

Summary

Múlt és Jövő is published quarterly. Its subject is Jewish culture. This has been evident for more than 30 years. But recent years have called this “routine” into question. The doubts and challenges of our daily existence have intruded into this behaviour.

The pandemic, the threat of the outbreak of World War III, and now, the Simhat Torah war are increasingly casting doubt over the meaning and relevance of this “routine” or the entirety of cultural tradition. In fact, this latest tragic event makes our uncertainty even more poignant. Because it calls into question the continuation of Jewish history. What began on 7 October 2023 is not one of the wars in Israel’s short history, not just another conflict in a long succession of wars. Its brutality and methods are reminiscent of the Holocaust. And the old and new waves of anti-Semitism around the world are reviving this “collective memory” – in the present.

What should the journal do? The intellectual who writes it and the audience who read it? Keep working and living right up until the last moment – we have also seen this attitude during the *Shoah* – as if nothing had happened? This too has its own sense, even its own heroism. To fight, to resist the ominous trends of today’s world by holding on to our cultural practices along the old values that have been crystallized over the centuries. Or: are we only concerned with, reporting on, and analysing what is happening now, trying to place these events in the narrative that we are, whether we like it or not, advancing?

The last issue of the 34th volume of *Múlt és Jövő* – like all issues – is a year in the making. Many of these writings have been waiting to be published for more than a year. And we don’t yet have the perspective to put today’s events in a broader context – that’s what our *online* journal (*multesjovo.hu*), which follows the developments day by day, is for. However, it is also a fact that what appears here now is also “given a different perspective by death”. We take it in in different ways, and our readings activate different layers in the reception process. Especially since a good part of them is about the *Shoah*, or the Hungarian founders of Israel.

More on this ongoing war will be published in the first issue of 2024. If we’re still alive then – in more ways than one, since for the first time in 30 years the state has stopped subsidising our periodical.

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Béla Tábor’s study on the Holocaust, the first chapter of a major philosophical synthesis, is a revelation because it was written in 1946 and is now being published for the first time. Both the time of writing and the intellectual excellence of the philosopher make this publication revelatory. (Thanks to his son, Ádám Tábor, who has also added explanatory notes.) Also on the subject of the Holocaust, and also the foreword to a posthumous work by Katalin Dávid, who just passed away at the age of 100 – and thanks also to her son, Máté Hidvégi, who donated the writing, complete with his notes, to our journal. Károly Bárd’s study analyses the exceptionality of the Holocaust/Auschwitz phenomenon/heritage in the light of the discussions that continue to this day (and have now become so relevant again).

Descending deeper in time, Péter Csunderlik analyses the criticism of left-wing movements and intellectuals by conservative historians of the Horthy era. The first chapter of Béla Bodó’s book *White Terror and Black Humour*, originally published in English (and to be published in Hungarian by us next year) also sheds light on this era that the Holocaust grew out of through the medium of contemporary humour. (A truly revolutionary approach.) György Csepeli’s more extensive and in-depth discussion of Emma Ritoók’s recently published *Journal*, which is more than a book review, adds further hues to this picture. Rita Szuromi’s study of local history – her first publication in the journal – presents the conditions of a more progressive era. It shows the relationship between Jews and nobles in the Tiszafüred and Heves districts during the period of early modernity.

Erzsébet Szilágyi’s study on the career of Israeli (and kibbutz) architect György Menahem Beer illustrates how a Jewish intellectual from Budapest, after living through the Holocaust, becomes an architect of Israel in the literal sense. (The photos of the kibbutzes built by him remind us, alas, of the fresh ruins of kibbutzes near Gaza, also designed in a similar style.) Ildikó Bajcsi’s interview with Chava Lustig, one of the founders of the Museum of Hungarian-speaking People in Tzfat, shows the same process – zooming in on life in the Budapest ghetto – through the eyes of a child. (But similar experiences are now being had by children of similar ages in the tunnels of Hamas.) László Nagy’s portrait of Holocaust survivor David Malek, an art collector from Felsővisó, presents a rich history of the preservation of “collective memory” across several continents through an exhibition catalogue. (What an important medium this is.) Tamás Bíró (in another debut piece in *Múlt és Jövő*) presents the portrait and views of Israeli Bible scholar Yehezkel Kaufmann. In the fiction section of our issue, we publish poems by Balázs Györe and excerpts from the novels of György Dalos and Anna Gáspár-Singer. (The novel by György Dalos, who is celebrating his 80th birthday, will hopefully also be published next year.) Emil Für has sent us his cartoon commentaries on the current war against Israel from England, a country now descending into anti-Semitism.

The news of the death of Mihály Vajda, the last bastion of Hungarian intellectual life, a permanent author, friend and benefactor to our newspaper, have arrived after our issue was sent to the press. The news of his passing is too fresh to properly express our loss and pain.