

**AJC STATEMENT AT BUDAPEST SEMINAR
December 15, 2015**

Twenty-five years ago, with the fall of the Wall and the reestablishment of democratic institutions in this region of Europe, countries were pressed to examine their Holocaust-era past. This was not an easy process. After half a century of Communist rule people rightly saw themselves as victims. They were not inclined to look deeper and further back to an earlier time when individuals and local governments also served as collaborators with the Nazis in the murder of European Jews. In fact, in some cases those Fascist-era leaders were even held up as “models” for national identity in a post-Communist age. We need look no further than here in Hungary and in neighboring countries with the revival of figures like Admiral Horthy, Marshal Antonescu and Father Tiso. Each of them played a major role in the persecution of their fellow Jewish citizens. Yet, for some people and some political movements this would be easily overlooked in the rehabilitation of anti-Communist “heroes.”

Fortunately, there has been considerable progress in confronting this difficult historical chapter. Several countries established national historical commissions to examine and critically document the actions of national governments and local collaborators in the Holocaust. Most have now designated official commemoration days and set about to revise and augment school curricula to correctly reflect these events. They have joined the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and thereby pledged to support the goals of education and remembrance.

In Hungary a Holocaust Museum and documentation center was established here in Budapest on Pava Street. It portrays in accurate detail the history of the Holocaust in Europe and in Hungary in particular, explaining the role of the Horthy Government in first introducing anti-Jewish legislation and the various measures that followed, including the mass deportations of Jews and the vicious murders carried out by members of the Arrow Cross.

But these positive developments have not been uniform, and we are dismayed by more recent efforts to reverse them.

Here in Hungary there have been several recent examples that drew international criticism. Last year the Government insisted on erecting a monument to the victims of the German occupation in Szabadsag Square, which was widely viewed as depicting Hungary as a wholly innocent victim. The controversial “House of Fates” project was seen as an effort to present a revisionist narrative of the Holocaust in Hungary at odds with what is presented at the Pava Street museum. As a result of these steps the Federation of Hungarian Jews severed its cooperation with the government in all projects that had been planned to mark the seventieth anniversary year of the Hungarian Holocaust, and we at AJC as well as other international Jewish organizations joined in solidarity with them.

Today we take note of one more troubling development—the plans to erect a statue in Székesfehérvár honoring Bálint Homan, who served both the Horthy and Arrow Cross governments and was the author of the country’s anti-Jewish laws. This anti-Semite and Nazi collaborator is surely deserving of no honor. The presence here at this seminar of so many diplomats and international and Hungarian organizations testifies to this fact.

We very much hope that the Hungarian Government which coincidentally holds the Chairmanship of IHRA will not only reverse this decision to honor Bálint Homan but also ensure that all other Holocaust revisionist measures are fully discredited and brought to an end. It owes this to the victims, but it owes it no less to the survivors and their descendants who have rebuilt a vibrant Jewish life in a democratic Hungary.