.¹²⁹ As previously detailed, the Hungarian military, police force and the Jewish Council all played a vital role in the persecution of Hungarian Jews during the German occupation. The ‘Eichmann Kommando’, composed of some 200 to 300 personnel, was dependent upon Hungarian collaboration in the persecution of Jewish Hungarians, which for many of those protesting against the Szabadság Tér monument serves as evidence against the statue’s myth of an angelic Hungary.¹³⁰ The fact that the

¹²⁶ Burke, P. (2001). p. 28.

¹²⁷ Haase, C, Kraiker, C and Kreuzer, J. (2012). p.81.

Here blame is said to have predominantly fallen on Nazi Germany as this is in line with the narrative presented by the Szabadság Tér monument. However, many scholars who detail the guilt of Nazi Germany and their role in the Second World War assign the majority of culpability to a small number of high ranking and ‘radical’ Nazis.

Post, G. (2016). p.6.

¹²⁸ Haase, C, Kraiker, C and Kreuzer, J. (2012). p.81.

¹²⁹ Translation by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

¹³⁰ Cornelius, D. (2011) p. 292.

Dossa, S. (1984). p. 169-170.

Nazi persecution of Hungarian Jews completely necessitated Hungarian collaboration is in complete contrast to the way in which Hungary is presented within the statue's myth. In reality the role of the Hungarians in the Holocaust was far from angelic. This contradiction is highlighted by the display in front of the monument, which reads: "My mother was killed in Auschwitz. Thank you "Archangel" Gabriel."¹³¹ This response to the Szabadság Tér monument is a rebuttal to the meaning of the statue and suggests that some are aware of the statue's potential to mislead its audience. This is despite Burke proposing that the process of manipulation through symbolism is "[...] largely unconscious to the viewers."¹³² While this connotative coercion usually occurs covertly, it is possible that individuals can become aware of such coercive intentions, however this diminishes the manipulative potential of such 'special performances'. Although the monument avoids both symbolism and language relating to the Holocaust, it remains an inseparable aspect of the German occupation of Hungary for many and protestors seeking the removal of the Szabadság Tér monument often invoke its inaccuracies with the Holocaust as a key issue.¹³³

To present this edited version of the Second World War the Szabadság Tér memorial draws heavily on religious symbolism, as with the image of an angel, which is recognised within many different cultures and religions as representing benevolence and innocence.¹³⁴ This common association of angels with positive attributes could be considered to be what Émile Durkheim called a 'social fact'. Michel Leezenberg presents Durkheim's theory regarding 'social facts' when he states:

"[...] such facts are as 'objective' as physical and biological facts, but they possess two particular features: first, social facts are *external* to, or independent of, the individual; second, they possess a certain *coercive force*."¹³⁵

An example of a social fact made by Durkheim was *Suicide* (1897), where he argued that the way people collectively perceive suicide dictated the reality of suicide to some

¹³¹ Erőss, Á. (2016). Photo 5a, p. 249.

¹³² Burke, P. (2001). p. 95.

¹³³ Máté, P. (2015). Translation by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

¹³⁴ Coghlan, J. (2012). p. 1-3.

¹³⁵ Leezenberg, M. (2018). p. 245.

Greenwood, J. D. (2003). p. 93-94.

degree. He concluded that the institutionalised beliefs and actions of various nations exercised a coercive force over individuals, which affected suicide numbers. The idea of suicide exists *external* to individuals, but also exercises a *coercive force* over them through their understanding of it.¹³⁶ Angels can also be considered a social fact, due to their institutionalised understanding. The understanding of angels and their connotative meaning is an *external* social fact in that it lies outside the control of individuals. Additionally, this understanding of angels and their symbolism acts as a *coercive force*, exemplified by how the Szabadság Tér statue's representation of Hungary as an angel attempts to coerce its audience into associating angelic connotations with Hungary. However, the controversy and protest against the monument suggests the coercive force is somewhat ineffective due to its overt inaccuracies, which draw attention to its manipulative potential.

The principal issue the protestors are concerned with regards the monument's coercive power; exemplified by how many believe the Szabadság Tér statue seeks to 'falsify' the Holocaust.¹³⁷ The monument's attempt to coerce its audience into a certain understanding of the Second World War is too overt. The version of history suggested by the statue's myth is too divergent from historical reality, which has hindered the covert power of its special performance. Burke highlighted the necessity for subtlety in such attempted manipulations and it is perhaps due to the overt symbolism of the Szabadság Tér statue that such heated contention surrounds it.¹³⁸ While the Szabadság Tér statue seems to fail at this covert manipulation it remains evident that it possesses the power to do so. The photos and stories of those who suffered during the Hungarian Holocaust, dutifully displayed by those in opposition to the Szabadság Tér monument's myth, serve to warn the memorial's audience of its misleading nature.¹³⁹ Those who protest against the statue draw attention to its historical inaccuracies and in doing so refute the myth that the Szabadság Tér monument presents. To lessen the manipulative potential of the statue, protestors seek to educate passers-by with historic examples from

¹³⁶ Leezenberg, M. (2018). p. 247.

¹³⁷ Máté, P. (2015). Translation by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

¹³⁸ Burke, P. (2001). p. 95.

¹³⁹ Zoltán, M. (2015).

during the German occupation of Hungary that contradict the symbolic myth of the Szabadság Tér monument.¹⁴⁰



Figure 9 – Photo showing a small section of the counter-monument set up to challenge the Szabadság Tér statue’s account of history. Photo originally from Erőss, Á. (2016).¹⁴¹

The counter-memorial, which is designed to undermine the myth presented by the Szabadság Tér, utilises artifacts that attest to the reality of the German occupation of Hungary.¹⁴² Photos and memoirs of those who suffered during the Hungarian Holocaust highlight the inaction of the Hungarian state in response to the persecution of Jews, Homosexuals and Romani. The counter-memorial is made up of photos, documents, flowers, suitcases, clothing, candles, glasses and shoes, all of which serve to deny the myth presented by the statue. White chairs are also part of the counter-memorial, intended to encourage visitors to sit and read the accounts and view the photos that contradict the Szabadság Tér monument’s special performance. Pálos Máté

¹⁴⁰ Please see figure 9.

¹⁴¹ Erőss, Á. (2016). Photo 5a. p. 249.

¹⁴² Please see figure 9.

(2015) highlights how the aim of the counter-monument and the protest is to deny anyone the monopoly over the memory of the Nazi occupation and the Hungarian Holocaust: “The aim is to ensure that no one can dominate the dialogue [... .]”¹⁴³ Máté is detailing how those in protest against the Szabadság Tér monument are fearful of the government’s power over the memory of the Hungarian Holocaust and German occupation. While the monument seeks to manipulate its audience covertly, the counter-monument acknowledges the intricacies of historical reality and instead is intended as a space for debate. Where the statue attempts to impose its fictitious myth onto its audience, the counter-monument encourages conversation and critical thinking prompted by the evidence countering the monument’s myth displayed close-by.¹⁴⁴

The theory that monuments have the power to warp their audiences’ perceptions of the past is by no means a recent idea. Pierre Nora, in his *‘Lieux de Mémoire’* (1984-1992), argued that the practice of linking historical events to memorial locations, much in the same manner the Szabadság Tér monument does, was in itself anachronistic and has the power to warp people’s perspective of the past. Tony Judt echoes Nora’s ideas when he argues that “[b]y making symbols or remnants stand for the whole, we ease ourselves into an illusion.”¹⁴⁵ It is clear that the German occupation of Hungary has long past, yet the memory of it remains and memories are malleable and subject to manipulation. Regardless of the Szabadság Tér monument’s true intentions, Nora contends that such monuments invariably distort the memory of the historical events they seek to memorialize. However, this thesis argues that the Szabadság Tér monument is designed with the intention of coercing its audience into adopting a specific account of the German occupation. To approach this interpretation we will now apply Louis Althusser’s theories to the monument.

¹⁴³ Máté, P. (2015). Translation by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

¹⁴⁴ Máté, P. (2015). Translation by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

¹⁴⁵ Judt, T. (2009). p. 197-198.

Chapter 6 - Althusser and the Politics of Control:

The Szabadság Tér statue does indeed have strong connotative meaning and the juxtaposition of Nazi Germany as an eagle and Hungary as the Archangel Gabriel presents a myth regarding the German occupation of Hungary during the Second World War.¹⁴⁶ Additionally, these symbolic features possess the power to coerce the monument's audience into adopting this myth of history. In answering the questions 'what are the symbolic features shown on the Szabadság Tér statue and what connotations do these features possess?' alongside 'do the connotations attached to the Szabadság Tér monument's symbolic features have the power to influence the interpretation individuals have of the past?', we can deduce that the Szabadság Tér monument and its symbolic connotations do have the potential to exercise coercive power over how people view the past. However, a thorough analysis of the methods by which the Szabadság Tér statue exercises this coercive power must now be carried out.

Louis Althusser considered schools, or the education system, to be ISAs due to the covert manipulation that they exercise over the populace. An example of the political agendas that education can facilitate can be seen in the subject of history, where students seldom stray from a purposely-restrictive curriculum centred on a positive retelling of the history of their home nation. Althusser would argue that such curriculums are far from objective and instead prioritise the subtle indoctrination of their students to uncritically accept the false consciousness that will ensure the bourgeoisie's dominant position. Ieva Zake (2002) discusses the role of ISAs in the construction of "national consciousness" through the evocation, or even invention, of national history.

"[...] the ISAs producing national(ist) history are aimed at creating a distinct and unique national subjective consciousness, which is enhanced with a sense of roots, embedded in notions of historically continuous identity and national future aspirations."

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¹⁴⁶ Barthes, R. (2013). p. 217.

¹⁴⁷ Zake, I. (2002). p. 229.

We have seen how the widespread Hungarian desire for the revision of the Treaty of Trianon (1920) in the aftermath of the First World War became the main goal of Hungarian foreign policy, yet Deborah Cornelius (2011) details how education also played an integral role in this process:

“In Hungarian schoolrooms geography was taught according to the map of the former kingdom, and school children grew up with the belief that Trianon Hungary was simply a temporary phenomenon. Twice a day they recited: *I believe in one God[.] I believe in one homeland[.] I believe in God’s eternal truth[.] I believe in the resurrection of Hungary[.]*”

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This prayer-like passage directly links the political goal of regaining lost territory with the Hungarian Christian identity.¹⁴⁹ This link to religious identity is also clear in the Szabadság Tér statue, which features Archangel Gabriel holding a globus cruciger, the symbol of Christ’s sovereignty over the Earth.¹⁵⁰ ISAs often evoke notions of historical identity as a means to create a unique national consciousness.¹⁵¹ After the Treaty of Trianon and the subsequent truncation of Greater Hungary, the Hungarian nation adopted a ‘national consciousness’ through the shared memory of humiliation and territorial loss. Whether this educational rhetoric was instigated by the Hungarian government, or for Althusser the bourgeoisie, is unclear. What is clear is that this revisionist mentality, which saw the return of Greater Hungary’s lost territory as the principal objective of the nation, was an important factor that led to Hungary and Nazi Germany becoming economic and military allies during the Second World War.¹⁵² The picture Cornelius paints of truncated Hungary is one of a united nation behind a single cause, with education playing a central role in maintaining this national cohesion. Much in the same manner that education played a central role in fostering the revisionist mentality in Hungary during the interwar period, the Szabadság Tér monument shares the function of coercing its audience into a certain perspective of history, one that specifically concerns the German occupation of Hungary. Similarly to how historical education within state controlled schools often covers topics suited to fostering pride in

¹⁴⁸ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 27,49-50.

¹⁴⁹ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 27.

¹⁵⁰ Please see Figure 6.

¹⁵¹ Zake, I. (2002). p. 229.

¹⁵² Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 7

one's nation, the Szabadság Tér statue represents a highly controversial period in Hungarian history, yet in a specific way designed to overstate the positive and leave the negative unspoken.

Here we are presented with two examples where ISAs exercise a coercive force over Hungarians to achieve political ends. The revisionist mentality promoted through the Hungarian education ISA served to encourage an alliance with Nazi Germany, as this provided Hungary with the ability to regain the territory lost through the Treaty of Trianon. On the other hand, the Szabadság Tér monument distances the Hungarian nation from Nazi Germany in an attempt to burden much of the guilt for the occupation of Hungary and the subsequent Hungarian Holocaust on Nazi Germany. As with Durkheim's explanation of 'social facts', Althusser's ISAs rely on subtlety to achieve their coercive potential.¹⁵³ The widespread protest against the Szabadság Tér monument and the construction of a counter-monument warning against the statue's coercive potential suggest that this ISA is unsuccessful in its goal.¹⁵⁴ Do we see an exposed system of control with the Szabadság Tér monument? Through their protest against the statue's myth of the German occupation, those in opposition to the Szabadság Tér statue expose this coercive ISA for what it is, a manipulative attempt to distort Hungarians' understanding of the Hungarian nation's role in the Holocaust.

While Althusser argued that ISAs and RSAs are responsible for coercing individuals into adopting an ideology, he referred to the means by which they achieve this coercion as '*interpellation*'.¹⁵⁵ The Szabadság Tér monument attempts to coerce its audience into accepting its myth regarding the Hungarian Holocaust by 'interpellating' or 'hailing' them. When viewing the Szabadság Tér monument, its audience are subjected to its ideology, one that provides a one-dimensional presentation of the German occupation and the Hungarian identity. Interpellation is the process by which the subjects of ISAs forcibly adopt the communicated ideology. The Szabadság Tér monument's myth links Hungarian identity with Christianity through the inclusion of both Archangel Gabriel, representing Hungary, and in how Archangel Gabriel holds a

¹⁵³ Leezenberg, M. (2018). p. 245.

Althusser, L. (2014). p. 75.

¹⁵⁴ Gyurcsány, F. cited in: Czenkli, D. (2014). Translated by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

¹⁵⁵ Althusser, L. (2014). p. 189-191.

globus cruciger.¹⁵⁶ It is possible that Prime Minister Orban, as a nationalist leader, seeks to create a unified Hungarian identity centred on Christianity.¹⁵⁷ By designing a monument that hails its audience, Hungarians, in conjunction with the statues semiotic link between Christianity and Hungarian identity, Hungarians are subjected to the Szabadság Tér monument's myth. From this perspective, we are able to see clearly how the principal role of the monument is one of coercion, rather than of officially memorialising the German occupation of Hungary.

To consider the Szabadság Tér monument an ISA is to assume that its intended function is to subtly coerce its audience. The monument, through its use of symbolism, juxtaposition, body language, notions of religious identity and subtlety, seeks to impose its narrative of the German occupation of Hungary onto its audience. Protestors, many of whom claim they are aware of the statue's manipulative and politically motivated function, seek the removal of the statue as their principal objective, however the counter-monument serves as a temporary educational solution to lessen the monument's coercive potential.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Please see figure 6.

¹⁵⁷ Muller, J. W. (2014). p. 15-17.

Krekó, P and Enyedi, Z. (2018).

¹⁵⁸ Máté, P. (2015). Translation by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

Conclusion:

Any statue or monument seeking to represent a period as turbulent and complex as the Second World War is destined to fall short. A symbolic representation will never be able to portray such a complex event accurately. The focal point of the controversy surrounding the Szabadság Tér monument is the statue's silence regarding the Hungarian Holocaust, which is an aspect that many of those in opposition to the statue regard as an inseparable element of the German occupation of Hungary. It engages with a painful memory. During the Second World War a German taskforce, known as the 'Eichmann Kommando', administered the persecution and deportation of Hungarian Jews, however, this small group of some two hundred personnel relied heavily on the Hungarian police, military and the specially formed Jewish Council to carry out its aims.¹⁵⁹ This understanding of the role of the Hungarian state and its agents has led many to believe that the Hungarian State is also culpable for the horrors of the Hungarian Holocaust, along with Nazi Germany.

The myth presented by the Szabadság Tér statue's connotations is in stark opposition to the reality of German – Hungarian relations prior to and during the Second World War. Through its close and cooperative relationship with Germany, Hungary was able to achieve the reclamation of the territory lost through the Treaty of Trianon (1920). This aspect of the relationship between the two nations is completely absent from the Szabadság Tér statue narrative, which restricts its theme to the German occupation of Hungary. Even within this narrow focus, the monument completely avoids the topic of the Holocaust. Through the demonization of Nazi Germany for their role in the occupation of Hungary while simultaneously disregarding the Hungarian state's contemporaneous role in the persecution of Hungarian Jews, the Szabadság Tér statue presents a fictitious account of history. It is this belief that the statue is an attempted falsification of history that has prompted such heated protest against the monument, however, in order to counteract the Szabadság Tér statue's manipulative potential protestors have organised a multilingual information stand that highlights the historical reality of Hungary's role in the Holocaust and in doing so refutes the myth presented by

¹⁵⁹ Dossa, S. (1984). p. 176-177.

Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 292-293.

the Szabadság Tér's narrative.¹⁶⁰ Protestors view the statue as a form of education that seeks to falsify history and therefore they have devised their own educational initiative to battle against the manipulative potential of the monument.

When cross examining the *historia res gestae* of the German occupation of Hungary with the myth of the Szabadság Tér monument's symbolism, we are presented with incompatible differences. Take for example the figure of Pál Teleki (1879-1941), Prime Minister of Hungary between 1920-1921 and 1939-1941. Teleki remains a highly nuanced and controversial figure even today. In his second term as Prime Minister, Teleki strove to distance Hungary from Nazi Germany and even went as far as signing the Treaty of Eternal friendship with Yugoslavia (1940), a nation Nazi Germany repeatedly requested Hungary to take part in the invasion of. This declaration of friendship renounced the Hungarian claim to territory lost to Yugoslavia through the Treaty of Trianon and sought to avoid further cooperation with Nazi Germany.¹⁶¹ Superficially this matches the Szabadság Tér monument's myth of Hungary being a mere victim suffering at the hands of the aggressive Nazi Germany as Teleki went to great lengths to avoid German interference in Hungarian politics. However, Teleki also passed the Second Jewish Law (1939), which continued and exacerbated the persecution of Hungarian Jews.¹⁶² The motivation and reasoning behind Teleki's passing of the Second Jewish Law remains a highly contentious debate.¹⁶³ However, this understanding of the intricacies of Hungary's anti-Semitic past is completely absent from the Szabadság Tér monument's narrative, which limits itself to blaming Nazi Germany for the occupation of Hungary.

Through the semiotic analysis of the Szabadság Tér monument's features, this thesis was able to analyse the methods the statue employs to present its narrative and achieve its manipulative function. The monument utilises a symbolic representation of the

¹⁶⁰ Máté, P. (2015). Translation by Jonas, G. (Free-lance Translator.)

¹⁶¹ Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 101.

¹⁶² Cornelius, D. (2011). p. 98, 107.

¹⁶³ Turda, M. (2013). p. 561.

Cornelius, D. (2011). p.106.

Many scholars, notably Marius Turda (2013), label Teleki an immoral anti-Semitic figure, while others scholars, such as Deborah Cornelius (2011), regard the Second Jewish Law a necessary evil that sought to "[...] pacify the supporters of the extreme Right" and to maintain the nation's political autonomy.

German occupation of Hungary that highlights the positive role of Hungary, that of a just nation dishonourably attacked by the aggressive Nazi Germany, and leaves the negative elements, principally the unpleasant involvement of the Hungarian state and its agents in the persecution and extermination of Jews, left unspoken. With this example the inevitable shortcomings of the Szabadság Tér monument are made apparent; the accurate portrayal of a complex event like the German occupation of Hungary in 1944 is impossible to represent accurately with tools as limited as symbolism, material form and a single inscription. This results in a finished product that is more of an allegorical representation of the past rather than an attempt to accurately detail the *historia res gestae*.

The construction of an educational counter-monument attests to the widespread belief that the myth presented by the Szabadság Tér monument has the potential to impose a false understanding of the German occupation upon the statue's audience. We can conclude that the monument does indeed have the power to manipulate its audience. However, with the current counter-monument highlighting the inaccuracies of the myth presented by the Szabadság Tér statue, the majority of the monument's audience are made aware of its coercive nature, which deeply diminishes its efficacy. However this thesis has not attempted to comment on the level of manipulation that the Szabadság Tér monument has been able to achieve, as this would be problematic to quantify.

In order to better understand the complexities of the relationship between Hungary and Nazi Germany during the 1930s and 1940s, a comprehensive study of the Hungarian education system should be conducted. By focusing on this monolithic ideological state apparatus and its coercive role in encouraging public support for the prominent revisionist mentality towards the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, historians are sure to command a much better understanding of how Hungary and Nazi Germany became close allies during the Second World War. The role of the Hungarian education system has already been highlighted as an integral institution in the promoting of the post-Trianon revisionist mentality and it was this desire for the regaining of lost territory that I believe led many to favour a Hungarian – German alliance. By analysing the education systems role in encouraging an alliance between these two nations, historians would avoid the oft-ascribed to convention of assuming German war guilt and instead present a more complex and objective account of Hungary's role in the Second World War. It

would be of great scholarly interest to cross-examine the Szabadság Tér statue's false narrative of the 1944 German occupation with the narrative presented through the Hungarian education system. Further inquiry into the role of the Hungarian education system in the commemoration of the Second World War and the Holocaust would offer a prosperous avenue of research to build upon this thesis. By comparing both the 2014 Szabadság Tér monument and the contemporaneous curriculum of state-controlled Hungarian education, both undeniable ISAs, a trend in the Hungarian commemoration of the Second World War may be uncovered. Does the history curriculum of the Hungarian education system present a similar myth of the German occupation of Hungary during the Second World War as The Szabadság Tér monument?

The Szabadság Tér monument's nature as an ISA is clear to see and it is this obvious manipulative nature that sparked protest against the statue. This begs the question of what should be done with the monument? It is my belief that the Szabadság Tér monument should be relocated to Szoborpark (*'Memento Park'*), an open-air museum in Budapest where Communist-era statues are displayed. Rather than tearing down the Szabadság Tér monument, its relocation could serve as a reminder of the subjective nature of memory and the politics of control active within mediums such as statues; a duty currently being carried out by those in protest over the Szabadság Tér who run the educational counter-monument, designed to diminish the monument's coercive power.

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