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Special Volume:

1956 in Hungary

Precedents, Events and Consequences

Part I

edited and introduced by
Nándor Dreisziger

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Forthcoming Special Volume:

1956 in Hungary:
Antecedents, Events and Consequences

Part II

Nándor Dreisziger, editor

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Márta Mihály, Károly Nagy, Andor Tari, Judit Galántha-Hermann, Éva Tömöry, Emese Ivan, Nándor Dreisziger and others.

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Judith Szapor, Lee Congdon, Sándor Zsíros and others.

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Preface:

2006-07 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the coming of the refugees of the 1956 anti-Soviet revolution in Hungary to North America. With the arrival of those refugees, the writer of these lines included, the life of North America's Magyar colonies was revitalized.

To celebrate this anniversary we undertook to publish two volumes of our journal, both of them bulkier than has been our tradition in the past. In the first of our "1956" commemorative issues we presented a collection of essays that dealt with or touched on the subject of the image Hungary and Hungarians at home or abroad. This was vol. 33 of the *HSR*, and it was published for 2006.

The second of our commemorative volumes, entitled *1956 in Hungary*, we publish as vol. 34, for the year 2007. A third compendium of studies is in the making as well, also dealing with aspects of 1956, since not all the papers collected fit in one volume of less than 250 pages. This third volume will be published for 2008.

The first essay of the present 2007 special volume deals with the subject of the treatment of Hungarians by Hungary's post-1945 Soviet masters, as illustrated by the fate of those Magyars who fell into Soviet captivity at the end of the Second World War. The next paper deals with the role of Hungary's Churches in the Revolution and the impact of the 1956 events on them. The following study examines the days when Hungary was free of Communist rule especially in the context of the functioning of the country's newly re-born political parties. This is followed by an examination of the interrelationship of the events of 1956 and the country's working class. Most appropriately, the next study deals with the subject of the revolution and Hungary's peasantry, focusing especially on the impact of the events of 1956 on the country's villages. The subsequent study examines the attempts by Hungary's post-1957 regime to re-write the history of the revolution through the means of films made for popular consumption. The volume's penultimate article surveys the reactions of writers and poets to the Revolution all over the world, while the last article reviews some of the most important recent books on the subject.

These studies, while offering comprehensive analyses of their subjects, represent only a sampling of the historical analyses that had appeared in connection with the celebrations of the Revolution's fiftieth anniversary. More studies will be forthcoming even in our journal. Some of these will be concentrating on the Canadian aspects of 1956: Canada's reactions to the Revolution — and, specifically, to the refugee crisis it generated — as well as the experiences of some of the refugees in Canada.

As usual in our collections of essays on a particular subject our offering is somewhat eclectic. While some important aspects of the events of 1956 in Hungary are well covered, such as the interactions of the regime on the one hand and the country's workers and peasants on the other, other aspects of the Hungarian revolution are hardly touched on in this volume. Some of these aspect will receive attention in Part II of this collection of essays, others will not be covered. Readers will have to turn to other publications for those topics. We would also suggest that they examine what has been published in our journal in previous years.*

NOTES

* In 1976 we published a collection of essays. Although many original documents relating to the history of 1956 in Hungary have become public in the intervening time — especially regarding the reactions to the Revolution in Moscow and Washington — some of the studies in this collection might still be of interest, as should be the studies that appeared in our journal after 1976. Here is a list of both the 1976 compendium and the papers that we published later:

Aczél, Tamás. "Between the Awakening and the Explosion: Yogis and Commissars Reconsidered, 1953-1956." III, 2 (Fall, 1976), 107-114.

Gollner, Andras B. "Foundations of Soviet Domination and Communist Political Power in Hungary: 1945-1950." III, 2 (Fall, 1976), 73-105.

Gosztony, Peter. "The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 Viewed from Two Decades' Distance." III, 2 (Fall, 1976), 139-153.

Granville, Johanna. "The Soviet-Yugoslav Detente, Belgrade-Budapest Relations, and the Hungarian Revolution (1955-56)," XXIV, 1-2 (1997), 15-63.

Klay, Andor C. ed. "Document: Budapest-Washington, 1956." VII, 2 (Fall, 1980), 145-162.

Nagy, Karoly. "Gyula Illyes' Poetry of Hope." V, 2 (Fall, 1978), 53-61.

Pilisi, Paul. "La Revolution Hongroise de 1956 et l'Idée de la Confederation Danubienne." III, 2 (Fall, 1976), 125-132.

Volgyes, Ivan. "Social Change in Post-Revolutionary Hungary, 1956-1976." V, 1 (Spring, 1978), 29-39.

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The 1956 Hungarian Revolution in Historical and International Perspective: An Introduction

Nándor Dreisziger

In the story of the world communist movement the Hungarian revolution of 1956 occupies a special place: the turning point that separated the ascending fortunes of this movement from the beginning of its gradual demise.

It can be argued that the mid-1950s constituted the high-point in the history of world communism. It was the time when the Soviet Union became a super-power, when Communism made great strides in Asia and when Communists seemed poised to gain a foothold in Western Europe through their powerful parties in France, Italy and elsewhere. It is interesting to note that those years seem to constitute the half-life of the movement, very much as certain elements, as well as medications, have a half-life, when they begin their journey toward inevitable decline. If we consider 1917 as the birth of the world communist movement and 1989 as the year of its demise, at least in Europe, 1956 is almost at the middle point.

The movement appeared on the world stage in the fall of 1917 when the Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin and a handful of his followers grabbed power in Petrograd and ousted the moderate leftist revolutionary regime of Alexander Kerensky. And the movement disappeared as a major political force in the world when the Soviet Empire collapsed in Eastern Europe in 1989, followed by the U.S.S.R.'s implosion a short time later.

Of course communist ideology had been around for a long time before 1917. Karl Marx and other thinkers developed it during the 19th century, but it was not till 1917 that the ideology of Marxism, and its very different Leninist variety, triumphed in a major country, in Russia.

Had Lenin and his Bolshevik followers not come to power in a country the size of Imperial Russia, our school textbooks would probably never mention Karl Marx.

Having come to power, the Bolsheviks were able to launch their movement for world domination. In this quest they were given a god-sent opportunity when in 1939 Nazi Germany embarked on the conquest of Europe and the Mediterranean and, by 1945, had collapsed in the process. The resulting political void, especially in Eastern and Central Europe, was filled by Russia's communists.

Antecedents in Hungary

At war's end the Soviet Union occupied Hungary. Unlike in Poland, Bulgaria and Rumania, the Soviet leaders did not impose a communist government on the country in 1945, yet they made preparations for its imposition later. During 1945-47, using the Red Army's presence, Hungary was primed for a gradual communist takeover. By the end of the 1940s, the communists were eliminating the last of the opposition to their rule. They abolished the multi-party system and nationalized the economy. They introduced centrally planned production of all goods. They also began to persecute the churches and purged non-communists from the government and public institutions. Their aim was to replace the pluralistic society Hungary had had for centuries with a one-party government that exercised total control over every aspect of Hungarian life. Hungary was to become a miniature version of the Soviet Union where Stalinist totalitarianism had flourished since the late 1920s.

All this meant the rule of the secret police and the internment or deportation to concentration camps of all real and suspected opponents of the new order. There were purge trials for the more prominent of the Communist Party's opponents and many people were sentenced to long jail terms — or death. The cult of personality intensified year after year. The Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and his Hungarian satrap Mátyás Rákosi were glorified and venerated an every possible occasion and everywhere.

Hungary was forced to focus on heavy industry while production of consumer goods was neglected. Peasants were forced into collective farms or had to work as labourers on factory farms owned and managed by the state. All this came with Hungary's total isolation from the West, and even from socialist, but not pro-Soviet, Yugoslavia. The Iron Curtain,

that was born already in 1945, was increasingly fortified and by about 1950 Hungary's border with Austria, and then also with Yugoslavia, had become guarded by special security forces, high barbed-wire fences, guard-dogs, and minefields. Ordinary citizens were forbidden from travelling to non-communist countries and they were ordered not to fraternize with the occasional visitor from the West.

After the death of Stalin in March 1953, a slow process of reversing the pace of the country's socialist transformation was started. In June of that year Moscow replaced as Prime Minister the unpopular Rákosi with another communist, Imre Nagy. Nagy implemented many reforms. His government allocated more funds for the production of consumer goods. It reduced taxes and deliveries paid in kind by peasants and peasant cooperatives to the state. In fact, Nagy even allowed peasants to leave the collectives — and many of them did.

Alas, reforms did little to improve the economic situation in Hungary and hard-liners such as Rákosi still retained much influence. Soon, Nagy's reform program was derailed and the Stalinists regained power. They were still in power early in 1956.

The International Background

On the international scene, the ten years leading up to the events of the autumn of 1956 in Hungary were times of the Cold War. There is general agreement among historians that the developments that precipitated the Cold War included the following: Soviet insistence in 1945 to impose a Communist government on Rumania, Bulgaria and, especially, Poland. Added to this was Soviet help to communist insurgents in Greece, and Soviet attempt to starve West Berlin into submission (the Berlin Blockade). Then there was the communist coup in Czechoslovakia through which a western-style government was replaced by one dominated by local communists. At about the same time relations deteriorated between Stalin's Russia and Marshall Tito's Yugoslavia. The Soviets prepared to invade this "renegade" communist country but thought better of their plan when the United Nations, lead by the United States, intervened in the conflict between North Korea and South Korea. The years 1950-53, with their Korean conflict, constituted the height of the early Cold War.

Starting with the death of Stalin in 1953, East-West tensions were slowly relaxed. A high point in these new relations was the Austrian

Treaty of 1955. Through it Austria was proclaimed a neutral (and disarmed) state and the Allied occupation forces left the country, including the Red Army from eastern Austria.

In February of 1956, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev denounced the crimes of the Stalin era at a closed session of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This speech further accelerated de-Stalinization in the Soviet Camp.

At the end of June, anti-communist disturbances took place in Poznan, Poland. They were put down rather ruthlessly by the Polish army. Nevertheless, Władisław Gomułka, who had spent much of the first half of the '50s in detention for the crime of "nationalist deviation", was readmitted to the Communist Party and was soon named the party's First Secretary. Probably in order to prevent similar discontent and disturbances in Hungary, the Soviets removed the unpopular Rákosi — for the second time. Unfortunately for them, they replaced him with another old Stalinist: Ernő Gerő. Not surprisingly, Hungary's public was not appeased.

In the meantime, disquiet in the country grew. The desire for further change, both in the country's leadership and in government policies, became openly voiced, even within the Hungarian Communist Party. The regime tried to make concessions. On October 6 took place the re-burial of László Rajk and his accomplices who had been the victims of a purge trial some half-dozen years earlier. The event turned into a mass demonstration against Hungary's existing leadership.

The Crises in Poland and Hungary

By this time a new crisis had developed in Poland. The reform-minded Gomułka demanded changes to the way his country was treated within the Soviet Camp. He insisted that Red Army officers in charge of the Polish Army be dismissed, that the policy of forceful collectivization of agriculture be relaxed, and that accommodation be reached with Poland's influential Catholic Church.

Anticipating a crisis Khrushchev and the other members of the Politburo (the supreme decision-making organ of the Soviet Communist Party) flew to Warsaw. At the same time the Red Army was put on alert. After arduous negotiations a compromise was worked out: Gomułka and his reforms were to stay but he promised that Poland would remain a loyal member of the Soviet Camp.

Meanwhile in Budapest university and college students were planning a demonstration to support of the reformers in Poland. The event took place on the 23rd. There were no clashes till the evening when a confrontation took place at the Radio Building. Soon, the panicked government of Gerő denounced the disturbances as a "counter-revolution" and called on the Soviet troops stationed in the vicinity of Budapest to disperse the demonstrators.

To gain control of the situation, on Khrushchev's orders, Imre Nagy was brought into the Hungarian cabinet, very much as Gomułka had been brought out from his enforced isolation in Poland. Next, the Central Committee of the Hungarian Communist Party appointed Nagy as Prime Minister. By this time a high-ranking Soviet delegation had arrived in Budapest but for the moment it saw no evidence of a dangerous crisis.

On the 25th a mass demonstration in front of the Parliament Building was dispersed by gunfire that resulted in many casualties. Next, Gerő was fired from his post on the order of the Soviet leaders and was replaced as Party Secretary by János Kádár, a former victim of the Stalinist purges.

The next day the revolution started spiralling out of control. Reports were reaching Moscow of the anti-Soviet overtones of the uprising. And, as the days passed, matters got worse for the Soviets. From the 28th on, Premier Nagy no longer called the uprising a counter-revolution. More importantly, he began appointing non-Communists to his government. Still another development came on the 29th: Israel attacked Egypt and with that act started what is known in history as the Suez Crisis. As it would have great importance for Hungary, we should examine it in some detail.

The Suez Crisis

The Suez Canal is a waterway that connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea. It makes the route from Europe to south Asia much shorter as ships do not have to circumnavigate Africa. There had been canals connecting these seas in ancient times but they had fallen into disrepair a few times, the last time in the 8th century a.d. In the late 1850s, almost hundred years before the Suez Crisis, the project was revived and a modern canal was built. Soon thereafter Britain acquired control of the company operating the canal. The canal was to be open to all shipping

and Britain was to guarantee the neutrality of the canal. In 1936 a treaty was signed by the United Kingdom and Egypt that allowed British troops to remain in the Canal zone. After World War II the Egyptians began pressing for the withdrawal of these troops. In June of 1956 the British forces finally withdrew.

About this time Egypt became involved in plans to build the Aswan Dam on the Nile River. For some time it seemed that this project would be financed largely with American loans but in July of 1956 Washington cancelled these plans. In retaliation, Egypt's new leader Abdul Nasser established closer ties with the Soviet Union and nationalized the Suez Canal company. Soon thereafter he expelled some remaining British officials from Egypt. In the meantime the Egyptians continued to deny passage on the Suez Canal to Israeli ships.

These developments in the Middle East brought Britain, France and Israel together. Their governments began hatching a plot to wrest the Suez Canal away from Nasser. The plan was for Israel to attack Egypt, which would give and excuse for the British and the French to "intervene" and send troops to control the Canal. A crisis was about to erupt in the Middle East that would have consequences on the outcome of the revolution in Hungary.

The main players in this crisis would not be the British and the French, Western Europe's ex-great powers, but they would be the United States and the Soviet Union. To understand the roles each played, it is useful to examine their actions in the international relations of the 1950s.

American Attitudes and Policies

In 1945 the United States of America had emerged as of the world's most powerful economic and military power. With Germany and Japan in ruins, and Britain and France exhausted by war, America became a superpower. While throughout most of 1945 America's attention was focused on the defeat first of Nazi Germany and then of Imperial Japan, by the end of that year her diplomats and statesmen had turned their concern toward the emergence of the Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. For many years Washington kept proclaiming the need to "liberate" Eastern Europe from Soviet rule while it also sought peaceful accommodation with Moscow. This two-faced policy became especially pronounced after the advent to power of the Eisenhower administration in January of 1953.

Under Eisenhower, funds were made available to such establishment as Radio Free Europe, as well as anti-Soviet emigre organizations and their publications, all for the purpose of promoting the chances of the "liberation" of Eastern Europe from Soviet rule.

In reality, however, as the mid-1950s approached American diplomacy increasingly sought negotiated solutions to such issues as the question of Germany and the status of Austria. When anti-Soviet demonstrations broke out in East Berlin in 1953, America was not able to do anything for the people of East Germany. In the eyes of many American politicians and defence experts this incident drove home the futility of the policy of roll-back. Yet, in American anti-Soviet propaganda the rhetoric of the "liberation" of the "captive nations" continued.

While the United States never incited East European nations to rebel against Soviet rule and it never promised to aid any such rebellion, some Radio Free Europe broadcasts, made by Hungarian-language broadcasters, made statements that could easily be interpreted as promises of US intervention, or if not, the promise that Washington would, in case of a revolt in an East European country, put overwhelming pressure on Moscow to withdraw its forces from there.

Regarding American thinking during the period 1953 to the fall of 1956 we can say that Washington was not expecting any fundamental changes in Eastern Europe. The only change there that was seen as possible by a few American analysts, was the spread of the "Yugoslav model" of communism. Not surprisingly under the circumstances, when an anti-Soviet uprising broke out in Budapest on 23 October, the Eisenhower administration was taken by complete surprise. But there were other factors complicating the reaction of America to the events in Hungary. One was the fact that the United States was in the midst of a presidential election campaign. The other was the outbreak of the Suez crisis which caught Washington completely by surprise and disrupted the unity of the West.

Soviet Reactions

By far the most important factor in determining the fate of the Hungarian Revolution was the attitude of the Soviet leadership to the events in Hungary. The Soviet Union had, by the fall of 1956, become the other superpower of the world. It had emerged victorious in the Second World

War and had occupied much of Eastern and Central Europe in 1944-45. There it created its new empire. In Asia it had extended its influence when China had gone communist, and it had gained the friendship of many Asian powers, including that of India. In 1956 the Soviet Armed Forces were numerically superior to any non-communist military in the world. The U.S.S.R. had developed atomic weapons and the capability to deliver them over hundreds of kilometres of distances. For the time being it lacked long and medium-range missile capabilities, a fact that probably made a difference in the minds of Soviet military leaders in the fall of 1956. The Soviet Armed forces could hit certain NATO bases, for example in northern Italy, only from Hungarian soil, a fact that made Hungary a more important strategic factor in Soviet military thinking than it could have been had the Russians had missiles with longer ranges. For the Soviets, the ability to counter the threat they perceived from NATO countries was a paramount consideration throughout the 1950s and in particular, during the fall of 1956.

While the Soviets feared "imperialist aggression" from the West, they did not feel it possible that there would be a local threat to their occupation forces in any of the satellite countries. Moscow was aware of discontent in countries such as Poland and Hungary, but it did not anticipate a major anti-Soviet, let alone anti-Communist outbreak there. So, Moscow was just as surprised by what took place in Hungary on the 23rd and 24th of October as was Washington.

When the news of these events reached Moscow, the first reaction there was one of caution. Some Soviet leaders, notably Politburo member Anastas Mikolyan, was unhappy about the fact that Soviet troops had been deployed against the demonstrators. Certainly, most of the Soviet leaders were anxious to resolve the crisis through negotiations rather than the use of force. Only the hard-liners insisted on harsh measures. Among these was V.M. Molotov in the Politburo and the Soviet ambassador to Hungary Juri Andropov in Budapest.

Elsewhere in the communist camp limited initial sympathies for the demonstrators in Budapest quickly evaporated when it increasingly became evident that the uprising in Hungary was not as much an anti-Stalinist manifestation but an anti-communist movement. Especially important was the influence of the Chinese who after urging caution, in the end favoured the crushing of the revolution. Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia also had an input into the deliberations in Moscow. First he and his government sympathised with what they thought to be an anti-Rakosiite

and anti-Gerő uprising, but changed their mind and advised harsh action when they realized that what was in danger in Hungary was not the influence of the Stalinists but the rule of the Communist Party itself.

Nevertheless, for some time, and especially on the 30th of October, the Soviet leadership came down on the side of caution and agreed to withdraw Soviet troops from Hungary — if by doing so it would make it easier for the Hungarian communists to restore order and preserve their rule. Even the hard-liners in Moscow acquiesced in this stand. But then events transpired that made the Soviet leaders change their mind within a day.

The End of October: The Time for Decision

During the closing days of the month of October matters came to a climax both in Hungary and the Middle East. In the former Prime Minister Imre Nagy came to the conclusion that he had to chose between the people of Hungary and those Hungarian communists who wished to preserve the "Socialist order" along with the Soviet alliance. He chose to side with the Hungarian people. Accordingly he endorsed the most important demands of the freedom fighters: the call for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Hungary and the restoration of a multi-party democracy in the country.

Just about the same time in the Middle East, after the British and the French governments had sent an ultimatum to Israel and Egypt threatening to invade if the fighting didn't stop there, the British and the French air forces began their bombardment of Egyptian military airfields in preparation for the landing of Anglo-French forces in the Canal Zone. The news of these events reached Moscow about the same time that reports arrived from Hungary that anti-communist crowds had lynched members of the communist security establishment. This strongly suggested to the men in the Kremlin that the uprising was not aimed at a reform of the "socialist order" but at the abolition of communist rule.

It was under these circumstances that the Soviet leaders met again on the 31st of the month. Not surprisingly they reversed their decision of the day before about troop withdrawal from Hungary and a negotiated settlement of the crisis. They now agreed to crush the revolution. They also agreed to keep their intention secret for the time being so that the illusion would be created in Budapest that the Red Army is leaving the

country. In their new decision the Soviet leaders had the support of the Chinese delegation that had been present in Moscow for some time.

Ever since this change in Soviet policy toward the events in Hungary has become known, historians have pondered over the question why, on the last day of October, the Soviet leaders abandoned the stand they taken only 24 hours earlier? Some commentators have pointed to the developments in the Near East as being the reason. After the British and French attack on Egypt, the Soviets realized that the Suez Crisis was a more serious threat to their interest than they had assumed it to be earlier. With Egypt under attack, it would be highly likely that Moscow would lose influence in the region and the dream of Egypt as a Soviet client state would crumble. Under these circumstances losing Hungary too would deal a double blow to Soviet prestige. And, as Khrushchev said at the time, withdrawing Soviet troops from Hungary would no doubt further embolden the "imperialists" in their quest to curb Soviet influence everywhere.

The Anglo-French attack on Egypt had further implications for the outcome of the events in Hungary. It put the Americans into a precarious position. With such Western democratic countries as Britain and France being involved in an invasion, it became more awkward for the United States to condemn Soviet aggression. More important was the fact that the Suez Crisis destroyed the unity of the West. At the United Nations America found itself voting with the Soviet Union in condemning French and British actions.

In any case, President Eisenhower feared that any military measures taken to oppose Soviet policy in Hungary could trigger a third world war that would probably be fought with nuclear weapons. Furthermore, military action was hardly a possibility with the Soviets having many divisions in Hungary while American forces were hundreds of miles away and would have had to cross neutral Austria just to approach the Hungarian border. In other words, neither the military nor the political situation made actual American aid to the freedom fighters in Budapest feasible.

In his most recent book about the Hungarian revolution, Professor Charles Gati has argued that Soviet withdrawal from Hungary would still have been possible, even without Western pressure, had the Hungarians not gone too far in demanding changes and in doing things that threatened with a loss of prestige for Moscow. He suggests that had the crowds in Hungary been more restrained and had they forgone the lynching of secret

servicemen, and had Imre Nagy's government not started the restoration of a multi-party system, amounting to the abandonment of communist rule and even membership in the "socialist bloc", the Soviet leaders would not have reversed their decision of the 30th of October to pull Russian troops from Hungary. He is probably right, but such a "might-have-been" of history is quite unrealistic. The hatred of communism in Hungary was so deep-seeded that restraint could hardly be expected of the country's masses, even of its revolutionary leaders.

For the depths of that hatred the Soviet leadership was in large part responsible. True, Khrushchev cannot be blamed for most of the excesses of the Stalin era and of the Stalinist leadership in Hungary, but he and his colleagues could have been wiser in 1956. They should not have waited till the summer of 1956 with the replacement the much-reviled Rákosi. They made an even bigger mistake when they replaced him not with a reform communist but with another Stalinist in the person of Gerő.

The Soviet leaders made another mistake when, soon after the first pro-Polish demonstrations in Budapest, they allowed Gerő and Andropov to call into the city Soviet tanks from nearby Russian bases. Of course, had they been wiser, perhaps the discontent in Hungary would not have spilled over into an anti-communist uprising. Had the Soviets been wiser, and Ambassador Andropov been less alarming and more compromising, the course of events in Hungary could have followed the Polish example.

But this was not to be. The Hungarian people, angered by what they had seen as provocative measures dictated from Moscow, were not in the mood for compromise. And once concessions were made to them they demanded more, and ultimately they called for an end to communist rule and Russian domination of their country. But all that was too much for Moscow.

Letting Hungary leave the Soviet Camp and become a western-style country would have been too dangerous to the Soviet leadership. It would have resulted in a serious loss of face for Moscow. It would have meant a gap in the defensive ring surrounding the Soviet Union. It would have invited other members of the Socialist bloc to try quitting the alliance. For Khrushchev to support such a proposition would have undermined his leadership and would have left the door open for the Stalinists in Moscow to reclaim power. The Hungarian revolution had to be crushed.

The Aftermath

The Hungarian revolution had wide-spread international consequences. The fleeing of some 200,000 Hungarian citizens and their re-settlement in the countries of the Western world created a Magyar diaspora that in time would play an important role in keeping links between the Hungarian people and the nations and cultures of the Western world. Their largely indirect role in bringing communism to an end in Hungary has not been studied, but it will become obvious once it will be investigated by historians.

The crushing of the Revolution by the Soviets had an impact on American foreign policies. The event drove home to everyone in Washington the futility of the idea of the "roll back" of communism. After 1956 American rhetoric was adjusted to the policy of seeking peaceful coexistence with the Soviet bloc and finding accommodation and compromises.

The greatest impact of the defeat of the Hungarian Revolution was on Soviet history and the history of the world communist movement. For the Soviets, the sending into Hungary of thousands of Soviet tanks in early November was a costly affair. It led to the condemnation of Soviet actions in many parts of the world. It confirmed the suspicion of many people that communism as practiced in the Soviet camp was a tyrannical system backed by brute force alone.

More importantly, Soviet intervention in Hungary resulted in a great deal of disillusionment among communists everywhere regarding Soviet leadership of the world communist movement. This was especially true of communists in the West upon whose support Marxist parties depended. Only a decade earlier it seemed that some European countries, as for example France and Italy, might embrace communism through the electoral process. By 1956 the chance of this happening had diminished and, after November of that year, it decreased even further. Viewed from the distance of half a century, it seems that 1956 was the beginning of the end of the world communist revolution.

The demise of the Soviet Empire came 33 years later. By then the Soviets were ready to abandon their imperial ambitions. By the late 1980s they, especially new Soviet leaders such as Mikhail Gorbachev, saw in Eastern Europe a drain on Soviet resources. Furthermore, unlike in 1956 when the Soviet military regarded Hungary (and, in particular, her terri-

tory) as an invaluable military asset, by 1989 it felt that the country was not needed for the defence of the Soviet Union in the age of intercontinental missiles.

Not surprisingly that year Gorbachev let Hungary — as well as Poland, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany — go its own way, mainly by making it evident to the communist leaders in the country that the Red Army would no longer prop up their regimes. When Hungary's communist masters realized this, they did their utmost to assure that the transition to a non-communist society came about peacefully rather than through another bloody revolution.

The dreams of Hungarians about independence, democracy and association with the West started to be realized only in 1989. But the road to a Western-European style society and economy has not been an easy one. Forty years of communism had bequeathed the country a burdensome legacy. The most tangible part of this has been the national debt that had been amassed by the country's communist regime from the 1970s to the 1980s. Hungary of the times shouldered the heaviest per-capita national debt in Eastern Europe — and it still does. In the wake of 1989 Hungary had to reorient completely her external trade and replace Russia as her principal trading partner with Western Europe. She also had to phase out her uneconomical heavy industries and replace them with economic activities more in tune with European markets.

Another, somewhat less tangible unfortunate legacy of the Soviet era in Hungary had been the tradition of the dependence of the individual on the state. Such attitudes will take at least a generation to eradicate. The country also has to learn, and this is a painful process for her people, that the cost of the cradle-to-grave social safety net that had been financed in János Kádár's Hungary mainly with western loans is too great for an economy that has not yet made a full transition to the economic order that exists in much of Western Europe.

The stresses caused by the transforming of Hungary from a socialist state to one more in line with Western models are still with us today and had helped to foster much of the discontent that we witnessed in the country on the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the revolution. We can only hope that by the time of the Revolution's centenary, all negative legacies of forty years of communist rule in the country will be eliminated.

NOTES

The literature dealing with the history of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution is enormous. The most recent bibliography of the subject can be found in Julia Bock, "The Subject of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution in American Academic Libraries," *East European Quarterly*, 40, 4 (December 2006): 443-66. This article contains a selective list of recent books on 1956 (pp. 451-56) as well as other relevant material.

Several of my own studies published over the decades have touched on the subject. These include an article in Béla K. Király, B. Lotze and N. F. Dreisziger, eds., *The First War between Socialist States: The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and its Impact* (New York: Social Science Monographs, Brooklyn College Press, Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1984). This book contains numerous studies that are still useful. A more recent documentary collection is Csaba Békés ed., *Az 1956-os magyar forradalom a világpolitikában: Tanulmány és válogatott dokumentumok* [The 1956 Hungarian Revolution in World Politics: A Study and Selected Documents] (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1996). This volume also contains a detailed and lucid introduction to the subject. Two other recent works are László Borhi, *Hungary in the Cold War: 1945-1956* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004) and, especially, Charles Gáti, *Failed Illusions: Moscow, Washington, Budapest, and the 1956 Hungarian Revolt* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 2006). Gati's volume is available in other languages as well, including Hungarian. See the review of this work by Géza Jeszenszky in our volume (pages 207-25).

For people who read Hungarian Péter Gosztonyi's monograph, *1956: A Magyar forradalom története* [1956: The History of the Hungarian Revolution] (Munich: Griff, 1981) might still be of interest. The *Yearbook* [*Évkönyv*] of the 1956 Institute of Budapest is another useful secondary source that contains many shorter studies. One of these is by the Institute's former senior scholar, the late György Litván, "Mítoszok és Legendák 1956-ról," in *Évkönyv*, VIII, ed. Kőrösi Zsuzsanna, Éva Standeisky, and János M. Rainer (Budapest: 1956 Institute, 2000), 205-18. The American scholar Johanna Granville has also written on the subject. One of her studies appeared in our journal: "The Soviet-Yugoslav Detente, Belgrade-Budapest Relations, and the Hungarian Revolution (1955-56)" *Hungarian Studies Review*, 24, 1-2 (1997): 15-63.

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Soviet Treatment of Magyars, 1945-56: Hungarian Slave Labourers in the Gulag

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The Origins and Development of the Soviet Gulag

While most people have heard of the word "Gulag," few are really knowledgeable about its meaning and significance. To our great surprise, this also holds true for Hungary, even among some educated people. Based largely on the title of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's monumental *Gulag Archipelago* (1973), many believe it to be a collection of penal islands somewhere in the far northern region of Russia.[1] In reality, however, GULAG is simply an acronym or mosaic word for the Soviet administrative apparatus *Glavnoye Upravleniye Ispravitelno-Trudovykh Lagerey* [Chief Administration of Corrective Labour Camps], which unified the administration of the many thousands of slave labour camps in the Soviet Union.[2]

Some corrective labour camps had come into existence immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The system that held these camps together, however, was established only in 1934. Becoming known as the GULAG, it soon gave its name to the collection of all slave labour camps, which numbered in the thousands throughout the vast reaches of the Soviet Empire. At its height, from the 1930s through the 1950s, the Gulag embraced a territory that was 5,500 miles long and 2,500 wide, and it may have included up to forty-thousand camps of various sizes. It stretched from the Ukrainian Donbass region to the Kamchatka Peninsula in the Far East, from the Lapp-inhabited Kola Peninsula to the Kuril Islands north of Japan, from the Caucasus Mountains in the south to Vorkuta beyond the Arctic circle, and from Mongolia to the mouth of the Lena River on the Arctic Sea.

Although the Gulag was a separate administrative system, it always remained under the direct control of the Soviet Secret Police, even though the latter was repeatedly reorganized and frequently renamed. The most important of these names included Cheka, GPU, OGPU, NKVD, MVD, NKGB, and finally KGB, which remained intact until the very end of the Soviet Union.

The young men and women — mostly innocent victims — who found themselves in one of these forced labour camps were put to work on every possible physical labour. They were forced to work under the most inhuman conditions, which decimated them very rapidly, forcing the authorities to replenish these camps repeatedly. In point of fact, in the course of time they devised a system of work and replenishment which appeared to them to be the most effective means in exacting work from the inmates. The person who is credited with having devised this system was a certain Naftaly Aronovich Frenkel (1883-1960),[3] who in the course of time was awarded the Order of Lenin, and was also promoted to the rank of a general in the NKVD. These promotions were his rewards for his ability to exact work most efficiently from the helpless inmates in the forced labour camps.[4]

Frenkel's method was to "substitute hunger for the knout," or to put it another way, "to link the prisoner's food ration... to his production."[5] But this was only one of Frenkel's methods of labour exaction. He also became aware of the fact that the prisoners were most productive during the first few months of their incarceration. After those initial months they became increasingly enfeebled and drained of their energies. As such they became progressively less productive. Based on these observations, Frenkel came to the conclusion that production levels of camp inmates could only be kept on a high level by repeatedly culling them — killing them off — and replacing them with newcomers.

This culling process was also applied in many different ways. In one instance, when called out for the daily work detail, the laggards who were not fast enough and thus brought up the rear of the line, were simply shot from behind. Others died of exhaustion and of the various diseases that were rampant in the Gulag camps. These "weaklings" were judged to be useless for the "building of socialism," and consequently were simply replaced by fresh prisoners. This culling and weeding out process continued for decades through much of the life of the Soviet Gulag in Stalin's Russia.[6]

With his well-oiled method of exacting the maximum amount of work from the hapless slave labourers, Frenkel had endeared himself to Stalin so much that in 1931 he was put in charge of the construction of the infamous White Sea Canal, which was completed in 1933 at the cost of the lives of 60,000 human beings. Moreover, in 1937 he was appointed director of the newly founded GULZhDS [Chief Administration of Railroad Construction Camps], and in 1939 he was entrusted with providing railroad transportation for the Red Army for its invasion of Poland, and then of Finland in the so-called "Winter War." Frenkel's proven methods of labour exaction were successively applied to many other large construction projects, including the Baltic-Amur Railroad Project, the Far Eastern Construction Project, and to the construction and running of such infamous slave labour camps as those of Vorkuta and the Kolyma region of Eastern Siberia.[7]

It is difficult to estimate the number of inmates in these forced labour camps, and even more difficult to assess the number of prisoners who died during their incarceration. Solzhenitsyn claims that between 1928 and 1953 "some forty to fifty million people served long sentences in the Archipelago."[8] The estimates of those who perished range up to thirty million, although one of the recent estimates stopped at twenty--three million.[9]

Up to the outbreak of the war in Europe in 1939, the inmates of the Gulag camps came almost exclusively from the ranks of Soviet citizens. Starting in 1939, however, the camps were being replenished by an increasing number of other nationalities, including Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Finns, Poles, and several smaller Caucasian and Crimean nationalities. These deportations were especially hard on the anti-communist intellectual elites of these nationalities, which nations were thus in effect decapitated.

During the final months of World War II, a new set of prisoners appeared. They came from the various conquered — according to the Soviets, "liberated" — nations of Central Europe. These included prisoners of war, but also a great number of civilians. The countries under Soviet occupation were depleted of able bodied young men and women. They were deported to the Soviet Union partially as a form of collective punishment, and partially to help rebuild the country after the devastation suffered in the war. Both of these goals were important, although their relative importance changed from time to time.

The alleged "liberation" of Hungary

After four years of war and one year of German occupation, in the spring of 1945 Hungary was freed from the Nazi German occupying forces, only to be subjugated by the "liberating" Soviet Red Army. In the course of the next forty-six years this Soviet control became a permanent feature of Hungarian life, and on April 4th every year, Hungarians were told to celebrate this alleged "liberation" of their country by the Soviet Union. Although these celebrations ceased in 1990, the Soviet troops did not leave Hungary until June 19, 1991.

To most Hungarians who had experienced first hand the circumstances of this Soviet occupation of their country, this "liberation" appeared more like the rape of their nation and their families. In private, this view was often expressed through a slightly different pronunciation of the expression "*szabadulás*" (=liberation), which with the appropriate emphasis came out as "*szabad dúlás*" (=free ravaging). Naturally, this view does not negate the fact that for some people — at least for a while — the Soviet conquest was in fact liberation. These include the Jewish and those non-Jewish Hungarians who openly opposed the Germans and their Hungarian cohorts. In the course of time, however, even these anti-Nazi groups began to feel the heavy hand of Soviet occupation.

One of the best examples of this "liberation-turned-into-oppression" is the case of Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera (1929-2001), the scion of a well-to-do Hungarian Jewish family, who survived Auschwitz only to be taken to the Soviet Gulag soon after his return to Hungary. Allegedly, this was done because he was born into a well-to-do upper bourgeoisie family, and thus counted as one of the "oppressors" in Hungarian society. Nagy-Talavera also survived the Soviet Gulag. Soon after his repatriation, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 broke out. He took the opportunity to flee Hungary and emigrated to the United States. Ten years later he acquired a Ph.D. at Berkeley, and then rose to a professorship at California State University at Chico.[10]

No Hungarian knew and felt the pain of Soviet "liberation" more than those tens of thousands of innocent civilians who were collected during this "liberation process" and then deported to the slave labour camps of the Soviet Gulag. As observed by Tamás Stark, a respected scholar of the period of World War II: "Who would have thought that in the immediate past century — in our own century — the institution of slavery would be reinstated? We may even assert that in the twentieth

century more people were enslaved than in all of the previous centuries together. Furthermore, in our age, slavery became 'more sophisticated' than in ancient times, not only in its organization and quantity, but also in its 'quality.' In those days the goal was simply the exaction of labour. Nowadays it was extermination for which labour was 'only' an instrument. The goal of German national socialism was to weaken and to annihilate certain 'races' or ethnic groups. The goal of Stalinist socialism, on the other hand, was to use forced labour for the decimation of Soviet subjects, and for the intimidation of the neighbouring states."[11]

We have no clear-cut picture of the number of Hungarians — military personnel and civilians — who ended up in captivity during the last phase of the war, but in generally it is assumed that their number was above 900,000. Of these, somewhat less than one-third were captured by the Western Allies (Americans, British, French), while over two-thirds or 600,000 to 640,000 ended up in Soviet forced labour or prisoner-of-war camps. Of the latter, 220,000 (or perhaps 270,000) never returned home.[12] About half of these internees — possibly 120,000 to 140,000 — were innocent civilians who had been taken captive in the period between November 1944 and March 1945. According to the *Magyar Nagylexikon* [Great Hungarian Encyclopedia],[13] of these 120,000 and 140,000 civilian captives from within Hungary's current borders only about 10% survived.[14] If we consider the territory of enlarged Hungary as it existed during World War II, then the number of civilian internees moves up to between 180,000 and 200,000, most of the extra ones coming from Northern Transylvania and Sub-Carpathia or Carpatho-Ruthenia.[15]

Although the above figures are usually mentioned, some scholars put the Hungarian losses even higher. As an example, Gusztáv Menczer, the President of the Directorate of the Central Office of Compensation [Központi Kárrendezési Iroda Társadalmi Kollégiuma], the number of the Hungarian deportees was close to 700,000 (680,900), of whom about 400,000 or 60% perished in Russia. This number, however, has to be amended by the addition of 120,000 person who died during transportation to the slave labour camps, and about whom very little information is available.[16] If these figures will prove to be correct, the number of Hungarian slave labourers who succumbed to the vicissitudes of deportation is above half a million.

But statistics about these deportations are scarce and often contradictory. This can easily be demonstrated even with the writings of such recognized experts of this mass deportation as Tamás Stark and Gusztáv

Menczer. In one of his relevant writings, for example, Menczer summarizes the statistical date of the various deportees as follows: "According to researchers, of the 750,000 Hungarian deportees at least 200,000 perished during the death march, in consequence of the horrendous conditions of their deportation. An additional 150,000 Hungarians succumbed to various diseases in the concentration camps. The primary culprit among these was alimentary dystrophy, tuberculosis, and malaria caused by shortage of protein."[17] As is evident, the statistics in this statement — which speak of 350,000 Hungarians who perished in the Gulag — do not quite coincide with the statistics given in the earlier summary, where Menczer speaks about the death of 520,000 Hungarians. This proves conclusively that even the most astute researchers are confused by the various contradictory statistics on this topic.

Although scholars inevitably disagree with each other about the number of the deportees and the number of those who perished during deportation or in one of the many Gulag slave labour camps, we all can agree with Gusztáv Menczer's following conclusions that touch all Hungarians:

> The two horrible dictatorships of the Twentieth Century [Nazi and Bolshevik] show a 'strange' similarity not only in their methods of operation, but also in the number of Hungarians who have fallen victim to them. As such, placing special emphasis on the victims of only one of these dictatorships offends the victims of the other dictatorship. It puts a dividing wall between two groups of Hungarians, who have suffered so much in the Twentieth Century.[18]

The civilians who ended up in the Soviet slave labour camps at the end of the war were in two distinct categories: political prisoners, who were convicted on various trumped-up charges, and the *malenky robot*ers, who were deported for a "little work" without being convicted of any crime. According to some sources up to 90% of the political prisoners may have perished in the Gulag camps under the most gruesome circumstances, but based on the number of returnees, this claim appears to be too high (We should add here that the grammatically correct term should be *malenkaya rabota*. Repeated Hungarian usage or misusage, however, made this incorrect expression the accepted term for this phenomenon in Hungarian popular and scholarly literature.)[19] The mostly unsuspecting

victims of *malenky robot* were collected in villages and towns, after having been called to a public meeting under various pretexts.

According to available statistics, in the period between the summer of 1945 and the fall of 1948 somewhere between 330,000 to 380,000 Hungarians — most of them members of the military — were repatriated. Between 100,000 to 150,000 of these arrived before the summer of 1946, 202,000 returned home between July 1946 and November 1948, another 20,000 to 25,000 in the course of 1949 through 1951, and a further 3,000 between 1953 and 1955. This comes to between 330,000 and 380,000 Hungarians who survived, leaving as many as 220,000 to 270,000, or even 310,000 who did not.[20] Those who were repatriated between 1946 and 1948 also included 9,425 documented civilians, most of whom were victims of the *malenky robot*. They represented perhaps only 10% of the innocent civilians who have ended up in the Soviet Gulag in wake of World War II.[21]

Those who were convicted for espionage or for some other imaginary "crime" were not so "fortunate" as the *malenky robot*ers. They were generally taken much further into Soviet Siberia, and they had to stay there for several more years after the surviving *malenky robot*ers had already returned. If the political prisoners survived, they were permitted to repatriate only after eight, ten, or even fifteen years of Soviet slave labour, in the period following Stalin's death in 1953.[22]

Some Recent Scholarship and Memoir Literature on the Gulag

In recent years, the institution of the Soviet Gulag has been ably chronicled by a number of Western scholars, among them Robert Conquest (1965 and 1992),[23] Nanci Adler (1993 and 2002),[24] and Anne Applebaum (2003).[25] Most of these syntheses were born in wake of the monumental works by the world-renowned Alexander Solzhenitsyn (b. 1918), whose account of life in Soviet forced labour camps (1963, 1973) had earned for him a Nobel Prize in 1970.[26] There were, of course, many other survivors who have recorded their frightening and torture-filled experiences in the Soviet Gulag, but none of them were able to do so on the aesthetic level, and with the political impact of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's Gulag Archipelago.

Among the scores of Hungarians who did so, the earliest was Áron Gábor (1911-1982) and the best known is János Rózsás (b. 1926).

Both of these former Gulag prisoners wrote powerful descriptions of their experiences in the Soviet death camps. Áron Gábor had spent fifteen years in the Soviet Gulag (1945-1960), and then five more years under controlled political circumstance in his homeland. Only after his illegal emigration in 1965, was he able to recount his trials and tribulations. Only then was he able to publish memoirs in the form of his Siberian Trilogy.[27] These volumes were also published in English, German, Spanish, and Portuguese, but as they were put out by small obscure publishers that lacked the necessary tools of mass publicity, these books were never able to penetrate Western social and political consciousness.

The situation with Rózsás — the author of the first Hungarian Gulag encyclopedia[28] — is somewhat different in that his works were never published in any language other than Hungarian. But because of the unfriendly political atmosphere back in his homeland, the first edition of his voluminous memoirs had to be published abroad in Germany (1986-1987).[29] Only in 1989, at the time of the change of the political regime in Hungary, was he able to have them republished in his native land.[30]

Of all the Hungarian Gulag-memoirs Rózsás's reminiscences are by far the most detailed. Yet, not even these memoirs were able to penetrate the Hungarian mind. The nearly half century of Soviet domination has left its mark upon Hungarian society. The memory of these mass deportations was virtually obliterated from collective memory of the nation. Moreover, those who survived and returned home were received as war criminals. They were forbidden to speak about their Gulag experiences, and in this way they were unable to pass through the catharsis that would have made their lives more bearable.

The situation was somewhat different with George Bien (1928-2005), who spent over ten years in Eastern Siberia province of Kolyma, and soon after his repatriation he left Hungary to the United States. In contrast to those who remained at home, George Bien was free to speak about his life, but he never got around writing about his experiences until after his retirement in the 1990s. His work entitled *Elveszett évek* [Lost Years] appeared both in Hungarian and in English.[31] Bien also appeared in a number of documentaries about Siberia and the Soviet Gulag. As such, his reminiscences made much greater impression upon Western scholarship than those of any of his predecessors. This is true notwithstanding the fact that his work is much shorter and more cursory than those of Áron Gábor and János Rózsás. His graphic portrayal of the "Death Ship to Kolyma," in which he described the torturous six days

between Vladivostok and Magadan without a drop of drinking water, is a particularly impressive and frightening picture of the inhumanity of the Soviet Gulag.[32]

This incredible lack of information, disinterest and disregard for the Soviet Gulag and its many death camps is evident from the various major syntheses of modern Hungarian history that have been written by respected scholars several years after the fall of communism. In most instances the authors of these syntheses barely mention, let alone discuss, this major Hungarian tragedy that landed perhaps 700,000 Hungarians in Soviet slavery, and resulted in the cruel death of at least quarter million fellow Hungarians. They simply gloss over this tragedy, without any effort to point out the enormity of the crime that had been perpetrated against innocent Hungarian civilians by the brutal Stalinist system that had inundated the lands of Western Christian Civilization at the end of the war. The violence, the rapes, the mass tortures, and the resulting loss of innocent lives by the tens of thousands all remain unmentioned by these historians who had been educated without any reference to these dark and painful events of Hungarian history.[33]

The rape of Hungarian women by the conquering Soviet armed personnel was so widespread that their number may have passed one million. Of the various sources that mention these rapes include the memoirs of the former Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy (1903-1979), who presided over the Hungarian Government between February 1946 and June 1947. He writes that "ruthless red soldiers have captured and infected with venereal disease tens of thousands of women and young girls."[34] At the same time "Russian female soldiers raped many thousands of Hungarian men, who were forced to perform unnatural acts. [These Soviet women]... congregated in gangs, attacked surrounding villages, and collected men, whom they held captive for several days."[35] Ferenc Nagy also mentions that these allegations were examined by the Swiss Embassy in Budapest, which than published the results of this inquiry in May 1945.

Another historical work also discusses the mass rape of Hungarian women by members of the Red Army. The author of this work claims that in August 1945 the Hungarian Government was forced to seek help and medication from several West European states to deal with the 470,000 women who were suffering from the so-called "Lenin disease."[36] If this allegation is correct, then the number of women who have been raped should be at least around one million. After all it is prudent to

assume that not all women who had been raped contracted the disease, and not all of them reported this violation to the authorities.

One may also mention the case of the case of the small town of Felsőzsolca in the vicinity of the industrial city of Miskolc. In 1945 it had a population of approximately 2,500, among them perhaps 500 adult women. Of these women, according to local historian Sándor Zsíros, well over a 100 were raped or otherwise mishandled under the most gruesome circumstances. As related by him, "we... know of cases where on the very first night of our 'liberation' Russian soldiers marched into the cellars... and raped crying-shrieking young girls, next to a corps, within the sight of thirty or so frightened adults."[37]

This lack of attention to the terrorization and deportations of Hungarian civilians by the Soviet conquerors after World War II is characteristic of virtually all historical syntheses and textbooks published in post-communist Hungary. These include even the twenty-one-volume *Magyar Nagylexikon* [Great Hungarian Encyclopedia], which devotes a whole column to the description of the Soviet Gulag, but only a single sentence to its Hungarian prisoners: "In addition to various Soviet nationalities, many foreign citizens also lived and died in the camps of the Gulag, among them hundreds of thousands of Hungarian prisoners-of-war, and after 1944 also civilians who had been deported from Hungary, of whom 90% never returned home."[38] While very brief, here at least the low survival rate of Gulag-prisoners is mentioned.

It is interesting and even frightening that this lack of attention to the Hungarian victims of the Soviet Gulag are short-shrifted even by some prominent Western authors, as well as by Hungarian historians who had spent considerable time in the West following the collapse of communism.

This lack of attention to the victims of the Soviet Gulag is all the more surprising in view of the fact that, in addition to a few specialized studies by scholars such as Tamás Stark and Lajos Fűr,[39] at least five dozen memoirs of Gulag-survivors and documentary collections have appeared in Hungary and in the neighbouring Hungarian-inhabited lands in the course of the past fifteen years.[40]

The most important of the latter were the interviews with former prisoners, who for the first time since their repatriation were permitted to speak openly about their torturous experiences. One of the first of these interview collections was Miklós Füzes's volume *Modern rabszolgaság* [Modern-day Slavery] (1990).[41] Füzes was a professional historian and

archivist. He wrote an extensive historical introductory study to the volume which contains twenty-seven interviews and reminiscences by Hungarian Germans, commonly known as Swabians. Similarly to Tamás Stark, Füzes also makes an attempt to synthesize the many contradictory statistics about the number of the deportees and survivors. In light of the scarcity and the unreliability of the existing sources, he too had to conclude that it is really impossible to come up with reliable figures for the deportees, although he does agree with the conclusion by some other historians that "about two-thirds of the deportees perished."[42]

Only a few months after Füzes's work appeared, Ilona Szebeni's *Merre van magyar hazám?* [Where is My Hungarian Homeland?] (1991) was published. It contains interviews by seventy-four former Gulag prisoners.[43] Szebeni also appended the names of 3,230 *malenky robot*ers who had been collected and deported from the Upper Tisza region. The large majority of these prisoners perished in the Soviet Union. Szebeni was aided in her work by Tamás Stark, who wrote a postscript to this volume, which essay placed the whole Gulag-experience into the proper historical perspective.[44]

In 1994 appeared the work by Sándor Zsíros, *A front alatt* [On the Front], which is based upon the reminiscences of eleven former Gulag prisoners from the town of Felsőzsolca, as well as on some official documents and memoir fragments. The author himself escaped deportation because he was only fourteen years old in those days. His book is a microcosm of the mass deportation of Hungarians to the Soviet Gulag that took place in late 1944 and early 1945.[45] This work was subsequently published in an expanded edition in 2004, and then in English also in 2006.[46]

Ten years after Szebeni's and Füzes's, and six years after Zsíros's work, there appeared another interview volume by the journalist Valéria Kormos, entitled *A végtelen foglyai* [Prisoners of Endlessness].[47] This book is much more selective in its coverage, for it contains interviews with less than a dozen survivors, but it was put out by a Budapest publisher in a much more attractive format. The interviews are more professional than in Szebeni's case, and they are placed into more easily readable literary form. This book is embellished with several dozen photographs. They compare and contrast the appearance of the survivors before their deportation with how they looked five decades later.

Notwithstanding these numerous publications, the history, and even the very existence of the Gulag camps and their Hungarian inmates

continues to remain largely unknown and unrecognized in Hungary. By refusing to incorporate the history of the Gulag into their syntheses of Hungarian history, professional historians assign this great national tragedy to total oblivion. This approach, however, is just as wrong and unjust, as trying to deny the Jewish Holocaust. The Gulag and the Holocaust are human tragedies on a previously unheard-of scale, which need to be remembered by all succeeding generations.

The Background to the Hungarian GULAG

The collection of innocent civilians for the Soviet Gulag was done in accordance with a tacit understanding among the victorious allies that Soviet Russia would have to be compensated for its losses during the war. The Soviet Foreign Minister, V. M. Molotov had alluded to this policy already two years before the end of the war, when in a letter to the British Ambassador dated June 7, 1943, he stated clearly that "the Soviet Government is of the opinion that the responsibility for the military help that Hungary had given to Germany... has to be borne not only by the Hungarian Government, but to a lesser or greater degree also by the Hungarian people."[48]

This policy of forced labour for the citizens of the defeated states was reaffirmed by a Decree of the Soviet Union's Committee of State Security on December 16, 1944, which stated that "all German men between the ages of 17 and 44, and all German women between the ages of 18 and 30, who are residents of the territories of Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia have to be mobilized and transported to the Soviet Union.

In Hungary, the Soviet zeal to collect slave labourers went much beyond the intent of this decree. As a matter of fact, Soviet military authorities, with the enthusiastic cooperation of their local cohorts and opportunists, collected not only Germans and Hungarians with German names, but also ethnic Hungarians who had nothing to do with the war except as suffering bystanders. At various places they collected Hungarians simply because their names ended in the letter "r." As remembered by ninety year old Mr. Imre Kolozsi in 1989: "Some stupid person came up with the idea that every family name ending in the letter 'r' is German, because Hitler's name also ended in an 'r.' This is how Pásztor, Molnár, Bodnár, Csiger... and even Gyüker got on the list.... But the surname was

not really important.... A certain number of people had to be deported, and the quota was filled with whomever could be caught."[49] They deported Hungarians with pure Hungarian names such as Bodnár, Bognár, Kádár, Fehér, Kövér, Vincellér, and so on, from numerous other localities as well.[50]

The Collection of Prisoners

In Hungary the first wave of deportations was haphazard and disorganized, but the second wave was a well-planned and well-carried out operation. It took place about a month or two after the first wave, and its goal was twofold: To supply free labour for rebuilding Soviet economy, and to apply collective punishment to Hungary's civilian population, particularly those of German ethnicity. This policy was to be applied not only to small rump Hungary that had been created after the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, but also to those largely Hungarian-inhabited territories that had been regained in the course of 1938-1941.

This is evident, among others, from the deportation of about 5,000 ethnic Hungarians from the city of Kolozsvár (today's Cluj) the capital of Transylvania, which in 1940 had been returned to Hungary but then in 1945 reverted once more to Romania. But it is also evident from the mass deportations that took place in Sub-Carpathia [Ruthenia],[51] as well as in the southern fringes of interwar Slovakia that had been regained by Hungary in 1938.[52]

The process of organized collection of Hungarians began in the Upper-Tisza Region of Northeastern Hungary. From there it proceeded partially toward Debrecen, and partially toward Miskolc and Eger, and then on to Budapest and its vicinity. After that it moved to the lands between the Danube and the Tisza Rivers and to Transdanubia. It seems that this process was carried out in accordance with a grand central plan that had been devised in Moscow for Soviet-style social reconstruction of postwar Hungary. Apparently, each section of the country had to supply a certain number of victims in accordance with a predetermined quota system. But once that quota had been filled, collections generally ceased.

While official documents concerning these mass deportations are sporadic, the nature of this policy can be deduced from various other sources. It is substantiated even by some of the personal papers of a number of top communist leaders. As an example, there is the letter of

Hungary's future communist cultural czar, József Révai (1898-1959), written to Hungary's "Little Stalin" Mátyás Rákosi (1892-1971) who at that time was still in Moscow. Révai recognized and readily pointed out the shortcomings of this meticulously planned deportation program:

> Sadly (he wrote) the plan concerning the deportation of the able-bodied German population did not have the effect it was meant to have.... In most places local commandants implemented this policy on the basis of family names and quotas. If there were not enough Germans, they collected Hungarians. They harvested even people who did not speak a word German, who were proven anti-Fascists, and who had even suffered imprisonments and internments [at the hands of Hungary's Fascist Government]. No matter. They were all taken.[53]

The collection process itself depended heavily on misinformation and outright deception. The majority of the internees were told that they would have to perform a "little work" ["*malenky robot*"] for a few days to clear away rubble, clean the streets, help distribute food, restart production in the local shops and factories, or to receive documents attesting to their innocence in matters relating to Nazi activities. After a few days or a couple of weeks, they would be permitted to return home to start rebuilding their own communities.

In the villages and smaller towns, the prospective Gulag-prisoners were told to assemble at one of the local public buildings — school, town hall, church, or armoury — for the purposes of being informed about new developments and for receiving their assignments to one of the many public work projects. Those who declined to come, were collected personally by the so-called "polic," usually accompanied by an armed Soviet soldier. These "polic" were eager collaborators, who usually tried to hide their recent Nazi past by over-fulfilling the demands of the occupiers. Most of the victims were not even given time to dress properly, nor to prepare themselves adequately for the so-called "little work" that allegedly awaited them. Once assembled, they were surrounded by Soviet military guards, forced to remain there for days, and then force-marched to one of the "receiving camps" or "holding camps" in their region. There, they were loaded onto cattle cars and deported to the Soviet slave labour camps.[54]

The convicted political prisoners

The *malenky robot*ers constituted only one segment of the deported civilian population. The other, perhaps slightly smaller segment was made up of the political prisoners; that is of those who were actually tried and convicted for an alleged crime and then sent off to Siberia for a period of ten to twenty-five years. These political prisoners were convicted for a wide variety of so-called political crimes, including alleged Nazi affiliation, fighting against the Soviet forces, spying, being involved in sabotage activities, uttering critical remarks about the behaviour of the occupying Soviet forces, or simply being listed on the personal papers of one who had already been arrested for any of the above alleged crimes.

If at all possible, the conditions of their deportation and confinement were even worse than those of the *malenky robot*ers. They had to travel under identically harsh conditions for a much longer period of time; their period of incarceration was much longer; and they were taken to the northern Ural region or to the far reaches of Eastern Siberia, without reasonable hope of ever returning to their homelands. Thus, among these political prisoners the number of those who survived was even smaller.

Arrest and deportation

The arrest, deportation, life, and survival of the Gulag slave labourers in the forced labour camps of the Soviet Union is a perpetual living component of the memories of those repatriated Hungarians who have survived their torturous lives in the "Soviet Paradise." They dream about it, they re-live their tormented and hopeless experiences repeatedly, they are often awakened by nightmares from their sleep, and it is this arousal that makes their lives bearable. Those who survived the camps, returned to Hungary, and then lived on to see the collapse of communism and the end to Hungary's Soviet military occupation gave us a detailed description of their march into captivity.

Their collection was done by Russian soldiers directed by Hungarian collaborators, known in common language as "*polic*," who performed their task with considerable brutality. They shouted and used their rifle butts to gain the compliance of the unfortunate prisoners, and many times they were more vicious than the Soviet occupiers themselves.[55]

The situation was very similar to what happened to the Hungarian Jews only a few months earlier. A number of the deportees to the Gulag recognized this similarity immediately and made known their views as soon as they could. Mihály Zöldi, for example, who ended up on the Gulag as a *malenky robot*er, had this to say about this parallel situation: "When in 1944 we as paramilitary forces [*levente*] were ordered by the gendarmerie to guard the unfortunate Jewish families [who were being deported], none of us thought that within a short time we too will be in the same situation.... Neither they, nor we were guilty. It was the law and human viciousness that was guilty."[56]

Some of the cattle cars were equipped with berths on both sides, and they generally crammed sixty persons into a wagon. Both sides had to accommodate thirty persons. In the middle there was a wooden stove with some pieces of wood. The bottom of the wagon had a hole which served as the toilet. There were no possibilities for cleansing oneself. Drinking water was stored in a standing barrel, but most of the time there was hardly any water in it. Moreover all of the doors were locked, and therefore there was very little possibility for escape. Yet, there were still some who tried, and a very few who actually succeeded.

Failed escape attempts were followed by brutal punishments, and successful escapes, by replenishment. The numbers had to match. If three people escaped then three new ones were caught to replace them. Following an escape, the Russian guards began to replenish the vacancies even before the train resumed its journey. As related by Imre Kolozsi, after a successful escape by two prisoners, the Russians "caught two men on the station and threw them into the wagons. One of them was thrown into our car. His name was Asztalos and he was a railroad man, who was just leaving for home. For many days the unfortunate man could not really believe what happened to him."[57]

Another case was described by Mrs. Ferenc Vojtó, née Ilona Vinnai, in her reminiscences:

> I witnessed a dreadful incident in the vicinity of a train station. We did not reach the village yet and our train was standing at a railroad crossing. On the other side of the barrier stood a horse-drawn wagon... with a driver and his young son. The driver must have been about thirty-six or thirty-eight, his son about thirteen or fourteen. A Russian soldier ran over to them, yanked them off the wagon, and shoved both of them into one of the cattle cars. It was terrible to listen to the hysterical

> screams of the man who shouted: 'Take me anywhere you want, I don't care, but let the boy go so that he can drive the wagon home. My wife will never know what happened to us.' They did not heed his plea, but took them away. The train started to roll. I looked back as long as I could, and I saw the two horses standing there stock still, without their master. They did not move at all. The wife would have to wait in vain. Except for us, there were no eyewitnesses.[58]

The long weeks of travel in the cattle cars made all of the deportees very nervous. Many of them were unable to survive the tribulations and died on the way. They suffered from being confined to a tight space, from the inability to move, from lice and other vermin, and from hunger and thirst. But from among all these sufferings, the constant and unending thirst was by far the worse. They rarely received water, and when they did, it was never enough. They tried to quench their thirst by removing snow from the roof of the wagons and then eating it. As described by one of the survivors, "those who were close to a windows and had long arms would reach out between the barbed wires and collect snow from the roof of the wagon. We would snatch it, gobble it up, devour it, and also pass it from hand to hand, because it was impossible to change places."[59]

This long travel, which in case of the *malenky robot*ers lasted three to four weeks, and in case of the political prisoners, who were taken to Eastern Siberia, perhaps as much as eight weeks, wore the deportees down. A significant number of them were unable to take the horrors of the deportation and died on the way.

These slave labour transports are described by the Soviet writer Gennadi Beglov, who spent nine years in one of the Gulag's Siberian forced labour camps. On one occasion he was present when a new transport arrived. He watched as the guards, equipped with machine guns and fierce dogs, flooded out of the lead wagon to unlock the cattle cars to let the prisoners out. The convicts who exited slowly were more dead than alive, but at least they still lived. When the guards reached the sixth wagon, however, no one emerged. Upon inspecting it, they realized that all of the prisoners were dead. They were frozen together in groups of three or four. Apparently, in trying to protect themselves against the Siberian cold, they cuddled and then froze together like blocks of ice.[60]

Life in the Gulag Camps

The lifestyle, surroundings, and living and working conditions of the workers in the forced labour camps were as diverse as the camps themselves. These conditions depended on the camp's geographical location, nature of the work that inmates performed, climatic conditions, as well as on the composition of the camp leadership. Political prisoners sent to Vorkuta, Norlinsk, or to one of the Kolyma camps in Northern and Eastern Siberia faced conditions that were far different from those encountered by the *malenky robot*ers in Eastern Ukraine and the Don region.

Work requirements and daily quotas were very high. A normal workday consisted of twelve hours, but occasionally it was pushed up to fourteen. This heavy workload, combined with such other factors as "inhuman treatment, constant hunger, inappropriate clothing, dismal living conditions, and not the least, the merciless and forbidding climate, claimed its victims steadily in ever increasing numbers."[61] But this created no problems for the camp administrators, for they were assured of a constant flow of new prisoners. "Replacements were assured by the incessantly functioning state security organs, people's courts, and military tribunals. By turning nights into days in political show trials, based on false accusations, they were handing down arbitrary and severe sentences at the victims' expense."[62] This is how many tens of thousands of Hungarians also ended up in the Gulag. They were convicted by Soviet military tribunals on various trumped-up charges and then sent to Soviet slave labour camps for ten to twenty-five years.

The prisoners' chances of staying alive depended to a large degree on the type of work they were forced to perform. Much greater were the chances of survival for those who were employed in agriculture or in manufacturing in the more civilized parts of the Soviet Empire. This was just the opposite for those who were taken to remote Siberian lands and forced to clear forests, build railroad lines, or mine gold in far northern Vorkuta or far eastern Kolyma. There the temperature would often dip down to minus 60 degrees centigrade. Minus 36 was normal for much of the year, when the prisoners were routinely marched out for work. During the daily marches many of them collapsed and then froze to death without anyone caring until the next thaw in the summer.

A few years ago the British writer, Colin Thubron, travelled through Siberia to visit some of the former forced labour camps that since have been abandoned and are in various stages of decay. He wrote about

his experiences in his book entitled *In Siberia*.[63] After visiting the far eastern province of Kolyma, he described his experiences as follows:

> This country of Kolyma was fed every year by sea with tens of thousands of prisoners, mostly innocent. Where they landed, they built a port, then the city of Magadan, and then the road inland to the mines where they perished.... People still call it the 'Road of Bones.'.... They called Kolyma 'the Planet', detached from all future, all reality beyond its own.... Bit by bit they [the prisoners] they were reduced to savages, famished and broken. They became the animals that the authorities had decreed them to be.... They descended into the walking dead, who lingered about the camp on depleted rations, then slipped into oblivion.... Young men became old within a few months.... They were tossed into mass graves.[64]

In Vorkuta Colin Thubron visited and explored the remains of a number of mining places, and then he recorded his impressions:

> Then we reached the shell of Mine #17, Here, in 1943, was the first of Vorkuta's *katorga* [hard labour] death-camps. Within a year these compounds numbered thirteen out of Vorkuta's thirty: their purpose was to kill their inmates. Through winters in which the temperature plunged to -40 F, and the *purga* blizzards howled, the *kathorzhane* [prisoners in hard labour camps] lived in lightly boarded tents sprinkled with sawdust, on the floor of mossy permafrost. They worked for twelve hours a day, without respite, hauling coal-trucks, and within three weeks they were broken. A rare survivor described them turned to robots, their grey-yellow faces rimmed with ice and bleeding cold tears. They ate in silence, standing packed together, seeing no one. Some work-brigades flailed themselves on a bid for extra food, but the effort was too much, the extra too little. Within a year 28,000 of them were dead. A prisoner in milder times encountered the remnant of the hundreds of thousands who were sentenced between 1943 and 1947. They had survived, he said, because they were the toughest — a biological elite — but were now brutalised and half-insane.[65]

Thubron continues his description of the Vorkuta's infamous slave labour camps:

> Then I came to a solitary brick building enclosing a range of cramped rooms. The roof was gone, but the iron-sheathed timbers of their door-frames still stood, and their walls were windowless.
>
> There were isolation cells. Solzhenitsyn wrote that after ten days' incarceration, during which the prisoner might be deprived of clothing, his constitution was wrecked, and after fifteen he was dead.... I stumbled into a quagmire curtained by shrubs, and waded out again.... I began to imagine myself here fifty years ago. What would I have done? But knowing how physical depletion saps the will, the answer returned: You would have been no different from anyone else.[66]

When saying good-bye to the ruins of Vorkuta, Thubron encountered a rock, on which was written: "I was exiled in 1949, and my father died here in 1942. Remember us."[67] How many innocent prisoners must have had similar thoughts, and how many must have whispered the same words, without anyone hearing or caring for their sighs? They all died far away from their loved ones in that hell on earth. In most instances not even their names are know. And among them were tens of thousands of Hungarians, who also died thousands of miles away form their homeland and their weeping families.

Sickness and the medical support system

The primitive living conditions, the inadequate portions of food, and the exacting and oppressive working conditions, soon lead to the deterioration of the prisoners' physical conditions. Many of them died already during the first month of their incarceration. In addition to the demanding work and the constant hunger, most of them died by contracting typhus, malaria or scurvy. Frequent beatings and equally frequent industrial accidents caused many wounds and sores, which almost invariably resulted in untreatable infections. Many of them became victims of the ever present mine mishaps, landslides, workplace accidents, as well as being frozen to death.

Many of the "camp doctors" were not really full-fledged physicians. They acquired their medical skills either by working in hospitals, or by having been medical students at the time of their arrest. These captive "camp doctors" were generally highly regarded even in the forced labour

camps. In many instances the fate, and even the life of a prisoner depended on their kindness or willingness to help. If they decided to assigned a prisoner to the "hospital," this decision usually meant a temporary relief from the life-exacting mine work, and at the same time an increased hope for survival.

As an example, Gusztáv Menczer, the immediate past President of the General Directorate of the Central Office of Compensation in Budapest, was among the elite of such "camp doctors." When convicted to hard labour in Siberia, he was a fourth year medical student at the University of Budapest. During his eight years as a Gulag prisoner he lived in about half a dozen forced labour camps, but his medical knowledge always elevated him above the common prisoners. And he used his privileged position to help other prisoners, many of whom found themselves in desperate situations, at times even close to death.[68]

To a lesser degree, this was also true of George Bien, who was arrested with his cardiologist father at the age of sixteen-and-a-half. Although he was too young to have finished even high school, by virtue of having been a physician's son, he eventually landed a position that made him into a "*feldsher*" [medical orderly] and thus a virtual "camp doctor." After this fortunate turn of events, his position improved significantly. He was even permitted to grow his hair and his mustache. Naturally, he too was in a position to help some of the less fortunate inmates of his camp.[69]

Although most "camp doctors" were decent and helpful people, there were a number among them who were cruel and vicious. Among them was a certain Loránd Endrei from the provincial Hungarian town of Ceglédbercel. He was generally known among the camp inmates as "Lenci doktor" or "Dr. Lenci." According to the *malenky robot*er János Kohlmayer,

> we were treated by a doctor who didn't know the difference between diarrhea and arthritis. He was form this town of Ceglédbercel. He used to be a stretcher-bearer before becoming a coach polisher.... He was the camp's chief doctor. He was also the one who admitted one [to the hospital]. If he felt like it, he hospitalized you, if he didn't feel like it, he chased you away. It made no difference how sick you were, he drove you off to work.... This Dr. Lenci... one day made a visit to my hospital bed and ascertained that I am not alive any more. He declared me dead. He also had me put into the collection ditch, next to five or six bodies. He had me thrown into their midst....

> I did not feel anything... because I was unconscious.... Next day came the cadaver collectors with their dump truck to take the dead to their final resting place.... They were dragging the bodies around, but than one of them... shouted: This man is still alive, he is breathing![70]

This is how János Kohlmayer was saved from being buried alive as a result of "Dr. Lenci's" medical incompetence.

Havoc perpetrated by criminals in the labour camps

With very few exceptions, life of the unfortunate Gulag prisoners was living hell. They had to struggle and strive for everything to say alive. As described by János Rózsás,

> Every working day was filled with quarrels, altercations, often accompanied by violence. To this must be added the fact that the overseers designated by the camp command were usually ruthless slave-drivers. In order to retain their privileged positions, they forced the half-dead prisoners to fulfil the norms. Life in the forced labour camps was made even worse by the fact that until the 1950s political prisoners were mixed in with the common criminals, such as gangsters, robbers and murderers. Political prisoners were placed at the mercy of these criminal elements. They freely took their fellow prisoners' garments, cheated the peaceful inmates out of their food, and even forced the latter to work in their place to fulfil the norm.[71]

Common criminals included several layers, from the Mafia-like professional felons to the small-time pickpockets. But these two groups together made up only a small portion of the so-called "common criminals." Actually, most of the latter were convicted for "crimes" that would hardly have been categorized as such in the Western World. Thus, there were some who were given five years of hard labour for having been late to work on a number of occasions. Some received six years because need compelled them to steel some clothing or a pair of shoes at the bazaar. Others were convicted to seven to ten years for having appropriated a couple of bottles of wine or a few loaves of bread during store deliveries. Still others were convicted for having stolen a few pencils and some

writing paper from the offices where they worked. These were the types of "felons" who constituted the largest segment of the "criminal elements" in the forced labour camps. Naturally, they had little to do with the above mentioned Mafia-like professional felons, robbers and murderers.

The various criminal groups functioned under their own acknowledged leaders, and they could be identified by the diverse identification marks on their bodies. These professional criminals conducted virtual haunting expeditions against the defenceless political prisoners. They took away the latter's best clothing and shoes, they robbed them of their food rations, and they also took the largest share of the gift packages sent to them by their families. At the same time they refused to work, but forced their less fortunate fellow prisoners to work in their place. Anyone who resisted, was beaten, maimed, or even killed mercilessly.

Janissaries of the Forced Labour Camps

Ruthless brigade leaders generally came from the ranks of those inmates who were willing to prostitute themselves by collaborating with the Gulag authorities, and thus become *sukis* or bitches. They were present in virtually all of the camps. This was recalled, among others, by Henrik Pfaffenbüchler who was picked up as a *malenky robot*er in the latter part of 1944. Soviet camp commandants "always found people who were willing to carry out their orders. They were sadists, who would beat us regularly. Most of them came from Romania, from among the Saxons, but there were also some Czechs. I never encountered a Hungarian."[72]

This view is counterbalanced by the camp experiences of Rózsa Nagy, who was collected and deported to the Soviet Gulag at the meagre age of fourteen. She remembers that denunciations to and collaborations with camp authorities "was a very widespread phenomenon."[73] There were many who for more food or better treatment were willing to squeal on their fellow prisoners. As an example, Rózsa herself was denounced by her Russian brigade leader — who was serving a fifteen-year sentence in the Gulag — for smuggling a letter from the camp for one of her fellow prisoners.

The traitors or so-called *Janissaries*, who were willing to join the ranks of the torturers of the Gulag prisoners, also appeared in the ranks of the *malenky robot*ers who had been collected and deported from the Upper Tisza Region of Hungary. One of the worse among them was a

certain Transylvanian woman, who had married someone in the village of Böcs, from where she was take to the Gulag. In Imre Kolozsi's reminiscences she is depicted as a horribly cruel and brutal person, who appeared to enjoy torturing others. Within the camp this vicious Hungarian woman from Transylvania was appointed an overseer and then joined her Romanian lover by the name of Korushchuck to torment the camp inmates. She placed her female victims into a partially water-filled small concrete den, where they were "kept for days without food and drink, standing in the water in their undergarments..... This woman from Böcs and her Romanian lover devised various methods of torture beyond one's imagination."[74]

This also holds true for a certain Juci Schubert, allegedly a Slovak girl from the Nyírség region of Hungary, whose name is remembered by all of those who had been tortured by her, but who managed to survive. In Imre Kolozsi's words, "the Romanian man, the woman from Böcs, and the Slovak girl, these three were the terror of the camp. They were not satisfied with constantly harassing and beating the prisoners. Some of them were punished by being placed into the disinfectant room with temperatures above 100 degrees. By the time they were removed, most of them were dead."[75]

Kolozsi also related the case of a Polish escapee who was brought back to the camp and then tortured to death by this infamous trio: "It was difficult to speak with him, his face and his mouth were scarred everywhere. Within two or three weeks he escaped once more, but they caught him again. They brought him back to the camp that same night. Then they began to torture him under the stairs. They beat him and pounded him repeatedly. By next morning he was dead.... His liver had been kicked to pieces."[76]

The activities of this vicious trio remained embedded in the memory of many other Gulag prisoners. Among them was Margit Rozgonyi (later Mrs. Lajos Gulyás), who enumerated many of the methods of torture employed by these inhuman *Janissaries* against their fellow prisoners. On one occasion, for example, they caught Margit Suller from the town of Rakamaz, while she was trying to escape. Upon recapture, "she was placed in a pit and doused with cold water. Then she was forced to walk barefoot in the snow."[77] In another instance, István Kovács, who also escaped, hoping to return to his wife and his six children, "was beaten to death right in front of us by these mad dogs."[78] The prisoners had to line up and were forced to witness his torture. The

torturers were again the above mentioned threesome: "The red headed Juci [Schubert], beautiful Rózsika [woman from Böcs], and her [Romanian] lover. They were indeed a horrendous threesome."[79]

Mrs. Péter Schmidt from the Transdanubian town of Feked also recalled one of these vicious *Janissaries*. He was a lame man from Becskerek, whose name began with the letter K.

> He was much worse than the Russians, for the latter generally did not hurt us.... [This man] always carried a rubber baton and he would use it to [beat us]. [On one occasion] a young boy from the town of Bikal, who had been working in the woods, fell asleep. The rest of the workers came back, but the boy did not. They assumed that he had escaped.... Then they found him. All of us had to stand in the courtyard. The Russian officer was also there. But he only stood there, while [the lame man from Becskerek] beat the boy. He pounded him until the boy died.... He beat him to death right in front of us.[80]

There were some prisoners who tried to escape even though they knew that being caught would mean certain death. But such attempts were seldom successful. And when they were, this could only happen in the Don region. To escape from Eastern Siberia was absolutely impossible. One of our interviewees, Magdolna Rohr, related such an escape attempt. After collecting a large supply of food two men decided to escape. Given the terrain and the climate, they were only able to reach a nearby forest, where they got stuck and could not continue. There they consumed all the food they had, and then one of them ate the other. (We don't know whether the "food" was killed first, or simply died before being consumed.) After having eaten his friend, except his head, the remaining escapee had no choice but to return to the camp and give himself up. Upon doing so, he was taken back to their hiding place, where he was forced to pick up the frozen head of his colleague and carry it around in the camp to show to the others what happens to one who tries to escape. Magdolna Rohr did not know the ultimate fate of this "cannibal," but we can safely presume that he too was executed.[81]

Another case of such an escape was described by an American-born Armenian girl, who, upon visiting some of her relatives in Soviet Armenia, was accused of spying and sent to a Gulag forced labour camps. She spent five years there, before — following Stalin's death — she was permitted to return to the United States. She recalled an incident

when upon being recaptured, two escapees were thrown to a pack of wild dogs. As she recalled: "They were torn to pieces by the dogs, and human flesh was being scattered all over the place. We were forced to stand there and watch their torturous death so as to put all thoughts of escape out of our minds."[82]

Of course, occasionally even these vicious and treacherous *Janissaries* tended to stumble and ended up in the same place as their former victims.

Compassionate Overseers — Humane Russians

While life in the Gulag was cruel, occasionally one did encounter compassionate camp overseers and humane Russian citizens. Such a humane commander was a certain Russian Jew by the name of Milligram, who had been a military officer before being appointed camp commander in the Donbass region of Russia. According to Imre Kolozsi, "he was a most decent and most humane [commandant] in the camp.... We still speak of him with respect and reverence."[83]

When becoming aware that some of the prisoners were very weak, Milligram would generally remove them from the mines and send them to a collective farm, where they would live and work under much better conditions. Their diet was also improved significantly. When he was informed about the cruelness and viciousness of the above-mentioned threesome, he ordered an inquiry. The result was that Korushchuck and another Romanian "war criminal" was sent off for ten years to Siberia.[84] The interviewee did not know what happened to the two women, his bestial cohorts.

Based on the above, it is evident that the former prisoners who managed to stay alive returned to their homeland burdened with oppressive memories. These memories, however, were attached to forced labour camps, to the cruel and inhuman prison guards, to their equally insensitive commanders, and to the above-described *Janissaries* who sponged off their unfortunate fellow prisoners, and not to the Russian people themselves.

The situation was totally different with the simple folk of the countryside, who were almost as hungry and almost as badly off as the prisoners in the Gulag camps. Of course, because of their initial inability to communicate with the deportees, and because of the vicious propa-

ganda they were fed night and day, most of the locals viewed the inmates as "murderous Fascists." But as soon as the prisoners learned enough Russian to make themselves understood, and were able to explain how they ended up in the Soviet Union, their relationship changed. Hate suddenly turned into compassion and the desire to help. Naturally, this was true only in regions where the Gulag camps were located close to human settlements. Such relationships were impossible on the frigid Siberian steppes, without any human habitation. As remarked by historian Tamás Stark, "the majority of the reminiscences emphasize the benevolent and generous nature of the Russian people."[85]

Testimonials to the humanity of the Russian people in the reminiscences of former Gulag prisoners are almost as frequent as references to the inhuman actions of cruel overseers and brutal *Janissaries*. János Rózsás, for example, dedicated a whole volume to Sister Dusya, who protected him and nurtured him back to health. It was her care that made it possible for Rózsás to survive, to see his homeland again, and to write about his Gulag experiences. Rózsás regards Sister Dusya as his "guardian angle" and his "saviour," whose real identity he was never able to learn.[86]

All these reminiscences point to the fact that human beings are the same everywhere. Every nation harbours good and humane individuals, as well as villains and scoundrels. Given the above, one can hardly deny that in Russia and the Soviet Union — like everywhere else — the problem was and is not with the people, but always the political system. And it was completely irrelevant whether the system was headed by a "holy" czars or an "infallible" communist dictator.

Women on the Soviet Gulag

About one-third of the deportees — at least those from the Upper Tisza Region — were women. This is how the deportees themselves remember it. This ratio was probably also true for those convicted of various political crimes.[87]

The majority of the women deportees were between sixteen and twenty-five years of age. Naturally, after their unexpected arrest by the Soviet forces they were even more frightened than the men. After all, in their case there was also the possibility of being raped. And even though this was not very common among the *malenky robot*ers, it did happen, particularly among the political prisoners.[88]

During the process of deportation all sorts of wild stories were spread, which frightened the women even more. By the time they reached Focsani [Foksani] in Moldavia (Romania) it was widely believed that the reason they were being deported was that they should give birth to little Russians. "There is a need for many women" — so the story went — "because many Russians have died and women are essential to give birth to children." This is how one of the survivors recalled it. Upon hearing this story "everyone of us began to cry," even though we thought it "impossible that such a thing could take place."[89] Fortunately, this rumour turned out to be completely false.

Upon reaching the destination camps, all prisoners were subjected to disinfection and depilation. This really caused panic among the women:

> They grudgingly agreed to the shearing of their heads, but further depilation could only be carried out after a hand to hand combat. Women also protested violently against the shearing of their locks.... Thereafter all women were lined up... and were given injections to stop their menstruations.... The reason behind this act was the belief that these 'Fascists' were brought here to work.... And because this was a joint camp, they could not discount the possibility of sexual relations. Women were therefore injected to prevent the possibility of child births.[90]

Others believe that something was mixed into their food, which sopped their menstruations. It is possible that in certain instances Soviet authorities may have mixed something into the food of the female prisoners, but most women claim that they were given injections. They were all very much afraid of this treatment, because they feared that it may destroy their ability of ever having children.

There were those who felt the negative effect of these injections already while in camp. Some of the side effects of this treatment included skin rashes and severe blisters. Among them was Erzsébet Pásztor, the future Mrs. Joseph Turkó, whose body was covered with large, ugly and painful boils, especially under her arms. And these boils lasted for many weeks.[91]

The same story was repeated by Magdolna Rohr, but she also added that the depilation of women was always performed by men, while the depilation of men was done by women. This was a horrendous experience for them, because they all had been reared with traditional ethical values. And this open violation of their modesty made their lives

even more miserable than it already was by virtue of their deportation and incarceration.[92]

After a while a number of children were born in the Gulag camps, but almost exclusively to women, who were already pregnant at the time of their arrest and deportation. There is the case of Mrs. Frigyes Muszbek, nee Mária Szloboda, who was in her fifth month at the time of when she was taken to the Gulag, where she gave birth to a little girl.[93] Meanwhile, Soviet authorities realized that they could not expect much work from pregnant women and breast-feeding mothers. As a result, a few weeks after the birth of these babies, they were collected and sent home.

There were thirteen young mothers and thirteen babies who began their repatriation to Hungary on October 20, 1945. The conditions of their travel, however, were such that there was little hope that most of the babies would make it home. As a result of malnutrition, most mothers had very little milk. And the unheated cattle cars were hardly fit to house newborn babies.

> Diapering took place by removing one rag from under them, putting another soiled rag back that had already dried. We were unable to bath them, nor to wash them. We were tearing apart whatever rags we had so as to prevent them from being kept in wet rags in the unheated wagons. Meanwhile we hardly ate anything.... The mothers' milk went dry. It became less and less. Our children slowly withered away..., and at the end they died of hunger.[94]

The unhappy mothers were forced to see the dying off of their children, one after the other; and also witness when the guards would toss their little corpses upon the snowy Russian prairie next to the railroad tracks. At the end, of the original thirteen babies only two remained alive.

There is another fact that has to be mentioned about female prisoners: They survived in much greater numbers than the male prisoners. This phenomenon was partially the result of the fact that women's bodies are tougher, because they are built to withstand the tortures of child birth. But at least of equal importance was the fact that in the Gulag camps all food portions were of equal size. Thus, it was the heavier and larger individuals who suffered most from the lack of food. Being consistently underfed, they were the ones who perished first. Those with smaller bodies — be they women or men with small frames — had a much greater chance to survive.

Repatriation and Reception at Home

As noted earlier, those who survived the vicissitudes of the Gulag were repatriated in several waves. Most of the *malenky robot*ers returned after three years toward the end of 1947 or early 1948. Political prisoners, however, were repatriated only in the years following Stalin's death in 1953. Of course, there were exceptions in both instances. Some of the former returned only in 1950, while some of the latter as late as 1960.

The desire to return home was so great among the prisoners that often they did not even feel the vicissitudes of the return voyage. They only wanted to be at home with their families. The great expectation and joy of repatriation, however, turned sour immediately upon reaching the borders of Hungary.

Hungarian communist authorities received them not as innocent victims of an oppressive political system, but as criminals who deserved everything that had been meted out to them. And the nature and tone of this reception accompanied them throughout their lives, right up to the collapse of communism, and in some instances even beyond that date.

Following their return the former Gulag prisoners were officially chastised, given a few forints — from five to thirty, depending on year and the circumstances of their return — and then sent home. There were many who upon reaching home found a house occupied by strangers, with their own family members gone. During their absence, some parents and spouses died, while others went insane,[95] Still others were declared Germans [*Volksdeutsche*] and then summarily deported to West Germany. There were also those who found a new partner, and even had children with their new spouses.

This was the direct result of the fact that the Gulag prisoners had not been able to correspond with their families for many years. Thus, with the passing of years — especially in the case of the convicted political prisoners who spent ten or more years in the Gulag -- their wives or husbands presumed them to be dead. After a number of years they wanted some security and some order in their lives. According to the law it was the wife who now had to decide with whom she wanted to spend the rest of her life. But it was usually the returned prisoner who solved the problem: He left and disappeared from the life of the family.[96]

Another problem faced by the returned Gulag prisoners was that most of them came home with various sicknesses and maladies. They received no help from Hungarian communist authorities. In fact, it was

even difficult for them to get and to hold on to a job. They were viewed and treated as dangerous criminals. In many instances the only solution for them was to leave their native village or town, relocate to a major city, and then try to conceal their past and their true identity.

Above and beyond this, however, the worse thing from a psychological point of view was that they could not speak about their horrendous experiences. They had to keep everything within themselves. They were even denied the possibilities of a spiritual catharsis that would have taken place had they been able to discuss their sufferings with their family members, their friends, and the community at large. They lived in constant fear of being discovered, and they had to suffer the contempt and scorn of the country, which had been the object of their dreams throughout their captivity.

Some Conclusions

The tormented life and often excruciating death of the former Gulag prisoners — be they *malenky robot*ers or political prisoners — constitutes an important, but mostly forgotten chapter in the history of humanity. This is a topic that is little known by the average citizen — be he a Hungarian or a member of another nation. Therefore, this topic needs to be researched, written about, and taught to people within and outside the borders of Hungary, as well as in all countries around the world.

It is true that since the collapse of communism in 1989, an increasing number of publications and documentaries have appeared on the Gulag. But compared to the coverage of the other great tragedy of the twentieth century — the Jewish Holocaust — people still know very little about the history of the Soviet Gulag and of its tens of millions of prisoners who lived, suffered, and died in the slave labour camps of Leninist and Stalinist Russia. In point of fact, we may even conclude that we have hardly made any progress in our understanding of this institution of mass extermination since 1944, when US Vice President Henry Wallace (1888-1965) visited one of the worst and most brutal Soviet penal camps in Magadan, and returned to the West "lauding its sadistic commander, Ivan Nikishov, and describing Magadan as 'idyllic'."[97] Like many other intellectuals and politicians of that period — including the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) — Wallace was also

blinded by his mistaken adoration of "Uncle Joe," otherwise known as Joseph Stalin.

It is our hope that with time ignorance about the Gulag will gradually disappear, and it will be replaced by a deeply felt consciousness and knowledge about this horrendous institution of human suffering and death.

NOTES

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[1] That this is a widespread belief has been demonstrated in July 2004, when discussing our research with a retired professor at the University of Pécs in Hungary. Until we explained it to him, he was convinced the "Gulag" is the name of a group of islands, containing penal colonies, somewhere off the northern coast of the Soviet Union.

[2] This is thoroughly explained by Anne Applebaum in her book, *GULAG. A History of the Soviet Camps* (New York: Doubleday, Division of Random House, Inc., 2003), 677 pp.; reissued in paperback (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 3.

[3] According to Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Frenkel was a "Turkish Jew born in Constantinople." See his *Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956*, trans. Thomas P. Whitney and H. Willetts (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), II, p. 76. According to Malsagov, Frenkel was a "Hungarian manufacturer." Cf. S. A Malsagov, *Island Hell. A Soviet Prison in the Far North*, trans. by F. H. Lyon (London, 1926), pp. 161-73. Still others claimed that Frenkel came from Austria, or from Odessa, or from Palestine. Cf. Applebaum, *Gulag*, p. 52.

[4] Dan Michaels, "The Gulag: Communism's Penal Colonies Revisited," in *The Journal of Historical Review*, vol. 21, no. 1 (January-February, 2002): 29-38. Also available on the Internet at: http://www.ihr.org. Reference here is to the Internet version, p. 3.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Ibid*, pp. 3-4.

[7] *Ibid*. p. 4.

[8] Quoted in the *Encyclopedia Britannica – Micropedia* (2003), vol. 5, p. 563; and on the Internet-1 http://geocentral.net/be/ archive/be/gulag.html.

[9] "Victims: People Dead from 'Violent Conflicts' in the 20th Century," http://www.nsu.ru/filf/pha/hist/Victims.html#FORMER%20SOVIET520UNION

[10] Professor Nicholas Nagy-Talavera related the story of his trials and tribulations to me during our first meeting at an international historical congress in Ankara, Turkey, in the year 1979.

[11] Tamás Stark's study in Ilona Szebeni, *Merre van a magyar hazám? Kényszermunkán a Szovjetunióban 1944-1949* [Where is My Hungarian Homeland? Forced Labour in the Soviet Union, 1944-1949] (Debrecen: Széphalom Könyvműhely, 1991), p. 302. Stark's study is found on pp. 302-310. (Hereafter cited as Szebeni, *Merre van hazám.*)

[12] According to Tamás Stark's calculations somewhere between 270,000 and 370,000 Hungarian civilians and prisoners of war perished in the Soviet Gulag camps. See Tamás Stark, "Magyarok szovjet kényszermunkatáborokban" [Hungarians in Soviet Forced Labour Camps], in *Kortárs* [Contemporary], 46, 2-3 (2002): 69-81; also available at http://www.kortarsonline.hu/0202/stark.htm. In one of his earlier works Stark calculated that the number of Hungarians who perished in the Gulag camps was between 250,000 and 300,000. Cf. Tamás Stark, "Megfogyva bár.... Háborús népességmozgás Magyarországon, 1941-1949" [Diminished.... Population mobility in Times of Belligerency], in *Hitel* [Credit], 5, 4 (April 1992): 14-20.

[13] *Magyar Nagylexikon* [Great Hungarian Encyclopedia], 18 vols. and 3 supplementary vols. (Budapest: Magyar Nagylexikon Kiadó, 1993-2006), vol. 8. p. 883.

[14] See *Magyarország a második világháborúban, Lexikon* [Encyclopedia on Hungary in the Second World War], ed. Péter Sipos and István Ravasz (Budapest, 1997), p. 498. See also Lajos Für's relevant work, *Mennyi sok sírkereszt? Magyarország embervesztesége a második világháborúban* [How Many Headstones? Hungary's Human Losses in the Second World War] (Budapest: Püski Kiadó, 1989). Für claims that Hungary lost close to one million persons, which include also the victims of the Holocaust.

[15] See Tamás Stark, "Ethnic Cleansing and Collective Punishment: Soviet Policy Towards Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees in the Carpathian Basin," in *Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. S. B. Várdy, T. H. Tooley, and A. H. Várdy (New York: East European Monographs, Columbia University Press, 2003), 489-502, statistics on pp. 498-501. (Hereafter cited as Vardy, *Ethnic Cleansing.*)

[16] The authors' interview with Gusztáv Menczer, June 23 and July 6, 2004. This statistical information is also available in one of the typescript authored by Mr. Menczer and given to the authors of this study.

[17] In addition to the above interviews, this information is also available in Gusztáv Menczer's typescript entitled "Gulág," that was presented to the authors of this study on the occasion of one these interviews.

[18] Quoted from Gusztáv Menczer above-cited typescript entitled "Gulág."

[19] In common usage, including popular and scholarly publications, Hungarians speak of *malenky robot*, even though grammatically it should be *malenkaya rabota*. This may be connected with the fact that the term robot — the work obligation of the serf for his lord — has been in use in Hungary ever since the Middle Ages. Cf. Steven Béla Várdy, *Historical Dictionary of Hungary* (Lanham-London: The Scarecrow Press, 1997), 596.

Totally different statistics are given by Ignác Romsics in his synthesis of twentieth-century Hungarian history. He claims that by the end of 1946 300,000 had returned, followed by 128,000 in 1947, and 170,000 in 1948. This comes to 598,000 out of the approximately 600,000 that Romsics claims as having been captives in the Soviet Union. These figures on repatriation are so unrealistic that they can only be attributed to some mixup. Cf. Ignác Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX. században* [Hungary's History in the 20th Century] (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 1999), 268.

[21] On these estimates, see Stark's study in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, 303-310; and Tamás Stark, *Magyarország második világháborús embervesztesége* [Hungary's Human Losses during the Second World War] (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 1989), 79-80.

[22] On these convicted political deportees, see Gusztáv Menczer: "A szovjet hadbíróságok által magyar állampolgárok politikai okokból történt elitélése és e tény jogosságának néhány kérdése" [The Sentencing of Hungarian Citizens for Political Reasons by Soviet Military Courts, and Some Questions of the Legitimacy of this Deed], in *Magyar kényszermunkások és politikai rabok a Szovjetunióban a II. világháború után* [Hungarian Forced Labourers and Political Prisoners in the Soviet Union after World War II] (Budapest, 2000), 15-33.

[23] Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror* (London: Pimlico, 1965). Revised edition: *The Great Terror. A Reassessment* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[24] Nanci Adler, *Victims of Soviet Terror: The Story of the Memorial Movement* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1993); and *idem*, *Beyond the Soviet System. The Gulag Survivor* (New Brunswick-London: Transaction Publishers, 2002).

[25] Anne Applebaum, *GULAG. A History of the Soviet Camps*, cited above.

[26] Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, trans. Ralph Parker (New York: Dutton, 1963); *idem*, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956*, trans. Thomas P. Whitney and H. Willetts (New York: Harper and Row, 1973); and *idem*, *The Gulag Archipelago*, vol. 3 (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 1992).

[27] Áron Gábor, *Az embertől keletre* [To the East of Man](Los Angeles and Munich: XX Század Kiadása, 1967); *idem*, *Szögletes szabadság* [Squared-off Liberty] (Los Angeles and Munich: XX Század Kiadása, 1968); and *idem*, *Évszázados emberek* [Men of Centuries] (Los Angeles and Munich: XX Század Kiadása, 1971).

[28] János Rózsás, *Gulag Lexikon* [Gulag Encyclopedia] (Budapest: Püski Kiadó, 2000).

[29] János Rózsás, *Keserü ifjúság* [Bitter Youth] (Munich: Új Látóhatár, 1986); and *idem*, *Éltető reménység* [Living Hope] (Munich: Új Látóhatár, 1987).

[30] János Rózsás, *Keserü ifjúság* [Bitter Youth], 2 vols. (Budapest: Szabad Tér Kiadó, 1989). The most recent edition of this work is: *Keserü ifjúság - Éltető reménység. Szovjet fogságom naplója* [Bitter Youth – Living Hope. Diary of My Soviet Captivity] (Budapest: Püski Kiadó, 1999).

[31] George Zoltán Bien, *Elveszett évek. Egy magyar diák raboskodása a GULÁG kelet-szibériai lágereiben*. 2d expanded edition (Budapest: Püski Kiadó, 2000), 184 pp.; and its English version, *Lost Years. A Hungarian Student's Ten Years in the Siberian Gulag. Kolyma 1945-1955* (Fairfax, Virginia: Published by the Author, 2003), 235.

[32] Bien, Lost Years, pp. 63-67; Bien, *Elveszett évek*, pp. 61-64.

[33] Some of the post-communist syntheses we have examined — all authored by respected historians or publicists — include the following: Zsuzsa L. Nagy, *Magyarország története, 1918-1945* [History of Hungary, 1918-1945] (Debrecen: Multiplex Media, 1995); Ferenc Pölöskei, Jenő Gergely and Lajos Izsák, eds., *20. századi magyar történelem 1900-1994* [Twentieth-Century Hungarian History, 1900-1994] (Budapest: Korona Kiadó, 1997); Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX. században*; *Millenniumi magyar történet* [Millennial History of Hungary], ed. György István Tóth (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2001), p. 562; László Kontler, *A History of Hungary. Millennium in Central Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); and Paul Lendvai, *The Hungarians. A Thousand Years of Victory in Defeat* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[34] Ferenc Nagy, *The Struggle Behind the Iron Curtain* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1948), 62.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

[36] Ödön Málnási, *A magyar nemzet őszinte története* [The Frank History of the Hungarian Nation], 2d ed. (Munich: Mikes Kelemen Kör, 1959), 218. See

also Steven Béla Várdy and Dominic G. Kosáry, *History of the Hungarian Nation* (Astor Park, FL: Danubian Press, Inc., 1969), 292, 369-370.

[37] Sándor Zsíros, *A front alatt. 1944 ősze. Felsőzsolca-Miskolc* [On the Front. Fall 1944. Felsőzsolca-Miskolc (Felsőzsolca: Örökségünk Felsőzsolca Alapítvány & Dominium BT Közös Kiadása, 2004), 47; see also pp. 46, 58, 61; and the English edition: Sándor Zsíros, *On the Front, Soviet Military Conquest and Sack of a Small Town, Felsőzsolca, in Hungary, in the Autumn and Winter of 1944-45* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Department of History, Duquesne University, 2006), 39-40.

[38] *Magyar Nagylexikon*, vol. 8. p. 883.

[39] The two examples of such studies are: Lajos Für, "Magyarország emberveszteségе" [Hungary's Human Losses], in *Magyar Hírlap* [Hungarian News], June 23, 1984; and Stark, *Magyarország második világháborús emberveszteségе.*

[40] Much of this bibliographical information can be found on the Internet. Cf. http://www.gulag. hu/konyvek.htm, which lists around seventy volumes. See also György Dupka's bibliography in his book, *Kárpátalja magyarsága* [Hungarians of Sub-Carpathia] (Budapest: Magyar Nyelv és Kultúra Nemzetközi Társasága, 2000), 197-209.

[41] Miklós Füzes, *Modern rabszolgaság. Magyar állampolgárok a Szovjetunió munkatáboraiban, 1945-1949* [Modern-day Slavery. Hungarian Citizens in Szovjet Labor Camps] (Budapest: Formatív Kft., 1990).

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

[43] Szebeni, *Merre van hazám?* For full bibliographical citation, see note 11 above.

[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 302-310.

[45] Sándor Zsíros, *A front alatt*, cited above.

[46] The English version will appear under the title On the Front.

[47] Valéria Kormos, *A végtelen foglyai: Magyar nők szovjet rabságban, 1945-1947* [Prisoners of Endlessness. Hungarian Women in Soviet Captivity, 1945-1947] (Budapest: Kairosz Kiadó, 2001).

[48] Gyula Juhász, *Brit-magyar titkos tárgyalások 1943-ban* [British-Hungarian Secret Negotiations in 1943] (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 1978), 158; also cited by Stark in several of his relevant studies.

[49] As remembered by Mrs. Imre Kolozsi, née Erzsébet Herényi, in 1989. Cf. Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, p. 24. For a list of these and similar names see p. 317.

[50] For a list of 3,230 deportees from the Upper-Tisza region, see Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, pp. 311-346.

[51] Concerning the situation in Sub-Carpathia or Carpatho-Ruthenia, see the following rich memoir and documentary literature: György Dupka and Alekszej Korszun, *A "malenykij robot" dokumentumokban* [Malenky Robot in

Documents] (Ungvár-Budapest: Intermix Kiadó, 1997); Dupka György, *Kárpátaljai magyar GULAG-lexikon. Lefejezett értelmiség 1944-1959* [Sub-Carpathian Hungarian GULAG Encyclopedia. Beheaded Intelligentsia, 1944-1959] (Ungvár-Budapest: Intermix Kiadó, 1999); *Sötét napok jöttek. Koncepciós perek magyar elitéltjeinek emlékkönyve 1944-1955* [Dark Days Descended. Memorial Volume of the Victims of Sham Political Trials, 1944-1955], ed. György Dupka (Ungvár-Budapest: Intermix Kiadó, 1992); *Élő történelem. Válogatás a meghurcolt magyarok visszaemlékezéseibŒl 1944-1992* [Living History. Selections from the Victims' Memoirs, 1944-1992] (Ungvár-Budapest: Intermix Kiadó, 1992); *Egyetlen bünük magyarságuk volt. Emlékkönyv a sztálinizmus kárpátaljai áldozatairól 1944-1946* [Their Only Sin Was that They Were Hungarians. Memorial Volume in Honor of the Sub-Carpathian Victims of Stalinism, 1944-1946], ed. György Dupka (Ungvár-Budapest: Intermix Kiadó, 1992); *Istenhez fohászkodva, 1944, Szolyva. Verses levelek, imák a sztálini lágerekből, szemelvények a hozzátartozók visszaemlékezéseiből.* [Praying to God, 1944, Szolyva. Poetic Letters and Prayers from Stalin's Camps. Selections from the Memoirs of Relatives]. Preface and Postscript by György Dupka (Ungvár-Budapest: Intermix Kiadó, 1994); and *A haláltáborból. Badzey Pál szolyvai lágernaplója* [From the Death Camp. Paul Badzey's Camp Diary from Szolyva, compiled and edited by Imre Badzey (Ungvár-Budapest: Intermix Kiadó, 1996).

[52] For the situation in the reclaimed territories from Slovakia, see the following studies: Kálmán Janics, *Czechoslovak Policy and Hungarian Minority, 1945-48*, ed. Stephen Borsody (New York: East European Monographs, Columbia University Press, 1982); Katalin Vadkerty, *A reszlovakizáció* [Re-Slovakization] (Pozsony, 1993); Edward Benesch, *Präsidentendekrete oder die Rechtsberaubung der Ungarn und Deutschen* (Pressburg, 1992); *Beneš Decrees. Taking Victims in 2002*, ed. Miklós Patrubány (Budapest: World Federation of Hungarians, 2002); and Róbert Barta, "The Hungarian-Slovak Population Exchange and Forced Resettlement in 1947," in Várdy, *Ethnic Cleansing*, pp. 565-574.

[53] Révai's letter to Rákosi, January 7, 1945, in *Moszkvának jelentjük. Titkos dokumentumok* [Reports to Moscow. Secret Documents], ed. Miklós Kun and Lajos Izsák (Budapest: Századvég Kiadó, 1994), p. 35. See also Stark, "Magyarok szovjet kényszermunkatáborokban," p. 73; Internet version, pp. 3-4.

[54] Much of the information concerning the collection of prisoners and their life in the Gulag is derived from the oral interviews we have conducted with the following persons: In Budapest: Gusztáv Menczer, Mrs. Károly Pintér, née Magdolna Rohr, and Father Placid Olofsson; in Nagykanizsa: János Rózsás, Ferenc Hársfalvi and Zsigmond Szabó; in Milota: Sándor Járai and Árpád Szabó; in Rakamaz: Mrs. Sándor Somlói, née Irén Képes, Mrs. József Turkó, née Erzsébet Pásztori, Mrs. István Sándor, née Margit Ruba, Mrs. Ferenc Szőke, née Borbála Rudolf, Károly Jung and Mrs. Károly Jung, née Mária Bodnár; in Gávavencsellő: Mrs. Ferenc Vojtó, née Ilona Vinnai, Béla Labanc, Mrs. Béla

Labanc, née Rozália Türk, Mihály Rák, András Türk, Mrs. András Türk, née Ágnes Labanc, and Mrs. József Varga, née Éva Türk; in Balkány: Béla Réti and Mrs. Béla Réti, née Gizella Csatlós; and in Magyarboly: Károly Szabó. Only segments of these long interviews were transcribed. Once done, they will all be published. In addition to our own interviews, we also relied on well over a hundred additional interviews conducted by Ilona Szebeni, Miklós Füzes, Sándor Zsíros, and Valéria Kormos; as well as on scores of memoirs published by the survivors.

[55] We have describe the treacherous activities of these so-called "polic" in another part of our study. Their despicable role was also mentioned by most of our interviewees, among them Mrs. András Türk, née Ágnes Labanc (Gávavencselő, June 23, 2003), Mrs. József Varga, née Éva Türk (Gávavencselő, June 24, 2003), Mrs. István Sándor, née Margit Ruba (Rakamaz, June 28, 2003), and Károly Jung (Rakamaz, June 28, 2003).

[56] Reminiscences of Mihály Zöldi, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, pp. 159.

[57] Reminiscences of Imre Kolozsi, in Szebeni, Merre van hazám, pp. 62-63.

[58] Reminiscences of Mrs. Ferenc Vojtó, née Ilona Vinnai, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, p. 138.

[59] Reminiscences of Mrs. László Homolya, née Piroska Pásztor, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, pp. 34-35.

[60] This event is described by Gennadi Beglov in Part 3 of a documentary about Joseph Stalin. The documentary was prepared by Public Media Video in 1990.

[61] János Rózsás, "Rabszolgamunka a Gulag táboraiban" [Slave Labor in Gulag Camps], manuscript, p. 1.

[62] *Ibid.*

[63] Colin Thubron, *In Siberia* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999).

[64] *Ibid.*, pp. 266-269. See also Michaels, "The Gulag...," pp. 29-38.

[65] Thubron, *In Siberia*, p. 40.

[66] *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

[67] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[68] The authors interviewed Gusztáv Menczer at his office on June 23 and July 6, 2004. In addition to these oral interviews, Mr. Menczer also supplied the authors with a number of important printed sources. Concerning Gusztáv Menczer, see Rózsás, *Gulag Lexikon*, p. 244.

[69] Bien, *Elveszett évek*, pp. 82-85; and Bien, *Lost Years*, pp. 93-97.

[70] Reminiscences of János Kohlmayer, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, p. 261.

[71] Rózsás, "Rabszolgamunka a Gulag táboraiban," p. 2.

[72] Reminiscences of Henrik Pfaffenbüchler, in Füzes, *Modern rabszolgaság*, p. 149.

[73] Reminiscences of Rózsa Nagy, in Füzes, *Modern rabszolgaság*, p. 271.

[74] Reminiscences of Imre Kolozsi, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, p. 77.

[75] *Ibid.*

[76] *Ibid.*

[77] Reminiscences of Margit Rozgonyi, Mrs. Lajos Gulyás, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, p. 270.

[78] *Ibid.*

[79] *Ibid.*

[80] Reminiscences of Mrs. Peter Schmidt, in Füzes, *Modern rabszolgaság*, p. 165.

[81] The authors' interview with Mrs. Károly Pintér, née Magdolna Rohr, Budapest, October 30, 2003. A similar incident is related by Sándor Adorján in his *A halál árnyékában. Magyar rabszolgák Szibériában* [In the Shadow of Death. Hungarian Slaves in Siberia] (Pápa: A szerző kiadása, 1993), 105-106. This section has also been reprinted in the quarterly *Örökség* (Felsőzsolca), vol. 3, no. 2 (2004), p. 50.

[82] Alice Mulkigian narrated this horrendous event when she was being interviewed for a documentary on Joseph Stalin. See Part 2 of Stalin's biography ("Generalissimo"), prepared and published by the Public Media Video in 1990.

[83] Reminiscences of Imre Kolozsi, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, p. 77.

[84] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

[85] Stark, "Magyarok szovjet kényszermunkatáborokban," p. 79.

[86] János Rózsás, *Duszja nővér* [Sister Dusya] (Nagykanizsa: Canissa Kiadó, 1994).

[87] See for example the reminiscences of Mária Hardicsai, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, p. 99.

[88] Based on the authors' interview with Mrs. Károly Pintér, née Magdolna Rohr, Budapest, October 30, 2003. See also István Stefka's interview with Magdolna Rohr in one of the January 2001 issues of the *Magyar Nemzet* (Budapest), which appeared in an English translation in the *American Magyar News*, January 2002, pp. 4-5, having been translated by Erika Papp Faber.

[89] Reminiscences of Mrs. László Homolya, née Piroska Pásztor, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, p. 34.

[90] *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

[91] The authors' interview with Mrs. József Turkó, née Erzsébet Pásztor, June 28, 2003.

[92] The authors' interview with Mrs. Károly Pintér, née Magdolna Rohr, Budapest, October 30, 2003.

[93] Reminiscences of Mrs. Frigyes Muszbek, née Mária Szloboda, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, pp. 121-125.

[94] *Ibid.*, pp. 121-123.

[95] This is what happened to Piroska Pásztor. Her mother went insane and did not recognize her, while her father died only a few months after her return. See the reminiscences of Mrs. László Homolya, née Piroska Pásztor, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, pp. 57-58.

[96] János Rózsás, "A volt Gulág rabok sorsa hazatérésük után," pp. 2-3. Rózsás also described these developments to us personally, when we interviewed him on October 24, 2003.

[97] Michaels, "The Gulag," Internet version, p. 1. Henry Wallace's naive description of the Soviet "Paradise" under Stalin's rule can be found in his *Soviet Asia Mission*, with the collaboration of Andrew J. Steiger (New York: Raynal and Hitchcock, 1946).

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A Sign that Communism Is Not an Inevitable Destiny: The Revolution and the Churches

Leslie Laszlo

It was a totally unexpected turn of events in Budapest on the 23rd of October 1956 when a peaceful street demonstration by students turned into violent armed confrontation and a full scale revolution. This could not have been foreseen by anyone, though the ground was prepared by the increasingly bold groups of intellectuals, such as those belonging to the Petőfi circle, who were taking advantage of the inner turmoil of the ruling Communist party. The denunciation of Stalin by his successor Nikita S. Khrushchev at the 20th Party Congress shook the hitherto solid edifice of Communist dogmas. This led to questioning the Party's immunity of any criticism whether that concerned its disastrous economic policies, or any other aspect of its all-encompassing totalitarian rule of the country. With the iron discipline slackened there was a chance that the pent up desire for radical change, especially among the young university students inspired by recent events in neighbouring Poland, would manifest itself in mass street demonstrations as it came to pass on the afternoon of October 23rd.

It has to be stated right at the outset that the Churches as institutions had no role either in the intellectual discussions or group formations, nor in the actual demonstrations leading to the uprising, or in the political-military events that followed.

Years of Repression 1948-1956

The reason for this passivity was very simple. In the past the established or "historic" Churches in Hungary — the Roman Catholic to which two-

thirds of the population belonged, the Reformed or Calvinist Church and the Evangelical or Lutheran Church — all played an important role in society and in the political life of the country.[1] However, after the Second World War, the Communist Party, abetted and mightily aided by the Soviet occupation forces, waged a relentless ideological war against all dissenters, but especially against religion and the Churches, not refraining from brute force if necessary, until by 1950 they had achieved total control of the country, including the Churches.

It does not seem to be necessary to recount here the already oft described and by now well-known facts of the ruthless confiscation of church property, seizure of denominational schools, dissolution of religious associations, dispersing the members of religious orders, forbidding them to work in schools, hospitals and in various charitable institutions, persecuting, even imprisoning and in many instances murdering believers, both clergy and lay people, for their faithfulness to God and to their Church. Equally disastrous was, however, the subversion, the fostering of internal corruption and division within the churches, using intimidation, physical/mental torture, blackmail, to achieve this end.[2]

Needless to say, all this did not go unchallenged. There was fierce resistance. The most notable fighter for the freedom of religion and of the Churches was Joseph Cardinal Mindszenty, archbishop of Esztergom, Prince-Primate of Hungary.[3] This man of steel stood unbendingly by his principles, denouncing all abuses of power in frequently issued pastoral letters and at mass rallies that attracted hundreds of thousands. For many Hungarians, I would dare to say, for the majority of the population, he became a national hero, the symbol of resistance to Soviet domination, to Communist ideology and politics. Naturally, for the Communists he became their *bête noir*, their arch-enemy. In the government media they depicted him as the most vicious foe of the working people, accusing him of espionage and treason on behalf of the Vatican and the Western "imperialists". The communist-led trade unions brought the workers to the street clamouring for the head of Mindszenty. In spite of all the attacks the cardinal stood his ground. His fate was sealed: he was to be silenced, eliminated. Arrested on Christmas 1948, he was condemned on trumped up charges for life imprisonment in February 1949. Similar fate awaited many other priests and religious individuals who refused to be silenced but spoke up in defense of faith and justice and continued to give religious instruction to children and youth even after this had been forbidden.

The Reining in of the Protestant Churches

To establish control over the Protestant Churches was made easier by two factors. Firstly, unlike the Papacy for the Catholics, the Protestants lacked a central authority residing abroad, thus outside of the reach of the Communists, and secondly, the large number of lay people in important positions of the governing bodies could be easier influenced and manipulated, because of their family, jobs, etc., than the celibate clerical leaders of the Catholics. This is not to say that the Protestant Churches submitted willingly. In fact, there was much resistance on their part too when the Communist seized their schools, their press and dissolved their associations and interfered with their internal affairs, such as the elections of their clerical and lay officials. However, the regime was determined to ruthlessly remove any obstacle in the way of its goal of establishing total domination over society as a whole, that included the Churches as primary targets.

On April 28, 1948, the most prominent Protestant leader in Hungary, Bishop László Ravasz, chairman of the Ecumenical Council and of the National Synod, was forced to retire and Mr. Andor Lázár, Head Curator of the Reformed Ecclesiastical District of Budapest was arrested by the political police and forced to resign. Intimidation and brute forced was used to effect many similar resignations of the "old guard" who were replaced with people more willing to collaborate. The ground having been thus prepared, on October 7, 1948 the Government announced that agreements were signed with the Reformed Church and also with the much smaller Unitarian Church. The agreement with the Evangelical Church was concluded somewhat later, on December 16, 1948, after Bishop Lajos Ordass and Baron Albert Radvánszky, Supervisor General of the Evangelical Church, had been arrested. Both were sentenced to prison terms under the pretence of black marketing on October 1, 1948. In these "agreements" the leaders of the Protestant Churches pledged faithful allegiance to the government, full support of its policies, especially the collectivization of agriculture, and took upon themselves to punish those who would oppose or try to sabotage them. In return the state offered financial subsidies for the clergy.[4]

The "Agreement" of 1950 with the Catholic Bishops

It was now the time of the majority Catholic Church "to fall into line". The bishops continued to resist, claiming that they could not sign any agreement without the consent of the Holy See, i.e. Pope Pius XII. In response the government ordered the arrest of all monks and nuns, some 13,000 in number, many of whom were deported under the cover of night to selected monasteries. This was followed by not-so-subtle hints that their final destination was to be Siberian forced-labour camps. The bishops were faced, on the one hand, with this threat to the most faithful sons and daughters of the Church, while on the other hand a vociferous group of dissident priests, organized by the Communists in opposition to the legitimate hierarchy as "Priests for Peace" demanded that the bishops come to the negotiating table in order to achieve peace and harmony in church-state relations. Under such pressures the bishops finally gave in and concluded an "agreement" with the government on August 30, 1950. Just as in the agreements signed previously by the Protestant Churches, the Catholic bishops too pledged support for the government and its policies and promised punishment for the disobedient. As a reward for their good behaviour they were given back eight schools, 6 for boys and 2 for girls from among the several thousands that the Communist confiscated in 1948. Also the state promised to grant financial aid in the form of subsidies complementing the lower clergy's salary.[5] These agreements served as the points of reference for the state authorities in their subjugation of the churches until the very end of the Communist era in 1989. However, when the Churches complained of decrees or actions contrary to the texts of the agreements, their grievances were ignored.

After the Agreements

Contrary to expectations, the signing of the agreements did little to improve the situation. The campaign against the Churches continued. While the pressure was on also on the Protestant Churches, several of their most prominent leaders and a number of their pastors being replaced by government favourites, it was the Catholic Church that was the primary target. Four bishops, together with an auxiliary bishop, were placed under house arrest. Archbishop József Grősz of Kalocsa, president of the Bishops' Conference at the time and signatory of the Agreement, was tried as the leader of an "armed group of conspirators" and sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment for "counterrevolutionary activities". Indeed,

the following years, 1951–1953, marked the nadir in the spoliation and debasement of the Churches. The Catholic bishops, under the leadership of the more malleable Gyula Czapik, archbishop of Eger, were forced to issue a condemnation of Grősz and his high-ranking clerical "accomplices". Then on July 21, 1951, all bishops, diocesan vicars, and the superiors of the remaining religious orders had to repair to the presidential hall of Parliament, where in the presence of the highest state dignitaries and the clicking cameras, they had to swear an oath on the constitution of the People's Republic. Instead of a genuine separation between church and state that was proclaimed in the 1949 Constitution, the Churches were placed under strict government control. To this end a special department, the State Office of Church Affairs was created. Government officials (nicknamed "mustached bishops") were placed in every chancery. They opened the bishop's mail, checked his visitors and were in possession of the diocesan seal. In a decree issued on July 3, 1951, appointments to bishoprics and all other church offices of importance was made subject to government approval. The bishops were forced to assign members of the Priests for Peace movement as their chancellors and to fill all other influential positions in their diocese from among the ranks of these priests. Moreover the government ordered all minor seminaries, together with seven of the thirteen major seminaries, disbanded.

The regime did not stop with crippling the authority of the duly constituted church hierarchy, neither was it satisfied with having reduced the activities of the Churches within the confines of the church buildings. As soon as it succeeded in silencing the Church as a voice of opposition, it applied new pressure to turn the Churches into instruments in the service of the Communist cause. Prelates, priests, ministers — with the threat of all kinds of harassments, prison and torture hanging over their heads — were forced to support the Soviet sponsored peace campaign with its anti-Western slogans, while the pastoral letters issued by the bishops' chancery, instead of teaching the Gospel, praised the government's domestic and foreign policies, pleading for the fulfilment of the production quotas in industry and giving instruction to the farmers on how best to perform the agricultural tasks of the season. The people dubbed these the "manuring pastoral letters" (ganajozó pásztorlevelek").[6]

Temporary Respite under Imre Nagy

This pitiful degradation of all that was sacred in the eyes of the believers was somewhat alleviated with the death of Stalin in 1953 and the New Course of collective leadership that was imposed by his successors. On Soviet orders Hungary's dictatorial ruler, the rigid Stalinist Mátyás Rákosi too had to share power with a more moderate Communist, Imre Nagy who dismantled some of the concentration camps, released many prisoners and introduced much needed economic reforms. The gravely ill Cardinal Mindszenty was transferred from prison to a less severe confinement where he was joined by Archbishop Grősz. The latter, however, was soon permitted to move to a parish in his archdiocese and, when Archbishop Czapik died in May 1956, Grősz was allowed to return to his see of Kalocsa and to resume the presidency of the Bishops' Conference, all this while his criminal conviction remained standing.

Unfortunately, Nagy's tenure as Prime Minister was short lived. Due to his heart ailment and the constant intrigues of Rákosi who remained the chief of the Party, and also the changes in the Soviet leadership where his patron Malenkov lost out to Khrushchev, Nagy was forced within a year to step down as Prime Minister and was expelled from the Party. Rákosi triumphed once again, liberalization ended, the screw was tightened over an increasingly desperate and restless population. By June 1956, seeing the discontent and intellectual fermentation in Budapest that affected even the Party, the Soviet leadership decided to remove Rákosi. However, his replacement by his crony, Ernő Gerő — who was even more hated, if that was possible, than Rákosi — did not improve the situation at all. This was then the situation in October 1956. In the tense atmosphere only a spark was needed to ignite the fire. The spark was provided by the exciting news coming from neighbouring Poland where the leaders of the Party in open defiance of Soviet orders and threats of military intervention elected the formerly disgraced Gomulka as their First Secretary.

The Days of the Armed Uprising

By the time of the outbreak of the revolution the Churches, both the Catholic and the Protestant, were in a state of amnesia, totally subjugated, their voices effectively silenced. To be sure, the clergy and the faithful

had felt the pain, the oppression and the discontent even more than the religiously indifferent, but by 1956 they were disorganized, atomized, isolated, thoroughly intimidated, fearful to voice any opinion. They did support the revolution, as the great majority of Hungarians did, but not as distinct, organized group or groups.

Still, there were some remarkable deeds of active involvement of the charitable kind, such as by the Piarist fathers in Budapest who gave shelter in their college not only to the freedom fighters, but also to the 50 or 60 captive AVO policemen who were brought over from the nearby building of the radio station in the wake of the fierce siege during the first night of the Revolt. It was the wise and benign intervention of the fathers that prevented a possible ugly massacre. At daybreak both the armed revolutionaries and also the prisoners were given some breakfast while the rector of the college exhorted both sides to practice Christian reconciliation and sent them all home in peace.[7] Similarly, the kitchen of the Central Theological Seminary in downtown Budapest provided food for days to a large group of student freedom fighters who held out in the adjacent building of the Faculty of Law. When the building was surrounded by Soviet troops, the seminarians cut an opening in a wall so that the students could climb over to the seminary. They were even given clerical garb to facilitate their escape through some side doors.[8] The greatest service that the Churches provided was their pastoral care and support of those in need during those infernal days. Catholic priests, Protestant ministers, seminarians, members of the disbanded religious orders, individually, but also in an organized fashion visited the battlefields, the hospitals, caring for the wounded, giving solace to the dying. According to their unanimous testimony they were well received everywhere, even though many of the young fighters had never been exposed to religion before.

Just as practically everyone, the leaders of the Churches were caught by surprise, totally unprepared how to face the gunfire. Individual bishops appealed to their diocesan flock to remain calm, to work for reconciliation and the restoration of order. On behalf of the government the Minister of the Interior, László Piros phoned archbishop Grősz, the president of the Bishops' Conference, to come to Budapest and help to restore order. Grősz did not go, but spoke in a short radio address, asking the insurgents to lay down their arms and cease fire. This appeal was broadcast on the second day of the revolution, on October 24, 7:17 pm. Amidst the embittered fight against the Soviet tanks and the machine guns

of the hated AVO (the Communist Security Forces) such calls remained futile.[9]

The Churches' inactivity, seemingly passive behaviour underwent a radical change with the arrival on the scene of Cardinal Mindszenty. Actually, given his stature and enormous popularity just a few years before, it is surprising that during the initial days of the revolution there was scant mention of him in the various demands and petitions drawn up by the insurgents.[10] All that time he was still kept in captivity in a secluded mansion in Felsőpetény, a relatively short distance north of Budapest. As he later described in his *Memoirs*, first he was kept in darkness about the goings-on in the outside, but on the 29th his jailers tried to take him to an undisclosed destination, presumably across the nearby border to Czechoslovakia. The Cardinal physically resisted their efforts, just as he refused the pleas of the head of the State Office of Church Affairs who arrived from Budapest to arrange for his transport. By late afternoon the villagers of Petény penetrated the mansion, setting him free, while from a nearby base a detachment of the Hungarian army offered him their services and on the morning of the 30th they accompanied him on his triumphant return to Budapest. On their way he was stopped at every village and town by jubilant crowds, asking for his blessing.[11]

There was joy in Budapest too, but also some anxiety as to what would his message be, into what direction would he influence the still fluid political situation. Remembering his uncompromising character, there was real fear that Mindszenty would oppose the new government of Imre Nagy, a longtime Communist, thus undermining the precarious calm and stability that had been achieved after days of fierce fighting.[12] To a great sigh of relief, while not giving his unconditional approval and loyalty to Nagy, he did praise the heroism of the Hungarian people rising in revolt. At the same time, he did ask in dignified and measured voice for the Church's freedom and for the restoration of its forcibly seized institutions.[13]

Actually by the time he had the chance to address the nation via the radio on Saturday night November 3rd, it was too late to have any impact on the course of events. A few hours later, in the early morning of November 4th, the Red Army attacked Budapest with overwhelming force. Cardinal Mindszenty was forced to flee and took refuge in the sanctuary of the U.S. embassy.

The Soviets then arrested Imre Nagy and his loyal entourage, in spite of the *safe conduct* promised them, and installed their obedient puppet János Kádár as prime minister of Hungary.

Thanks to the modern ways of communication, especially the television, the events in Hungary were watched by the whole world with admiration mixed with horror. There were sympathy demonstrations with the Hungarians in Western Europe and the Americas and condemnation of Soviet brutality by the United Nations. Pope Pius XII expressed his joy at the time of Cardinal Mindszenty's liberation. The joy turned into sorrow in his subsequent encyclicals in which he addressed the people of Hungary and the world, pleading for freedom and peace for the oppressed everywhere.[14]

The Impact of the Revolution on the Churches

As already stated, the Churches as institutions played no active role in the armed revolt.[15] One can still ask the questions, how did the revolution affect them, and in what way did the sudden political changes influence their policies. Their first reaction, quite naturally, was to throw off the shackles imposed on them by the Communist rulers. Regaining their freedom meant first of all an opportunity to put their house in order, to cleanse their leadership of the collaborators, the so-called "peace priests" who were installed in all churches by the civil, i.e. Communist, authorities with no respect for the churches' canonical constitution. One of the first acts of Cardinal Mindszenty was the suspension of 11 prominent "peace priests" from all their priestly functions, ordering them to take leave of Budapest immediately. Even from his subsequent asylum in the U.S. embassy, he was still able through instructions to his Episcopal vicar Imre Szabó as late as early 1957 to transfer a number of peace priests to faraway village parishes. The other diocesan bishops followed the Primate's example and cleansed their diocese of known collaborators. Almost simultaneously Rome also stepped into action and moved against the illegally appointed clerics. Thus in January 1957 a further 21 persons were removed from their offices of vicar general, or chancellor. In another decree in July 1957, the Vatican forbade priests to accept political office and ordered those already sitting in parliament to resign within a month. In response the Kádár regime suppressed the publication and execution of Rome's order, invoking the ancient royal privilege of *ius*

placetum. Upon this Rome excommunicated the three disobedient priest deputies of parliament.

Similar cleansing process was also initiated in the Protestant Churches, both in the larger Reformed (Calvinist) Church and in the smaller Evangelical (Lutheran) Church there was wholesale resignation, voluntary or forced, of the leadership, making place for the return of the pre-Communist leaders, or some newly elected ones who had the confidence of the congregations. Thus Bishop László Ravasz, the leading personality of the Reformed Church during the interwar and early post-war years — but was forced out of office in 1948 and by 1953 had to retire into complete silence — was now recalled to reoccupy his formal position as the presiding bishop of his church. Similarly Bishop Lajos Ordass of the Evangelical Church whose imprisonment in 1950 caused world-wide protest, had emerged from isolation and assumed the leadership of his Church again.

The Aftermath

One has to remember that while the revolution was effectively crushed by the second Soviet attack on Budapest on Sunday, November 4th, after which there were only sporadic flare-ups of fighting here and there in the capital and in the countryside, still the political situation remained extremely fluid for weeks. János Kádár himself proclaimed to lead a government of workers and peasants, different from the previous Rákosi regime, and was willing to negotiate with the representatives of the Revolutionary Workers' Councils, promising them certain democratic reforms in the hope of inducing the striking populace to return to work. To placate the Churches and receive their cooperation in the restoration of order and stability, certain concessions seemed in order. Thus at the end of the year the universally hated State Office of Church Affairs was abolished, or rather its functions transferred to a section of the Ministry of Education.

The Churches continued their internal housecleaning and restructuring. The bishops reasserted their rights to govern their dioceses without outside interference, the "peace priests" were assigned to jobs where they could do no more harm. When on December 18th the President of the State Office of Church Affairs, János Horváth, visited Archbishop Grősz in Kalocsa telling the prelate that his office considers the removal of the

peace priests "illegal", Grősz explained to him that from the Church's point of view their appointments by the civil authority was illegal and that they have to obey their bishops. Horváth suggested new negotiations between representatives of the Conference of Bishops and delegates from the government's side. The archbishop did not object to that, however already the next day he informed his fellow bishops about his talk with Horváth and set down in eleven paragraphs those demands that the Church should insist on should such negotiations take place. These included, among others, the freedom of bishops to exercise their authority in church governance, unhindered communication with the Holy See, restoration of the Catholic press and publishing houses, permission for the members of the dispersed religious orders to reassemble and work according to their vocation, freedom for religious instruction of children and youth, freedom to form religious associations and movements.[16]

In the Reformed Church where practically all bishops were removed or resigned under the threat of the Revolution, the temporary leadership was assumed by a three member team of National Administrative Committee with Bishop Ravasz, János Kardos, former Superintendent, and László Pap, the dean of the reformed theological academy in Budapest and the only leading personality of the Church of those years who was not tainted with collaboration with the Communists. This Committee on November 13th sent a circular letter signed by Ravasz to all the congregations nationwide asking them to decide by democratic vote whether they wanted to join the Movement of Renewal that was launched by the thoroughly cleansed leadership of the Church.[17] This Movement aimed at reasserting the true mission of evangelization of the Church, to that end they demanded the freedom from any kind of political interference. Within a short time the great majority of the congregations, more than 900 in number indicated their approval of the goals and their enthusiastic adherence to the Movement of Renewal.

It is interesting to note that in the much smaller Evangelical Church the movement for greater freedom and independence from political interference had predated the Revolution and achieved better results than in the larger Reformed Church. Already during the summer months of 1956 on various occasions of regional meetings there had been loud demands on the part of both the clergy and laity for reform. On October 9th, i.e. two weeks before the actual outbreak of the Revolution, the senior bishop, Lajos Vető, announced that there would be far-reaching reforms introduced in the church governance. At about the same time Bishop

Ordass, in 1948 condemned to prison and in 1950 deprived from his office by his Church, was now rehabilitated both by the state and by his Church's authorities.[18] Ordass decided to resume his teaching at the Theological Academy and announced his first lecture for October 24th. On that day gunfire prevented him from lecturing; instead, he was called upon to take over the leadership of his Church, since Bishops Vető and László Dezséry resigned in haste. On November 3rd Ordass presided over a wide reaching conference where decisions were made regarding the cleansing of the Church of the political appointees in the leadership, and on launching a new era of stricter adherence to the Church's mission. These resolutions were later presented to the congregations and won widespread acceptance.

Revenge and Repression

Kádár's promises of a new era of greater tolerance, "Socialism with a human face", did not last long. Within a few months of the Soviet suppression of the Revolution the smooth talk gave way to the policy of "iron fist". Waves of arrests, executions, struck terror into the hearts of the population, while the structures of the former dictatorship, dismantled during the Revolution, were rebuilt once again. Tens of thousands armed "Workers Guards" were given military training, while everybody was spied upon by the ubiquitous informers.

The Churches were no exception. Those priests and religious persons who had been freed from prison by the "freedom fighters" and did not flee the country with the waves of refugees before the borders were sealed again, were now re-arrested and incarcerated, soon to be met with numerous newly arrested brothers and sisters. Then a most ominous Edict was issued in March 1957 which prescribed the need for permission from the Ministry of Education for staffing of all church offices, prelates, teachers of theology, pastors of parishes, etc., their appointment, transfer, removal, etc. This law had a retroactive clause to October 1st, 1956. In other words, all those who assumed office in the wake of the Revolution could be removed — and this was done during the spring of 1957 — while the Churches could not elect or appoint anybody without the political authorities who, in fact, were more often than not the initiators of the appointments, transfers, etc.

Finally, in June 1959 the State Office for Church Affairs that was never really abolished, only its functions were transferred to another ministry, was now reinstituted with all its formal power.[19]

Simultaneously with the imposition of control over church administration and personnel, a vigorous indoctrination campaign was launched with the avowed aim to extirpate religion and inculcate atheism, especially in the youth. Registration for religious instruction, which in 1957 embraced 80 and 90 per cent of the pupils in all elementary and high schools, was substantially reduced through administrative trickery, coupled with intimidation of students and parents, to under 10 per cent. While religious belief was ceaselessly assaulted and the Churches persecuted, the leaders of all religious denominations were called upon to praise the Government and thank it for its generosity towards the Churches — exactly as they were wont to do under the Stalinist regime of Mátyás Rákosi before the 1956 revolution. The intimidated and by now thoroughly conditioned church leaders complied with abject servility. They gave public blessing to the forcible collectivization of the countryside, took active part in the so-called peace campaign, praising the great Soviet Union as the defender of peace while denouncing the U.S.A. as an aggressive imperialist power. In short, by 1960 the pre-revolutionary *status quo* was fully restored, the Churches were reduced once again to impotence and subservience *vis-à-vis* the government.

The Search for National Consensus.

The initial phase of Kádár's attempt to rebuild the shattered Communist power structure in Hungary was accompanied by a vicious campaign against the "counter-revolutionaries" and "revisionists", culminating in the judicial murder of Imre Nagy and his associates in June 1958. This was followed by a thorough purge of Stalinist "dogmatists", as the loyal followers of the former party boss Rákosi were now labelled. The task of crushing both leftist and rightist "deviationists" thus accomplished, his enemies out of the way, the workers' councils suppressed, the peasants safely locked into the *kolkhozes*, János Kádár, secure in Khrushchev's unequivocal support, quite unexpectedly embarked on a new policy of national reconciliation, best expressed in his famous slogan first enunciated in December 1961: "Whoever is not against us is with us."

The "new" Kádár, who now became benignly tolerant toward his subjects' ideologically not always correct preferences in tastes and mores, was pursuing moderate "centrist" policies and visibly courted popular acceptance. The unprecedented freedom permitted artists and intellectuals, just as the daring economic innovations under the sign of "goulash communism", were designed to make his regime palatable and help people to forget its terrible birth amid treachery and blood.

As an integral part of his policy of achieving a true "socialist national unity" Kádár made new peace overtures towards the Churches calling for improvement in church-state relations and the solution of all outstanding questions "in a mutually acceptable way, namely, with full respect for the laws and legal order of the State, but also taking into consideration the internal laws and order of the Church."[20] A real departure from earlier practice became manifest when the Hungarian Government approached the Vatican offering to negotiate. It should be recalled that the last Papal Nuncio to Hungary, Msgr. Angelo Rotta had to leave the country on Soviet orders in the spring of 1945, and that the "Agreement of 1950" was forced upon the bishops without allowing them to consult the Pope and obtain his consent. Why then this dramatic turnaround?

It seems that the regime was prompted towards rapprochement with the Vatican by both domestic and foreign policy considerations. On the domestic scene Kádár must have realized that any genuine reconciliation with the Catholic clergy and faithful whose support he was now actively seeking would be impossible without papal approval. At the same time, parallel with his efforts of gaining popular endorsement for his policies at home, Kádár expended great effort to convince the international community of his regime's legitimacy. Following the brutal suppression of the 1956 revolution the "Hungarian question" was raised year after year in the United Nations, while the validity of the Hungarian U.N. delegation's credentials remained in dispute. Western and some Third World Governments ostentatiously shunned Hungary in their diplomatic dealings.

At the time when in the neighbouring Communist states the U.S. diplomatic missions were raised to the ambassadorial level, the United States legation in Budapest was headed by a mere *chargé d'affaires*: a pointed reminder of Washington's displeasure with Kádár's Hungary. Under such circumstances to open up negotiations with the Church and win recognition from the Holy See must have seemed a good way for

Kádár to show the world that the situation in Hungary had returned to normalcy and the regime was gaining international respectability.

The timing for an attempt of rapprochement was propitious in that with the death of Pius XII in 1958 and the election of John XXIII there came a certain mellowing of attitudes toward Communism in the Vatican. His successor Pope Paul VI sent an emissary, Monsignor Agostino Casaroli to Budapest in 1963 to open talks. The negotiations that begun with hopeful expectations could proceed only after both sides agreed to side-step the issue of the fate of Cardinal Mindszenty who was still holding out at the Budapest U.S. embassy and refused to leave Hungary without certain conditions he set for the Government.[21] In the end, after one year and a half of negotiations, a partial agreement was signed on 15 September 1964, by Monsignor Agostino Casaroli, Under-Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Special Ecclesiastical Affairs, and by József Prantner, Chairman of the State Office of Church Affairs in Hungary.

This agreement was hailed as a historic breakthrough, since it was the first such document between the Vatican and a Communist-ruled state. By mutual consent only a part of the document was made public. This included, first of all, the appointment of new bishops — an all important matter, since at the time only three of the eleven dioceses had ordinaries (the rest were Governed by apostolic administrators). Secondly, a section of the Hungarian Academy in Rome, housing the Hungarian Papal Institute, was once again placed under the jurisdiction of the Hungarian Bishops to enable eight priests each year to continue their education in Rome. The unpublished part of the document contained a list of problems to be discussed in the future. Both sides agreed to meet twice a year, alternately in Rome and in Budapest.

In the follow-up negotiations the Hungarian side continued to insist on giving priority to questions of personnel in the apparent hope that the new appointees selected jointly by Rome and Budapest would more willingly cooperate with the government than the older prelates. Between 1946 and 1980 twenty-six persons were appointed as bishops or auxiliary bishops. In spite of the fact that these appointments were the results of strong arm tactics from the state authorities leading to compromise, the Vatican regarded the restoration of the hierarchical leadership in the Church as a step forward. Similarly, the participation of several Hungarian bishops in the closing session of the Second Vatican Council in 1965 was greeted as a sign of the reintegration of the Hungarian Catholic Church into the mainstream of the Universal Church. On the

other hand, most of the pastoral problems were unresolved and remained on the agenda of the seemingly unending series of meetings, about which Msgr Casaroli — bishop from 1967, cardinal from 1979 — himself admitted that they produced only meagre results.[22] He gave his autobiographical account of the negotiations with the Communists states the title, *The Martyrdom of Patience.*[23]

The Kádár regime went out of its way in publicizing the newly-found good *entente* with the Vatican. Commentators praised the significance of the event and pictures showed the papal emissary surrounded by happily smiling Government officials. While the Communists thus created the impression that the rapprochement with the Church corresponded to their most sincere wishes and expressed satisfaction over the successful signing of the agreement, that same policy unexpectedly landed them in a quandary as to the proper ideological 'line' that could be understood and followed by the rank and file of the Party. Apparently there was some confusion among the Party cadres, quite a number of whom, seeing the Government's friendly gestures toward the Vatican and the Churches, accepted the loud pronouncements about the freedom of religion at face value and concluded that religion had been 'rehabilitated'; everybody was now free to go to church and enroll his child for religious instruction at school. An editorial entitled "The Ideological Offensive of Marxism" in the monthly *Társadalmi Szemle* (Social Review) took up the cudgel against this erroneous view, reminding the readers of the party's continued commitment to the eradication of religion and to education along strictly atheistic lines. In the words of the editorial:

> Recently there has been confusion in some of the party organizations regarding this question. This happened because in some places — where they can conceive the fight against religion only in a simplistic fashion — they misunderstand the normalisation of relations between the State and the Churches, certain changes in the Vatican's stand, the recently concluded agreement between our State and the Vatican... This is why the conference on ideology deemed it necessary to recall to attention: religion remains a retrograde world-view also in our days, and the ideological fight against religion continues to be the daily task in our ideological work.[24]

Actually, the regime's response to the challenge of ideological erosion was twofold: on the one hand, a stepped up ideological campaign, includ-

ing greater stress on atheistic materialism in all school curricula and, on the other hand, a return to terroristic methods against churchmen and believers who were bold enough to test the sincerity of the Government's policy of religious toleration. In the years following the signing of the partial agreement scores of priests were arrested at almost regular intervals and charged with conspiracy. Their trials were invariably held *in camera,* but enough transpired to show that their true "crime" consisted of spreading religious views, distributing devotional literature, and having given religious instruction for the young "illegally", although this was often done at the explicit request and always with the consent of the parents. The house searches, arrests and various other harassments of priests, seminarians, former monks and nuns, were apparently designed to intimidate, to render harmless those who otherwise could become the most likely *avant-garde* of the Church Militant, who would zealously proselytize for God and combat atheism. It is significant that, unlike the show trials under Rákosi, these post-revolutionary acts of terror received but scant publicity. Kádár did not want to create martyrs. The man on the street knew only that the Churches supported the Government and in turn received money for their sustenance. All they could see was open collaboration, while the moral courage of the persecuted remained behind the veil of silence.

Restoration of the *status quo ante* in the Protestant Churches

The Protestant Churches did not fare better. In less than a year the leaders of both the Reformed and the Evangelical Churches who were elected during the 1956 Revolution were forced to resign and were replaced with their discredited predecessors, plus some newer regime favourites.

The subservience of the Reformed Church to the Communists became especially evident in that their bishops played a prominent role in the political arena, in Parliament, the Presidential Council, Patriotic Peoples Front, National Peace Council, World Union of Hungarians, etc. János Péter, the leading bishop of the Church, resigned his ecclesiastical post and became the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Kádár's Hungary. The lower clergy and the congregations were reduced to mute spectators of the widely publicized political activities of their bishops. The theology taught and practiced has been reduced to the *diakonia,* i.e. that the Church is there to render service to the people in various forms of charitable works.

No wonder that the post-1956 decades of the life, or rather the lack of life, in the Hungarian Reformed Church had been described by an observer as being in the state of "frozen immobility" (megdermedt egyház).[25]

For a while the much smaller Evangelical Church experienced less interference in its internal affairs. In the summer of 1957 they even received permission to send a six member strong delegation to the Fifth Lutheran World Conference in Minneapolis where Bishop Lajos Ordass was asked to give the opening address on August 16. He choose to preach about the seed that has to be buried in the earth in order to bear fruit. (Jn. 12, 24). On the last day of the Conference Ordass was elected into the Executive Committee of this world-wide organization. This did not prevent the Communists to find ways to side-line Ordass and, after various devious manoeuvres, force him into complete retirement and silence.[26] This happened in November 1958, two years after Soviet troops crushed the Revolution. The *Gleichschaltung* of the Christian Churches of Hungary was now complete.

The End Years of the Babylonian Captivity

The first signs of a subtle change in attitudes appeared only in the mid-seventies. By then the Communists apparently discovered that religion is not only an annoying superstition of the elderly and ignorant — who, incidentally, can be quite decent people and good workers — but that religion might provide man with a code of ethics based on moral values that were sorely needed also in a supposedly "Socialist" society. In a widely distributed study State Secretary Imre Miklós, chairman of the State Office for Church Affairs, admitted that

> ...the Church can also carry out a positive role within socialistic society, such as the defence of peace, in the promotion and encouragement of national unity with socialist content — for which the development of trust is especially important — in defining societal and personal property, in spreading the ideas of humanism, in love for the people, in the fight against crime, in the promotion of the progressive traditions of the national inheritance and of cultural values...

Moreover, according to Miklós, it would be wrong to underestimate the influence of religious faith "in the private life of individuals, in interpersonal relations, in the defense of certain moral norms and critical view of other norms."[27]

In a similar vein there was a remarkable dialogue in 1975-76 between the Party's chief ideologue and cultural czar, Deputy Premier György Aczél and the Bishop of Pécs, Msgr. József Cserháti. There is no place here to go into details of their widely publicized exchanges; suffice to say that to Aczél's invitation to the religious believers to join in the task of defending world peace and of building of socialism, Bishop Cserháti replied that if the regime wanted sincere cooperation it should stop offending the feelings of the believers by its constant attacks, and even ridicule, of their most sacred convictions. Why not, asked the bishop, end the deeply humiliating treatment of the believers as second class citizens subject to various kinds of harassment and discrimination. Instead the government should aim at restoring their pride and self-esteem that is so necessary for the good performance of any job, by openly acknowledging the positive value of ethics and morality that Christian believers contribute to society. This would, of course, necessitate also the granting of greater freedom to the Church in its mission to strengthen those values among the adults and inculcate them in the children in teaching them the catechism of Christian faith and morality.[28]

Bishop Cserháti's challenge was not ignored or rejected outright, as it would have been in earlier years. There were some musings on the government side about the possibility of some positive role for religion and the Churches. For example, Professor József Lukács, the foremost philosopher of atheism in Hungary, the editor of *Világosság,* lecturing on "Churches and Religiousness in Socialist Hungary" at the political Academy of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, conceded that religion could perform a useful social function. It is by no means a negligible social force that "preserves certain moral principles," especially in the realm of human and family relations.[29]

The Ills of a Socialist Consumer Society

One might suspect that this change in perception and attitudes toward religion might have been due, at least in part, to some cold statistics that were brought to light by the new breed of sociologists, growing bolder

every year in their research.[30] Their findings called attention to the shocking social ills that were in stark contrast to the picture of an ever more just and better life painted by the Communist propaganda. During the late 1960's and early '70-ies when Kádár's Hungary after many years of penury, helped by huge loans from the Western capitalist countries, entered a degree of prosperity, and when many of the shackles restricting the acquisition of private property were removed by the New Economic Mechanism (NEM), parallel with the decline of religion a vulgar materialism took hold of large segments of the populace whose chief goal in life became material possessions and *la dolce vita.* Few of them, however had striven to realize their dream by hard work. Popular belief, based on observation of easy-to-find notorious examples, says that there are better and quicker ways to success and riches. Corruption, greasing of palms, cheating on the job, embezzling, and stealing of public property had become so wide-spread that it was almost accepted as normal behaviour for "smart folk". At the same time those who couldn't make it, sunk into the stupor of alcohol, absented themselves from work, ended up on skid row, or committed suicide. The picture that the newly emancipated sociologist discovered and showed to the public in journals and even in daily newspapers, was truly shocking and certainly beyond anything the Party and the Government cared to admit even to themselves. After all, no country, and even less one that called itself socialist, would brag about such sorry records as having the lowest birthrate, but the highest rate of suicides in the world, and probably the worst problem of alcoholism: it was estimated that between half a million to a million men and women were severely affected by alcohol, while about 150,000 could be regarded as alcoholics proper, among whom the male-female ratio was 5:3. Work discipline was almost non-existent and productivity was abysmally low. These were symptoms of a seriously ill society, even if to the outside world Kádár's Hungary presented the show window of the Communist world, with its happy-go-lucky people, considerable degree of individual and artistic freedoms, and fully stacked magazine shelves, which even its critics described as "the merriest barracks in the Soviet camp".

While the Party in the '70-s and '80-s relaxed somewhat the overall control on the population, and also made occasional conciliatory gestures toward the Churches — János Kádár was the first Communist Party and Government chief to visit the Vatican and received by the Pope in private audience in 1977[31] — the oppression of the Churches continued to the very end of the era, i.e. 1989. The biggest stumbling block in the

way of true reconciliation between the Communist regime and the Churches was the claim made by both sides over the winning of the mind and the soul of the youth. There the Party's attitude had not changed at all: hands off the young people! Although János Kádár addressing the 12th Congress of the Hungarian Socialist Workers party in 1980 himself complained about those young people who "have negative attitudes, such as indifference, in the case of some people even cynicism, and the tendency to seek an easy life", there was no admission of failure, nor a call for help addressed to the Churches. The Communists stubbornly and desperately clung to their faith that it is they alone who should mould the young mind. If anything, the shackles on religious instruction were tightened even further while Communist indoctrination was intensified. Thus, in spite of the official assurances about the satisfactory church-state relations in Hungary, a muted tug-of-war for youth continued to the end.

One can summarize the church policies in the last years of the Kádár regime by saying that even though the long-term goal of the Communist to promote the disappearance of religion and eliminate the Churches from society remained valid, their methods toward achieving that goal were somewhat adjusted. Outright terror, creating martyrs, gave way to more subtle policies. There were no more waves of arrests and torture of priests, nuns and religion teachers. Compliance with the political line by the clergy was now enforced by the State Office for Church Affairs through direct pressure on the bishops whose job it became to discipline the "disobedient" priests by transferring them to little obscure villages, forbidding them to preach, etc. As a result of these changed policies the public at large had no awareness of the true situation in which the Churches had to struggle for mere survival, how the bishops were constrained to temper, even silence the apostolic zeal of their best priests, how religious instruction was made nearly impossible by intimidation and constant harassment of the parents and the instructors, etc.

Repeated requests for permission to resume work by the surviving members of the banned religious orders were ignored, nor were the severe restrictions on religious publications lifted.

The State Office of Church Affairs continued to function until the very end of the Communist era, and the media continued to publish reassuring statements from government and church authorities about the freedom of religion and the harmonious relationship between Church and State in Hungary. It was not just foreigners who were deceived by this insidious propaganda, but most, if not all, Hungarians too. Any visitor to

Hungary in the '80-ies could meet many people who would show genuine surprise, if asked about oppression of religion or of the Churches. Oh, but that is the thing of the past, gone long time ago, would have been the likely answer.

This general acceptance of the muzzling of the Churches and the resulting quasi-disappearance of religion as an integral part of people's life and interest, could be scored as one of the greatest successes of the Kádár regime.

What was the True Significance of the Revolution for the Churches?

In conclusion, one could say that while the radical changes that occurred during those heady days of the end of 1956 and the first months of 1957 had been successfully reversed in the retribution that followed, so that in the following three decades Communist policies were fully restored, still the Revolution remained a *sign* that the Marxist-Communist system is *not* an inevitable destiny for mankind as its followers tried to force people to believe. There will be, eventually a chance to escape. While in Hungary, being a small satellite of the mighty Soviet Union, the 1956 Revolution was officially renamed counter-revolution and everything was done to erase its memory, the world at large did not escape the impact of that heroic event. The Communist parties of France and Italy which at that time were considered capable of seizing power, were fatally weakened by the bloodshed in Budapest, and even in the Soviet Union and in its satellites the events of 1956 could not be ignored. Thus the Hungarian Revolution definitely contributed to the final implosion of Communism and the disintegration of the Soviets' "evil empire". This way, by the end of 1989, with the dismantling of all the odious restrictions on their freedom, the Churches of Hungary could again enjoy the freedom they so sorely lacked for over four long decades.

NOTES

Recently, and especially on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the 1956 Revolution, a spate of books and articles had been published on our subject. Out of these I have consulted the following: Bálint Balla *et al.*, eds., *30 év 1956–1986* [30 Years 1956–1886] (Bern: EPMSz, 1986); Gyula Havasy, *Martyrs of the*

Catholics in Hungary 1944–1989 (Budapest: by the Author, 1993); Károly Hetényi Varga, *Papi sorsok a horogkereszt és a vörös csillag árnyékában* [Priests' fate in the shadow of the Swastika and the Red Star] (2nd ed., Budapest: Új Ember, 2004); István Mészáros, *"Devictus Vincit" Tanulmányok a Magyar katolikus egyház 1945–2000 közötti történetéről* ["Devictus Vincit" Studies relating to the history of the Hungarian Church between 1945–2000] (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 2002); Hansjakob Stehle, *Die Ostpolitik des Vatikans 1917-1975* (München: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1975); Pál Gerő Bozsóky and László Lukács, *Az elnyomatásból a szabadságba — az egyház Magyarországon 1945-2001* [From oppression into freedom — the Church in Hungary 1945–2001] (Budapest: Vigilia Kiadó, 2005). Ferenc Tomka, *Halálra szántak, mégis élünk! Egyházüldözés 1945-1990 éa az ügynökkérdés* [Condemned to death, but still alive! Persecution of the Church 1945–1990 and the Problem of Collaborator–Agents] (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 2005); Pál Rosdy, ed., *A katolikus egyház 1956-ban* [The Catholic Church in 1956] (Budapest: Új ember kiadó, 2006).

[1] In 1949, the last time the census before the Communist takeover contained information about religion, 70 per cent of the population was Catholic, 22 per cent Calvinist, 6 per cent Lutheran, and just over one per cent Jewish.

The bishops of these Christian Churches were members of the Upper House of Parliament, the county and municipal councils included *ex officio* priests and ministers. The Catholic bishops and abbots owned huge landed estates that assured them great prestige and authority in the largely agricultural society of Hungary.

[2] A good summary of church-state relations in the 1950's is given by K.Z., "Egy elhallgatott évforduló" [An Anniversary Passed over in Silence] *Katolikus Szemle* (Rome) 37, 3 (Fall 1985): 266-268; see also Emeric András and Julius Morel, *Hungarian Catholicism: a Handbook* (Toronto: St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish, 1983), 19-25.

[3] There are many books about Cardinal Mindszenty. Two which contain his own writings are: *Cardinal Mindszenty Speaks – Authorized White Book* (New York – London – Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1949) and József Cardinal Mindszenty, *Memoirs* (New York: Macmillan, 1974).

[4] The English translation of the texts of the agreements with the Churches can be found in Vladimir Gsovski, ed., *Church and State Behind the Iron Curtain* (New York: Praeger, 1955), 134-141.

[5] See my "The Agreement Between the Government and the Hungarian People's Republic and the Roman Catholic Bench of Bishops" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Columbia University, 1958).

[6] Jenő Gergely, *A katolikus egyház Magyarországon 1944-1971* [The Catholic Church in Hungary 1944–1971] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1985), 132-133.

[7] See András Koltai, "A Magyar piaristák 1956-ban, Forrásgyűjtemény" [The Hungarian Piarist Fathers in 1956 /Archival Collection] in Rosdy, *A katolikus egyház 1956-ban*, p. 162.

[8] Soós Viktor Attila, "Kedves Barátom" [My Dear Friend], *ibid.*, p. 59.

[9] Margit Balogh, "A katolikus egyház és a forradalom" [The Catholic Church and the Revolution], *ibid.*, p. 39.

[10] Paul E. Zinner, *Revolution in Hungary* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1962), 297.

[11] Mindszenty, *Memoirs*, pp. 194-200.

[12] Responding to the growing public demand Prime Minister Imre Nagy announced on October 30th that in the near future there would be free elections held with the participation of several parties. Indeed, the surviving leaders of the pre-1950 political parties, including those with Christian Democratic orientation, have re-emerged on the scene and announced their party platforms. See Zoltán Kovács K., *Kereszténydemokrata erők a forradalomban* [Christian Democratic Forces in the Revolution], in Rosdy, pp. 237-238.

[13] For a most thoughtful analysis of Mindszenty's radio address, see Zinner, pp. 299-302. Communist propaganda ever since accused the Cardinal of calling for the restitution of the Church's landed estates. However, in the original speech he called for the restitution of the Church's confiscated institutions ("intézmények"). In the Hungarian language land is never called "intézmény".

[14] Pope Pius XII expressed his anxiety and sympathy for the Hungarians in his Apostolic Letter *Luctuosissimi eventus* of October 28. He greeted the liberation of Cardinal Mindszenty in an other Apostolic Letter broadcast by Radio Vatican on October 31, which was rebroadcast in Hungarian translation the same day by the Free Hungarian Radio Station in Budapest. This was followed by his encyclical *Laetamur admodum* on November 2, when he expressed guarded optimism over the developments in Hungary. The Holy Father's reaction to the second Soviet attack on Budapest on November 4 was quick; already the next day, on November 5, he denounced this outrage in a new encyclical, *Datiis nupperrimis"*. Then on November 10, in a lengthy radiobroadcast referring to the tragedy in Hungary he expressed his deep anxiety and sorrow about the state of the world. These papal documents — in Hungarian translation — are included in Rosdy, pp. 92-99.

[15] There was, at least, one exception. At the news of the fighting a young Franciscan friar, fr. Vazul Végvári, a former graduate of a military academy, left his convent without his superior's permission and rushed to the capital. He became the commander of a group of young freedom-fighters on the castle hill of Buda. They continued to fight until the afternoon of November 7th, when in face of the overwhelming power of the Soviet tanks they took to flight. See the personal account of this incident by fr. Vazul Végvári, "Budavári

Krónika," *ibid.*, pp. 232-236. Note that fr. Végváry acted out of personal bravado, not as a representative of his Church.

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 211-212.

[17] For the Reformed Church see Gyula Barczay, "Megújulás – Megdermedés – Megmozdulás – A Magyarországi Református Egyház harminc éve" [Renewal – Freezing – Stirring – Thirty Years of the Hungarian Reformed Church] in Bálint Balla, *et al.*, eds., *Harminc Év 1956-1986* [Thirty Years 1956-1986] (Bern: An Edition of the Protestant Academy for Hungarians in Europe, 1986), 328-363.

[18] For the Evangelical Church see László Terray, "A Reformmozgalomtól a Hierokráciáig — A magyarországi Evangélikus Egyház harminc éve" [From the Reform-Movement to the Hierocracy — Thirty Years of the Hungarian Evangelical Church], *ibid.*, pp. 364-388.

[19] The extent of this power has been demonstrated in the way how the Office dealt with the disobedient theologians of the Budapest Central Seminary, where the most talented of the country's young priest were formed. In January 1959 some 80 seminarians refused to attend a political lecture organized by the State Office for Church Affairs. The Office first demanded the expulsion of 14 "agitators". When most of their confreres declared their solidarity with those expelled, the Office ordered the dismissal of 59 more seminarians and 3 superiors. Thus the largest seminary of Hungary was practically emptied of students, a very severe blow to the Church struggling with a shortage of priests. See Ferenc Tomka, *Halálra szántak, mégis élünk*, p. 117.

[20] See my "Towards Normalization of Church-State Relations in Hungary", in Bohdan R. Bociurkiw and John Strong, eds., *Religion and Atheism in the USSR and Eastern Europe* (London: Macmillan, 1975), 291-313.

[21] Unable to exercise his office, but remaining the Primate of Hungary, at 80 years of age, not always in the best health, the Cardinal was a cause of worry to his hosts for fifteen long years and also an irritant in Hungarian-U.S. relations. Pope Paul VI finally persuaded him to leave Hungary which he did in September 1971 and, after a short stay in Rome, he settled in Vienna. Soon afterward, however, the Hungarian government launched a strong protest with the Vatican, charging that Mindszenty with his pastoral travels among the two million Hungarians in the West and the impending publication of his memoirs had violated the conditions accepted by the Holy See at the time of his departure. They demanded that Rome should impose silence on the Cardinal, or remove him. When Mindszenty refused to be muzzled, the Supreme Pontiff on February 5, 1974, declared the see of Esztergom vacant. The following year, on May 6, 1975, József Cardinal Mindszenty died. Pope Paul VI then appointed László Lékai archbishop of Esztergom and Primate of Hungary.

[22] See his description of the negotiations in the 19 September 1964 issue of the Vatican paper *Osservatore Romano.*

[23] Agostino Casaroli, *Il martirio della pazienza – la Santa Sede e I paesi comunisti (1963–89)* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore S.P.A., 2000). The Hungarian version, published by the Szent István Társulat in Budapest in 2001, *A türelem vértanúsága,* has a 20 page appendix of a selection of press reactions to the book, collected and edited by Pál Rosdy, many of them bitter critiques of the Vatican's *Ostpolitik,* including the diplomatic activity of Cardinal Casaroli, going so far as claiming that it did more harm than good for the suffering Church.

[24] *Társadalmi Szemle*, vol. 19 (November 1964), pp. 14-15.

[25] Barczay, pp. 335 ff.

[26] Terray, pp. 367-371.

[27] The study first appeared in the January 1977 issue of *Világosság* (Light), the monthly for the propagation of the "materialist World View"; it was reprinted under the title "Beziehungen Neuen Typus," as the lead article in the official government publication *Staat und Kirchen in Ungarn* (Vienna: Ungarisches Pressebüro Wien, 1977), pp. 5-13. Quotations on p. 9.

[28] The essay by Aczél and three articles by Cserháti, of which the last one was an answer to Aczél, were reprinted (in German translation) in *Staat und Kirche in Ungarn,* pp. 15-67.

[29] *Népszabadság,* 13 June 1979, pp. 4-5.

[30] In this section I draw heavily on my earlier study "Religion in a Communist Consumer Society: The Case of Kádár's Hungary," in *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* (Philadelphia: Ecumenical Press, Temple University) 1, 5 (September 1981): 1-10.

[31] On this occasion Kádár acceded to the Pope's pleas and ordered the release of the Piarist Father Ödön Lénárd, the last priest still in prison. He was thrown into jail for purely religious activities on several occasions and spent altogether 18 years in the most notorious prisons.

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That Was The Week That Was
(October 30 – November 4, 1956): Comparison of the Economic Platforms of the 1956 Parties

Susan Glanz

The Great Depression and the two world wars created an atmosphere where both politicians and the public saw direct government involvement in the economy as the only way of preventing the repetition of these destructive events. The involvement of the state in the post World War II economy increased everywhere in Europe. For example, in both France and Great Britain, railroads, banking (both the Bank of England and the Bank of France), domestic energy (coal in England, electricity in France) were nationalized and placed under the jurisdiction of semi-public directorships. Health care and transportation were nationalized in England. In France, nationalization was accompanied by state planning. The view that planning and nationalization are important for the smooth running of the economy became the accepted European norm.

Hungarians felt the same way about the role of government. A public opinion poll conducted in 1945 found that 67% favoured nationalization of factories and 75% favoured nationalization of banks.[1] The eleven years that passed between 1945 and 1956 did not change these sentiments and none of the parties in the coalition government formed in October 1956 demanded reversing the process.

The economic background

In 1992 the University of Groningen's Growth and Development Centre created a database which estimated the per capita GDP for most countries from 1950s on.

Table 1. Per Capita Real GDP between 1950-1956, in Selected European Countries. (In 1990 US$ -converted at Geary-Khamis PPPs)

Year	Hungary	Czechoslovakia	Poland	Austria	West Germany
1950	2,480	3,501	2,447	3,706	4,281
1951	2,695	3,524	2,510	3,959	4,651
1952	2,762	3,598	2,521	3,967	5,046
1953	2,786	3,544	2,618	4,137	5,439
1954	2,850	3,652	2,715	4,555	5,797
1955	3,070	3,922	2,794	5,053	6,431
1956	2,906	4,110	2,864	5,397	6,839

Source: http://www.ggdc.net/maddison [accessed April 1, 2005]

Economists measure economic well-being and economic growth by looking at the growth rate of the per capita GDP. Based on the numbers in the table, Hungary's economic growth between 1950 and 1955 was 23.8%. Economists also warn that this can be a misleading number, because a. when products are low quality and not durable, then people will have to buy them again and again, b. as GDP doesn't measure the sustainability of growth. A country may achieve a temporary high GDP by over-exploiting natural resources or by miss-allocating investment, and

c. quality of life is determined by many other factors besides physical goods.

Today we know that the lack of choices for consumers and producers, the low quality of the products, and the over-allocation of investments funds to heavy industry existed in the Hungary of the times. We also know that the pervasive atmosphere of fear made life difficult for the population.

To make these numbers meaningful, let us compare them to prewar data. Hungary's per capita GDP in 1935 was $2,471 and Austria's was $2,907.[2] That is, Hungary reached its 1935 GDP only in 1950, while by then Austria had surpassed her 1935 GDP by 27.5%.

A somewhat different data set was published by Iván Pető and Sándor Szakács, and is summarized in Table 2.[3]

Table 2. Per Capita Real Income in Hungary, 1950-1956 (1949=100)

Year	Per Capita Income for Workers and Employees	Per Capita Consumption by Peasants*
1950	102.8	112.7
1951	97.8	118.8
1952	87.5	106.6
1953	91.0	100.6
1954	115.0	111.0
1955	121.8	124.5
1956	129.3	131.2

* without deductions and taxes; source: Pető – Szakács (1985, 217)

Though both data sets, in Tables 1 and 2, show 20+% growth between 1950 and 1955, table 2 shows that this growth was not continuous. Standard of living fell between 1950 and 1952, and in 1953 it was still below the 1950 level. According to Pető and Szakács's calculations, as table 3 shows, real wages in Hungary fell between 1951 and 1953, and in 1955 were only slighly above the 1949 level.

Table 3. Real Wages in Hungary between 1950-1955 (1949=100)

Year	Real wages of workers and employees	Real wages of workers in manufacturing
1950	101.3	107.4
1951	89.7	94.1
1952	82.3	84.5
1953	87.0	87.9
1954	102.3	103.9
1955	106.0	107.1

Source: Pető–Szakács (1985, 221)

Berend's calculations show similar results; namely that by 1953, the prices of consumer goods were nearly 100% higher than the 1949 price level, meaning that real wages had fallen nearly 20% below the 1950 level.[4]

What do these statistics really indicate? Table 4 below shows the average monthly wages in Hungary in 1956 and 1957. According to calculations of the Trade Union Council quoted by Pető–Szakács, the minimum wages necessary to support a family of three was Ft. 1440, and for a family of four was Ft. 1900. Such wages were not sufficient to provide for a minimally acceptable living standard. "According to the Ministry of the Interior," as quoted by Pető-Szakács:

> a worker could afford a new winter coat (Ft 1,000) every ten and a half years, a wool suit (Ft. 870) once in every two and a half years, and a pair of shoes (Ft. 260) once a year; his wife a new wool suit (Ft. 400) every three years and a cotton dress (Ft. 150) and a pair of shoes (Ft. 200) once a year... a new winter coat (Ft. 1,000) every ten years, and a pair of stockings (Ft. 45) every six months. For their child they could buy clothing... every six months, every three and a half years a coat (Ft. 400) and a pair of shoes (Ft. 90) every six months.[5]

Table 4. Monthly Average Wages (Ft.)

	1956	**1957**
All workers and employees	1,235	1,445
Industrial workers	1,234	1,486
Construction workers	1,152	1,512
Employees of central government, health-care, etc.	1,338	1,560
Employees of local government, health-care, etc	1,136	1,238

Source: Pető–Szakács (1985, 314)

Political events leading to October 1956

The death of Stalin in 1953 began a thawing process everywhere in communist-controlled Central Europe. In 1955 the debate club of the

Union of Working Youth, (*DISZ – Dolgozó Ifjúság Szövetsége,* the youth organization of the Communist Party) the Petőfi Circle, was formed. At first the Circle's goal was to organize public debates about how the decisions of the XXth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party applied to Hungary. Later discussions were held on topics ranging from the freedom of the press, to economics, history, education, and philosophy. The leadership of each circle was composed of young communists. The Petőfi Circle's two economic forums of May 9th and June 20th, 1956, focused on two problems, the lack of statistical information, both domestic and international, and lack of knowledge of the planning process. Similar circles were formed all over the country and their meetings were widely attended.

Khrushchev's revelations about Stalin at the XXth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in February 1956, caused a political earthquake which was felt everywhere in Eastern Europe. At the end of June, Polish workers in Poznan went on strike and demanded increased wages, payment for overtime work, the abolition of piecework and the roll-back of fuel and food price increases. The revolt was crushed, the workers did not achieve their goals but some political changes did occur. For example, Wladyslaw Gomulka, Zenon Kliszko and General Marian Spychalski were rehabilitated and readmitted into the Party.[6]

In Hungary, Communist Party chief Mátyás Rákosi announced already in March that the miscarriage of justice against László Rajk[7] would be rectified.[8] On July 18, 1956 the much-hated Rákosi resigned. At the end of the summer events speeded up. Towards the end of September, when the first of the trials of the workers who had been involved in the strikes in Poznan, had started, members of the Petőfi Circle called for a solidarity demonstration with the Polish workers. Even before these demonstrations could be organized, after Rajk's October 6th ceremonial reburial that had been promised by Rákosi in the spring, students marched through Budapest shouting anti-Stalinist slogans.

On October 13, 1956 Imre Nagy was readmitted to the Hungarian Workers' Party.[9] *The Washington Post* deemed Nagy's return as "a big step toward liquidating the remnants of Stalinism by formally announcing that ex-Premier Imre Nagy has been restored to party membership."[10] Three days later a meeting of about 1,600 undergraduates in Szeged founded League of Hungarian University and College Students (*MEFESZ – Magyar Egyetemisták és Föiskolások Szövetsége*), a students' organization independent of the Union of Working Youth, (*DISZ – Dolgozó*

Ifjúság Szövetsége) and the HWP (*Hungarian Workers' Party – Magyar Dolgozók Pártja*). Their action was followed in several universities and colleges. On October 22nd the demands of the students at the Building Industry Technological University in Budapest were published and widely circulated.[11] Of the 16 demands, five dealt with economic issues. These were:

> 6. We demand a re-examination and re-adjustment of Hungarian-Soviet and Hungarian-Yugoslav political, economic and intellectual relations on the basis of complete political and economic equality and of non-intervention in each other's internal affairs.
> 7. We demand the re-organization of the entire economic life of Hungary, with the assistance of specialists. Our whole economic system based on planned economy should be re-examined with an eye to Hungarian conditions and to the vital interests of the Hungarian people.
> 8. Our foreign trade agreements and the real figures in respect of reparations that can never be paid should be made public. We demand frank and sincere information concerning the country's uranium deposits, their exploitation and the Russian concession. We demand that Hungary should have the right to sell the uranium ore freely at world market prices in exchange for hard currency.
> 9. We demand the complete revision of norms in industry and an urgent and radical adjustment of wages to meet the demands of workers and intellectuals. We demand that minimum living wages for workers should be fixed.
> 10. We demand that the delivery system should be placed on a new basis and that produce should be used rationally. We demand equal treatment of peasants farming individually.

Demand number 5 was the reestablishment of a multiparty system:

> 5. We demand general elections in this country, with universal suffrage, secret ballot and the participation of several Parties for the purpose of electing a new National Assembly. We demand that workers should have the right to strike.

The call for multiparty elections was a new element in the students' demands. The demands of the Writers' Union published the following day did not go as far as the students; it insisted on fewer economic changes.

> 3. The country's economic position must be clearly stated. We shall not be able to recover after this crisis, unless all workers, peasants and intellectuals can play their proper part in the political, social and economic administration of the country.
> 4. Factories must be run by workers and specialists. The present humiliating system of wages, norms, and social insurance conditions must be reformed. The trade unions must truly represent the interests of the Hungarian workers.
> 5. Our peasant policy must be put on a new foundation. Peasants must be given the right to decide their own future freely. Political and economic conditions must, at last, be created to allow memberships in co-operatives. The present system of deliveries to the State and of taxation must be gradually replaced by a system ensuring free socialist production and exchange of goods.[12]

That the Writers' Union memo voiced some of the demands that were just under the surface is shown by the report of the HWP. In Document No. 21, Record of Conversation between Yurii Andropov and Ernő Gerő on October 12, 1956 reports that Gerő blames "anti-Soviet propaganda" on three economic issues.[13] These were:

> b. Protests against the selling of [former] German properties as a form of Hungarian payments to the Soviet Union;
> c. Protests against the alleged short selling of Hungarian uranium to the Soviet Union (even though the country received a Soviet loan before shipping [the raw materials]...
> d. Complaints that Hungary is involved in unfavourable trade relations with the Soviet Union.

In the same document Andropov blames the

> economic hardships, ...to a great extent on the fact that our [Hungarian] friends have lately given up keeping an eye on the national economy. Several questions concerning industrial production are pending, most of them are not being taken care of at all. ... It is worth noting that while lately the Hungarian

> comrades are constantly receiving advice from the CPSU leadership on various issues, and even when they agree with these suggestions, afterwards they are too feeble when it comes to enforcing their execution.

The first Soviet armoured units entered Budapest at the early dawn of October 24. A few hours later on the same day, the HWP's Central Committee confirmed Ernő Gerő in his post as First Secretary of the Communist Party and Imre Nagy as Prime Minister.

Two days later a delegation of workers from Borsod County met Prime Minister Nagy and presented to him a list of demands. Imre Nagy agreed with the demands and promised to fulfil them. The economic components of the demands that Nagy agreed with were:

> the publication of foreign trade agreements, the use of uranium to the benefit of the Hungarians, the raising of base wages, the abolition of hidden price increases, the lowering of retirement age, the raising of family support and retirement payments, the abolition of the childlessness tax, introduction of train transportation subsidies, increased construction of apartments, and subsidization of private housing construction. The reorganization of agriculture should be voluntary, based on the interests on the peasantry.

Both the demands and Nagy's support for the demands were read on the national radio stations.[14]

On October 28 the Law Faculty of Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest founded the Revolutionary Committee of the Hungarian Intellectuals (*Magyar Értelmiség Forradalmi Bizottsága*). The economic demands listed in their Appeal were published later that day and were similar to the demands published by the student groups and the Writers' Union, namely:

> 2. The Government should abrogate all foreign trade agreements which are disadvantageous to the country. It should make public all foreign trade agreements concluded in the past, including those relating to uranium ore and bauxite.
> 4. Factories and mines should really become the property of the workers. We shall not return the factories and the land to the capitalists and to the landowners. Our factories should be

> managed by freely elected workers' councils. The Government should guarantee the functioning of small-scale private industry and private trade.
> 5. The Government should abolish the exploiting "norm" scheme. The Government should raise low wages and pensions to the limit of economic possibilities.
> 6. The trade unions should become genuine workers' organizations representing the workers' interests, with their leaders freely elected. The working peasants should form their own organizations to safeguard their interests.
> 7. The Government should ensure the freedom and security of agricultural production by supporting individual farmers and voluntary farm co-operatives. The hated delivery system, by which the peasants have been robbed, should be abolished.

The call for multiparty elections was again included in the statement: "We demand general elections with secret ballot. The people should be able freely to nominate their candidates."[15]

The *United Nations Report of the Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary* published in 1957 summarized the economic demands represented in the earliest resolutions and manifestos as the demand for openness.[16]

> The demand for the publication of the facts about foreign trade and Hungary's economic difficulties, publication of the facts about uranium, reforms in connection with factory management and trade unions, the "norm" system and other working conditions, and a revision of agrarian policy, especially in regard to agricultural co-operatives and compulsory deliveries.... The economic objections showed a deep seated resentment of Hungary's dependence on the Soviet Union and the uncritical copying of Soviet economic system.[17]

On October 28th, Imre Nagy announced on radio "the Hungarian government agreed with the Soviet government, the Soviet troops will begin immediate withdrawal from Budapest." In the same speech he promised that "the new government will work on a new broad-based program, in which we hope to solve the justified demands of workers." Nagy enumerated the "justified demands" that his government will work on to include the question of wages of work norms, the raising of minimum pay in the lowest wage brackets, and of the smallest pensions,

and the raising of family allowances. To help resolve the housing crisis, the government promised the support all state, cooperate, and private construction of homes and apartments. He applauded the establishment of workers' councils. He also promised to work on a plan to increase production by agricultural cooperatives and by individual farms.[18]

On October 30th at 2.28 p.m. Imre Nagy, as Prime Minister, announced on national radio that "in the interest of the further democratization of the country's life, the Cabinet abolishes the one-party system and places the country's government on the basis of democratic cooperation between the coalition parties, reborn in 1945. In accordance with this decision an inner cabinet has been formed within the coalition government, whose members are Imre Nagy, Zoltán Tildy, Béla Kovács, Ferenc Erdei, János Kádár, Géza Losonczy and a person to be appointed by the Social Democratic Party."[19] The four coalition parties were the Smallholders' Party (represented by Zoltán Tildy and Béla Kovács), the National Peasant Party (represented by Ferenc Erdei), Hungarian Workers' Party (represented by János Kádár and Géza Losonczy) and the Social Democratic Party.

Hungary's multiparty democracy was short lived; it lasted for six days, from Tuesday, October 30th, 1956 to Sunday, November 4th, when the second Soviet invasion of Hungary began. After the initial announcement several political parties immediately started to reorganize. Due to the short time they could function, the parties did not have time to develop full platforms.

The economic platforms of the coalition parties

On Wednesday, October 31st Radio Kossuth reported, and street posters announced that the **Smallholders' Party** (*Kisgazda Párt*) was re-formed.[20] The Party's much maligned (by the Communists) Secretary-General Béla Kovács was understandably reluctant to assume a leadership role.[21] He took on the post of president only after much convincing. A radio reporter and several papers quote him as saying "no one should dream of the old days. The days of the aristocrats, bankers and capitalists have ended forever. Those, today, who think in terms of 1939 or 1945, are not real smallholders."[22]

Because the Smallholders', just like the other parties, never had the time to develop comprehensive economic platforms, we are forced to

evaluate the demands voiced by the publications of various local Smallholder and other party organs and draw our conclusions based on these pronouncements.

The recurring demands that were voiced by different Smallholder party cells did not go beyond the demands of the students in MEFESZ or those of the intellectuals. The poster published by the party cell of the 12th district of Budapest on October 31st asserted that "the economy of the nation cannot be run by any dogma...."[23] It then went on:

> 13. Election of new union leadership. The right to strike....
> 19. Small crafts, services, students and artists should receive subsidies from the state; and factory workers should receive a share from the profits of their factories....
> 27. All war indemnity payments and deliveries to the Soviet Union must be reexamined. While this reexamination is continuing, the deliveries must be stopped.
> 28. The just demands of the peasants should be satisfied by the Provisional Government.

A more detailed platform was published by the Provisional Executive Committee of the Smallholders' Party of Győr-Sopron County.[24] Their circular, also published on October 31st lists eight economic demands, namely:

> 1. The acceptance of the principle of private property.
> 2. The unity of peasants.
> 3. The dissolution of state owned retail and service sector and the return of these establishments to private ownership. The acceptance of the idea of the sanctity of private property.
> 4. Unconditional support for private enterprise. Only self initiated cooperatives, esp. to take advantage of large scale purchases and sales, should be allowed, and only if it is beneficial to members.
> 5. Full compensation to those who suffered because of forced collectivization.
> 6. Reopening of the denied pension applications, and the raising of all pensions to the level of providing decent living standards.
> 11. A new wage system that allows households with one wage earner to support a family.
> 12. The economic platform of the central Smallholders' Party cannot go against these demands.

Another appeal, addressed to railroad workers, in addition to the above-listed demands, included demands for a five-day, forty hour work-week and for the abolition of the norm system. The appeal also stated that "land should belong to those who work it and the demand that the issues relating to the wage and family support systems be solved immediately."[25]

István Varga, an economic adviser to the party, in an interview on November 3rd added the call for the releasing by the government of economic and trade data to the aid the process of rational decision-making.[26]

The party's support for a market-based system in small industry, farming and retail trade, is clear. Priority was placed on reforming the pension and wage systems, and redressing past economic injustices. The termination of the forced collectivization was also demanded.

The Smallholders' Party ceased its legal activities on November 4th. A Provisional Executive Committee met occasionally until the early spring of 1957.[27]

Representatives of the **National Peasant Party** (*Nemzeti Parasztpárt*) met on October 31 at Vajdahunyad Castle, in Budapest's City Park. Since in the past some party leaders had been viewed as communist fellow travellers, and to indicate a break with this tradition, the Party adopted a new name, the Petőfi Party, after the poet Sándor Petőfi, a hero of the March 15, 1848 revolution.[28] The formation of the National Peasant Party, and its name change to Petőfi Party, were announced on Thursday, November 1st on the radio.[29] The Party did not publish a platform, but its program is implied in interviews given and reports written by its leading members. Of the Party's local organizations, the one in Szabolcs-Szatmár County reorganized the fastest, probably because this county had been the Party's stronghold after 1945. The most detailed program proposal was given in an interview by Sándor Varga, the secretary to this Szabolcs-Szatmár County organization. The economic program outlined by Varga was the following:

> ...the respect for private property is the basis of party policy, and the party will fight for free choice in production and free choice in sales...
>
> The 1945 land reform was legitimate and we will not return land owned by peasants. But, we find it necessary to demand the review of all those unlawful acts that were instituted against small peasant landholdings from 1948 on, ... Respecting the freedom of sales choices for peasants until

healthy peasant cooperatives are organized, we want to maintain the cooperatives, but not as monopolies, but as a buyer of the products at market prices that peasants cannot deliver to the cities....

...the organization of politically independent peasant interest groups....

We demand the immediate review of the tax system, as the current system places undue burden on the peasants....

We demand the reevaluation of the wages of peasants working on state farms and in state forests, the immediate abolition of the piece work systems and the introduction of a progressive compensation system, where these agricultural employees receive a greater percentage of their wages in-kind and receive a small share of their income, sufficient to finance small purchases, in money twice a month.

We demand the reevaluation of the restrictions on keeping animals by the employees of state farms, the permission of keeping a cow and the abolition of the restrictions of keeping pigs, chickens and other small animals.

We demand the reevaluation of the social insurance and social health care system, and the provision of support for peasants identical to those of industrial workers. We demand the expansion of the social health care system to individual farmers who wish to do so.

We demand the immediate reorganization of agricultural machine industry to permit the production of machinery profitably employable on small farms, and that these machines also be made available on credit.[30]

The speech outlined the party's goal of representing peasants, and achieving parity for state farms and forestry workers with industrial employees. The goal of terminating forced collectivization is listed as a priority, as is the need to include peasants in the national social insurance and healthcare system.

Ferenc Farkas, the Secretary General of the Petőfi Party, emphasized on Hungarian Radio on November 3rd, that all parties in the coalition government want to maintain the socialist successes achieved to date that can be used by an independent, free and democratic socialist country. This meant the acceptance of nationalized industry and banking system.[31]

On the same day in an interview published in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County's *People's Daily* (*A Nép Lapja*) the party representative

was asked about the re-organized party's platform. His answer was "that the final program is being worked on, but our goals are already clear. We want to build strong ties with the Peasant Alliance and with the Smallholders' Party. We will continue to fight for land to be owned by those who work it."[32]

One of the most influential Hungarian thinkers of the period was István Bibó. He was serving on the executive committee of the newly reconstituted Petőfi Party when he was appointed Minister on November 3, one day before the second Soviet intervention. On the morning of November 4th, Bibó continued typing in his office in the national parliament while Soviet troops occupied the building and he stayed in the Parliament building for another two days.[33] On November 9th Bibó wrote "A suggested solution for the Hungarian problem."[34] The economic solutions listed in the memo are:

> c) Hungary's social structure is based on the principle of prohibition of exploitation (socialism) which means:
> (i) to maintain the 1945 land reform with a maximum of 20 to 40 acres;
> (ii) to maintain nationalization of mines, banks, and heavy industry;
> (iii) to maintain the existing social ownership of factories through workers' management, workers' shares, or profit-sharing;
> (iv) the possibility of free individual or cooperative enterprise, with guarantees against exploitation;
> (v) freedom of private ownership within the guarantees against exploitation;
> (vi) general social insurance.
> d) Reparation for those economic and moral injustices which have been committed shall by no means involve restoration of the *status quo ante*. All compensations shall be made according to the principle prohibiting exploitation and only in respect of ruined homes or loss of property earned by labour.

The Bibó plan reiterated the goals of maintaining the "achievements" of 1945, the land reform and nationalized large industry. Yet Bibó suggests that public ownership can be more "profitably" maintained by either worker management, by employee stock ownership plans or by creating profit sharing plans for workers. He advocated an all-inclusive social

insurance system and reparation payments to compensate those people whose homes or property had been expropriated by the state.

The December meeting of the Provisional Executive Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) was preparing a new government program and on December 8, Bibó and other leaders of the Petőfi Party prepared and signed the so-called "Declaration about the Fundamental Principles of the State, Social, and Economic System of Hungary and about the Ways of Overcoming the Political Crisis."[35] They asked K. P. S. Menon, India's Ambassador to Moscow who was then visiting Budapest, to convey its contents to the Soviet leaders.[36] This document reiterates the previously listed economic demands.

> 2. The country's social and economic order shall be based upon social ownership of the decisive majority of the means of production. In accordance with this, the mines, factories, banks and other large enterprises that were in state ownership on October 23, 1956 must remain in social ownership.
> 3. The land ownership rights established by the 1945 land reform shall not be interfered with, but the upper limit of private ownership of land shall be determined by the area that can be cultivated by a family without regular recourse to outside labour.
> 4. The peasantry, craft industries, and all economic activity in general, must be guaranteed the right to form economic activities, on a voluntary basis, in order to secure the advantages of large scale production.
> 5. Private enterprise shall be allowed within the limits imposed by professional qualifications and planned direction of economic life. The number of persons employed by private enterprise must be restricted by law.
> 6. The freedom of workers and employees to form trade unions on a voluntary basis, and the right of trade unions to make collective agreements and to act in defense of their members' interests, must be secured by law. The peasantry, craft industries, small traders and the self-employed should also have the freedom to form organizations appropriate for defending their interests.
> 7. The workers of state enterprises must be guaranteed in law the right to participate in the management of their enterprises through the workers' councils, and also the right to share in the material success of the enterprises' operations.

> 8. Compensation for economic damages resulting from the illegalities committed in the past must not lead to the restoration of the former property and income of those who suffered losses, and especially not to any possibility for the restoration of exploitation....

Goals 3 to 8 were not included in the new HSWP party platform. The Petőfi Party ceased to exist in January 1960.[37]

The **Social Democratic Party** (*SZDP, Szociáldemokrata Párt*) was reconstituted on October 30th in the editorial offices of the *Népszava (People's Voice)*, the party's paper.[38] The Party's past president, Anna Kéthly, was reelected as president.[39] Gyula Kelemen, the Party's Secretary General, summarized the recent past of the Party as "hundreds of our leaders were imprisoned, and thousands were deported."[40] The following day the provisional leadership of the party was elected.[41] Initial emphasis was on party reorganization and due to the brief time period of legal existence no platform was published. The work on the platform was postponed for after the Socialist International meeting in Vienna, which was to begin on November 1, where the party president and deputy-secretary travelled to, to represent the Hungarian party.

Anna Kéthly, in her editorial on the front page of the November 1 issue of *Népszava* wrote: "we must protect the factories, mines and land as those must remain in the people's hand."[42] In an article that appeared on November 2nd, Gyula Kelemen called on the Party's peasant members to "save their strength for the fight to make it impossible to return the large estates."[43]

Most party announcements dealt with reorganizing the Party rather than its program of action. The latter were just hinted at. A poster published by the Party's Heves County branch emphasized typical social democratic goals:[44]

> Unions should be true representatives of workers.
> Abolition of the unfair and exploitative piece-work wage systems and bonus systems.
> Raising of wages to the extent it is bearable by the country and immediate reevaluation of low wages.
> We demand a market based small industry (service) and market based retail trade.

The same county's party cell's November 1 stated in a proclamation that "our party's goal continues to be the raising of the living standard of the whole working population." The poster also called for "the protection of peasant interests; peasants who got land grants should not suffer, but with reasonably rational production techniques, while serving the whole nation's interests, should serve their own."[45] Another of the Party's posters stated that "the Party welcomes the service workers and will fight for the independent functioning of the service industry."[46]

The Party's president, Anna Kéthly, did not return from the Vienna meeting to Budapest after the second Soviet invasion. The Party ceased functioning; several leaders left Hungary; some left-wing members and union leaders eventually joined the Kádár regime, and were rewarded with high positions.

From the Hungarian Workers' Party to the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party

On Oct. 24th the HWP felt that it could control the events. Imre Nagy in a radio address stated that the "peacefully demonstrating Hungarian youth were misled by enemies.... The Hungarian government will not allow itself to be pushed off the road of democratization, which is in the interest of the Hungarian population, a program discussed and agreed upon with a large segment of the public."[47] But next day, on the 25th, Nagy was less confrontational. In his radio address he talked of "the public's despair over the serious political and economic mistakes... Shortly after the restoration of peace, parliament will meet. I will submit a detailed and all-encompassing reform plan which will cover all important questions..."[48] On the 26th the radio anchor reading from the *Szabad Nép (Free People,* the Party's paper*)* reported the emergence of a new party leadership under János Kádár, Ferenc Donáth and Gyula Kállai, all previously imprisoned by the Rákosi regime.[49]

Nagy, in his previously mentioned radio address, on the October 28th stated, that

> ...we wish to solve the old and justified demands of workers to the their satisfaction; amongst them the issue of wages and norms, the raising of the lowest bracket of the minimum wages and lowest pensions by calculating them based on years worked, and raising the family subsidies. To solve the extremely

> grave apartment shortage, the Government will support to the utmost state, cooperative and private construction of buildings. The government, to solve the desperate apartment shortage will support state, cooperative and private construction.[50]
>
> The government applauds the workers' initiatives of expanding a factory-based democracy and approves the formation of workers' councils.
>
> The government will immediately end the illegalities committed while farming agricultural cooperatives, ... [and] will develop a plan to increase agricultural productivity, to increase production by agricultural cooperatives and by individual farmers,... The government will put an end to the serious illegalities which were committed in the name of agricultural cooperatives.[51]

The New York Times succinctly evaluated the events and statements as "Politically, Premier Imre Nagy's concessions amount to nothing less than surrender to the will of the people. He and his Cabinet Ministers have now promised free elections and the end of the one-party dictatorship. They have announced the end of the hated collective farm system."[52]

On October 30th Hungarian radio announced that the reorganization of The Hungarian Workers' Party and its reemergence as the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (*HSWP, Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt*) on November 1. János Kádár's speech on the radio that day indicated that this was just another political party campaigning to achieve electoral victory. He stated the Party's goal as "Workers, peasants and intellectuals! The new Party, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, is prepared to do its share in fighting for the consolidation of independence and democracy.... We turn to the newly-formed democratic parties — first of all... to the Social Democratic Party — with the request that they help consolidate the government and thereby overcome the danger of menacing countries and intervention from abroad...."[53]

On November 4th, in an open letter read on the radio, the formation of the new Kádár-led government was announced.[54] This new government was called the Hungarian Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Government (*Magyar Forradalmi Munkás-Paraszt Kormány*). Its economic platform was summarized on a poster as:

> 2. The government program is to protect our popular people's democracy and socialist system from all attacks. The protection

of our socialist achievements, and the continued movement on the socialist path.
6. The rapid and significant raising of the living standards of the employees- especially of the workers. More apartments for workers. We must make it possible for factories and companies to build apartments for their workers and employees.
7. The adjustment of the five-year plan, charging the economic leaders to take into consideration the country's economic conditions in order to raise the living standard of the population as fast as possible.
8. The termination of bureaucracy and the spreading of democracy for the employees.
9. Worker management must be built on broad based democracy in factories, on shop floors and in enterprises
10. The development of agricultural production, the termination of compulsory delivery systems, and provision of aid to individual peasants.
The government will terminate all illegalities that were committed during forced collectivization.
12. Support of small industry and retail trade.

In this poster Kádár explained the need for his new government by blaming "the weakness of the Imre Nagy government and the counter-revolutionaries whose increasing influence threatened our socialist achievements, people's democracy, the worker-peasant power and the existence of our nation."[55]

On another poster also dated November 4th, a more detailed explanation was given for the takeover by the new government. In addition to Nagy's weakness it states that "on the October 23rd a popular movement began whose noble goal was to correct the crimes committed by Rákosi and his cronies against the party and the public...."[56]

The HSWP's program did not go as far as the Nagy government's program. It did not talk of wage and pension reform or about changes in the family support system.

Other political organizations or parties

The book, *1956 and the Political Parties*, edited by István Vida, reported that documents indicated that 31 parties, or party-like organizations or attempts to organize parties existed during this period.[57] These were:

1. Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (*Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt*),
2. Hungarian Social-democratic Party (*Magyar Szociáldemokrata Párt*),
3. Smallholders Party (*Független Kisgazdapárt*),
4. Petőfi Party – National Peasant Party (*Petőfi Párt - Nemzeti Parasztpárt*),
5. Hungarian Revolutionary Youth Party (*Magyar Forradalmi Ifjúsági Párt*),
6. Democratic Popular Party (*Demokrata Néppárt*),
7. Christian Democratic Party (*Keresztény Demokrata Párt*),
8. Catholic Popular Party (*Katolikus Néppárt*),
9. Christian Hungarian Party (*Keresztény Magyar Párt*),
10. Christian Front (*Keresztény Front*),
11. Hungarian Freedom Party (*Magyar Szabadság Párt*),
12. Hungarian Independence Party (*Magyar Függetlenségi Párt*),
13. Party of Justice (*Igazság Párt*),
14. Hungarian Democratic Union (*Magyar Demokratikus Unió*),
15. National Revolutionary Party (*Nemzeti Forradalmi Párt*),
16. National Organization of the Unaffiliated (*Pártonkívüliek Országos Blokkja*),
17. Christian National Party (*Keresztény Nemzeti Párt*),
18. Hungarian Life Party (*Magyar Élet Pártja*),
19. Hungarian Popular Party (*Magyar Néppárt*),
20. Hungarian Radical Party (*Magyar Radikális Párt*),
21. Party of the Nation's Defenders (*Honvédők Pártja*),
22. Christian Popular Party (*Keresztény Néppárt*),
23. Christian Socialist Party (*Keresztény Szocialista Párt*),
24. Christian Democratic Popular Party (*Keresztény Demokrata Néppárt*),
25. Party of Hungarian Unity (*Magyar Egység Párt*),
26. National Uprising Party (*Nemzeti Felkelés Pártja*),
27. Hungarian Christian National Party (*Magyar Keresztény Nemzeti Párt*),
28. National Radical Party (*Nemzeti Radikális Párt*),
29. National Camp-Independent Hungarian Socialist Party Movement (*Nemzeti Tábor-Független Magyar Szocialista Pártmozgalom*),
30. Bourgeois Democratic Party (*Polgári Demokrata Párt*).
31. Arrow Cross Party (*Nyilaskeresztes Párt*),

According to Robert Huckshorn's definition "[A] political party is an autonomous group of citizens having the purpose of making nominations and contesting elections in hope of gaining control over govern-

mental power through the capture of public offices and the organization of the government."[58] To act as a party, a party must register its name, elect temporary party officials and have a constitution or by-laws. Several of the above listed parties had only one or two members (13-16), some showed no activity (17-20); thus were not real political parties. Others organizations never got off the ground (21-31). Of the 31 parties, therefore, only the first twelve would meet the definition of a functioning political party. These were the: 1. the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, 2. the Hungarian Social-Democratic Party, 3. the Smallholders' Party, 4. the Petőfi Party, 5. the Hungarian Revolutionary Youth Party, 6. the Democratic Popular Party, 7. the Christian Democratic Party, 8. the Catholic Popular Party, 9. the Christian Hungarian Party, 10. the Christian Front, 11. the Hungarian Freedom Party, and 12. the Hungarian Independence Party.

The economic platforms of the four coalition parties have been discussed above. The platforms of the other eight parties are summarized below.

The economic goals or platforms of the other parties

The economic goals listed on the poster announcing the formation of the **Hungarian Revolutionary Youth Party**[59] stated:

> 3. We want to develop an economic and political system that will eliminate the depressive feelings stemming from the uncertainties of tomorrow, and at the same time eliminate the country's economic uncertainty....
> 5. We want to fight for the rights of workers so that they can become the owners of factories and with that their standard of living will rise commensurate with increased production.
> 6. We will protect the rights of the peasants gained in the revolution.
> 7. We want to provide to the head of households a wage that allows him for carefree provision for his family and permits him to satisfy cultural and other demands.
> 8. We support the initiatives of Hungarian small industry, retail trade.
> 9. We will soon offer solutions to solve the housing crisis....

> 11. We will protect the achievements of the revolution with all our might.

On another poster this Party demanded "the raising of the standard of living and the upholding of the achievements of the revolution."[60]

Late in the evening of November 1, Dénes Farkas announced on radio the reorganization and the platform of the **Democratic Popular Party.** He positioned the party as an opposition party, by stating "that the party's program is its old program. We will support the government in maintaining order, protecting property and life.... As in the past we are not willing to participate in any coalition."[61] The old party platform in 1945 had been based on maintaining private property, though "supported the nationalization of those industries that are for the public good."[62]

In the party's application for permission to function three of the stated party goals are economic, namely:[63]

> 2. We believe that there is a unique Hungarian democratic socialism. We want to protect the socialist achievements of our nation, primarily the land reform, including the break up of church property; and the public ownership of banks and other large enterprises.
> 3. We support private initiatives limited only by public goals, especially in small scale manufacturing, in retail trade and service industries.
> 4. We support independent unions and the right to strike.

Six of the 16-point program of the **Christian Democratic Party** dealt with economic issues.[64] These were:

> 5. Immediate acceptance of foreign economic aid and grants without any economic and political preconditions....
> 9. Our whole economic policy must be reorganized with the help of the revolutionary workers, youth, peasants, service employees and intelligentsia to meet their interests. A fair tax system must be developed, so that the tax burden falls equitably on small and large economic units. Tax rates must be public.
> All national – natural and intellectual – treasures must be used only to serve Hungarian national interests. (uranium, bauxite)
> Immediate payment of the unfairly withdrawn pensions, reevaluation of the pension system, and compensation for those whose pensions were denied. Reevaluation of new pensions....

> 11. Land-reform for the working peasants, the right to form cooperatives voluntarily; aiding of the individual peasants by a fair tax system and long-term credit. The distribution of collectively held agricultural machinery in accordance with the decisions of the peasants....
> 13. Independent unions.... Placing the publicly held factories and wholesale outlets in the hand of workers' councils.
> 14. The return of the nationalized small-scale manufacturing and retail trade within reason, or as decided by the revolutionary unit.
> 15. Compensation for all who suffered unfair and illegal economic disadvantages between 1945 and 1956.

In another document, the Party emphasized that "we are against the return of large property, but we want land reform, as the current situation is chaotic and unfair to the Hungarian peasants. We want private property! End to state-capitalism. Factories should be run by workers' councils."[65]

On the evening news on November 1, the radio announced the formation of the **Catholic Popular Party**.[66] This party also saw itself as an opposition party which became clear when the party program was read on the radio. The statement said, "we can not work together with the government,... until the compromised members of the cabinet are exposed. We insist on maintaining the social achievements of the post 1945 period, in fact we demand their expansion."[67]

The Christian Hungarian Party published its platform on November 1.[68] Its economic demands were:

> 3. No government interference in agriculture, industry and trade. Abolishing all import and export duties and following the example of Switzerland of free economic life with abolishing of currency regulations.
> 4. Immediate return of all one family houses.
> 5. The return to previous owners of all small- and medium sized trading companies and land up to 50 *hold*s (28.76 hectares or 71.05 acres)[69] from reserve land.
> 6. Creation of a wage level for men so women would not be required to leave the family hearth.
> 7. Renting those factories, not using domestic raw materials or other preconditions for profitability, to foreigners. The pay scale should match that of the home country. 20% of the output

> can be sold to the Hungarian state at cost and no more than 10% of employees may be foreigners.
> 8. All state owned enterprises should be converted to stock companies, with 75% of the shares held by employees, and 25% by the state.
> 9. The introduction of the maximum 40 hour work week, with 36 hours in mining. The minimum wages should be Ft. 1,500.
> 10. Both agriculture, and retail trade and small scale industry should have access to loans with 20 year repayment schedule; and the establishment of savings banks in villages to provide these loans.
> 11. A one year moratorium on all loans.
> 12. 80% of construction projects by the state should be building apartments, where priority should be given to young couples and homeless people.
> 13. The abolition of exploitative system of norms, and work competition.

The leaders of the **Christian Front** were released from prison in October 30, 1956, and immediately began organizing.[70] The poster announcing the formation of the Party emphasizes that "our leaders were released from prison only 24 hours ago," and that they see the Party as an umbrella organization for all Christian parties, "there can be only one Christian Party, we do not commit to supporting individuals, but to the success of our program."[71] Their program dealt with political reorganization of the country. They advocated the restoration of the monarchy and a two chamber parliament. From this statement it is clear that this Party also saw itself as an opposition party. Its leaders called for a "class-free society,... for a Christian socialist state."[72] To achieve their goal of a "true Christian classless society they did not want to reverse the achievements of socialism, approved of previous distribution of land, the nationalization of factories, banks and mines." They advocated limited return to private property."[73]

The **Hungarian Freedom Party** summarized its goals in its motto "the dual motivators in the world are family and property."[74] Its demands included:

> The imposed industrialization changed the composition of employment. The majority of the population is still agricultural, and this is the backbone of the nation.

> Back to land. Let the population love the land as before. We will not let the achievements of the land reform be destroyed.... We will help individual peasants, by providing cheap loans to rebuild destroyed buildings and machinery. Special attention will be paid to restocking the animal herds.
> We understand the goals of cooperatives.... There is no need for those money losing cooperatives that must be supported by public financing.
> Hungarian industry must be proud of its past.... The opening of the borders mean strong competition, which can be met by cheaper and better consumer goods.
> Our workers should be the real owners of the factories, should receive parts of the profits.... Norms should be abolished,... They should have the right to organize freely.
> Small scale industry was an important pillar of the nation's independence, ...
> We want to support individual initiatives,...
> We want to restore the chambers of commerce.
> We will abolish the unfair premium reward system, which was most often given to undeserving individuals. Satisfactory wage system will result in satisfactory work. As above, we emphasize that workers must receive a share of profits above his wages.
> We mean to provide healthcare for all.
> We must create an old-age pension system worthy of a civilized nation.

The **Hungarian Independence Party**'s application for formation referred to the Party's 1947 platform. Two economic concerns were listed in their platform of six issues:[75] The "Sanctity of private property," and the "Reduction of the tax burden to a level where it is sufficient to support the public infrastructure and is bearable for an individual."

With the second entry of the Russian army on November 4th the various political parties ceased their activities.

The January 7, 1957 issue of *The New York Times* reported, based on a Hungarian radio broadcast, "...that the Government intends to conduct talks with various factions of public life, whether members of parties or not, who are willing to fight against the counter-revolution and for the maintenance of social achievements...."[76] Over a month later, *The New York Times* again reported, "based on a 'usually reliable' source", of Kádár "... having forecast the "liquidation" of the Social Democratic Party" in a speech made at Újpest on February 9, 1957.[77] Kádár "also

predicted that negotiations would begin with two other non-Communist parties, the Smallholders' and Petőfi Parties, at an unspecified future date, to broaden the present all-Communist Government."[78] The promised multi-party talks never took place.

Conclusions

Of the twelve political parties active during the Revolution only four — the Hungarian Revolutionary Youth Party, the Christian Democratic Party, the Christian Front, and the Christian Hungarian Party — were new parties, all the others had their start in the post-1945 period or even before. The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party was a new party in name only, it was the Hungarian Workers' Party reorganized under a new name. Only two parties, the Social Democrats and the Smallholders', had existed before the war. The Peasant Party had been established before the war, but it did not function during it. Between 1948 and 1956 only eight years had passed, so the parties and their programs were still alive in the public's mind. Based on the historic roles the parties played, Vida placed the parties on the left to right spectrum as in the following Table 5.[78]

Table 5. Political Parties in 1956

Left	**Centre**	**Right**
HSWP (1)	Smallholders (3)	Catholic Popular (8)
Social Democrats (2)	Petőfi (4)	Christian Hungarian (9)
		Christian Front (10)
	Democratic Popular (6)	
		Hungarian Freedom (11)
	Hungarian Revolutionary Youth (5)	
	Christian Democratic (7)	
		Hungarian Independence (12)

However, an examination of these parties' the economic platforms shows that their views were more homogenous.

Due to the short time that the parties were allowed to function openly, they did not have time to develop comprehensive platforms. With the exception of the Hungarian Independence Party, all parties directly or indirectly mentioned the maintenance of the land reform, public owner-

ship of large industries and the return to some form of private ownership in the service and retail industries and in agriculture. The Nagy Government's program did not mention land reform and nationalization of industry and banking, as these were cornerstones for building socialism. Only the Christian Hungarian Party mentioned converting state ownership into employee ownership of the factories through stock conversions.

According to Anthony Downs' rational-efficient political party model, each party's political activities are centred "around the parties' electoral activities, at the expense of virtually all other functions" as winning elections is the goal of each party. "Voters also act rationally, using the information provided by the party candidates to make selections that will benefit them personally."[79] The promise of improving the standard of living is always central to all political parties. As the tables 3 and 4 show the majority of Hungarians lived near poverty. The slight increase in real wages from 1954 was still below what was necessary to support a family.

To improve the standard of living, the members of the coalition government, the Revolutionary Youth Party and the Christian Hungarian Party promised to raise wages, and/or to raise minimum wages. Only the Social Democrats, the Petőfi Party, the Christian Hungarian Party and the Hungarian Freedom Party promised to abolish the hated norm system. This is interesting as all published pre-revolutionary demands, and the program of the Nagy Government, included the demand to abolish this payment scheme. Until October 1956, 67% of workers were paid on piece work, but from November on, nearly all enterprises switched to paying hourly wages.[80] Worker management and profit sharing was mentioned by the Petőfi Party, the Christian Democratic Party, the Hungarian Freedom Party, Hungarian Revolutionary Youth Party, Christian Hungarian Party, the Smallholders and the HSWP. (Worker management and profit sharing were to be achieved through the Worker Councils. The councils were terminated by the Kádár regime on November 11, 1957.)[81] Another tool to strengthen workers' role in the economy was the support independent unions, and was promised by the Social Democrats, Smallholders, Democratic Popular Party, Christian Democratic and Hungarian Freedom Parties. The expansion of the health-care and social insurance system was promised by the Petőfi Party — agricultural workers and peasants had been excluded from the then existing system — specifically mentioning their constituent base, while the Hungarian Freedom Party talked of expanding coverage to all.

Another issue, the need to increase housing construction, was raised by several groups before the revolution and by the Nagy government, but was mentioned only in the platform of the HSWP, Hungarian Revolutionary Youth and Christian Hungarian parties.

To attract past and new members they most frequently listed the most common complaints of Hungarians, thus party platforms on the surface were similar.

Bibó explained the support for these similar programs the best:

> We must not forget that the aversion for an orthodox capitalist, reactionary, anti-communist restoration is the concern not only of the Soviet Union and the communists, but also of the young people, workers, and soldiers who carried out the revolution and shed their blood for its victory. The majority of them were not communists but the great majority consider themselves socialists. It is morally inadmissible and also, from the standpoint of Hungarian internal politics, impossible, that the forces of reaction should profit, thanks to the votes of the older generation, from the freedom bought by the blood of young revolutionaries.[82]

Other possible explanations for the similarity of the platforms are the facts that a., the majority of the political actors spent time in Rákosi's prisons and were probably leery of proposing radical departures from existing socialist norms lest they would get into trouble for doing so; b., the pre- and post 1945 and 1947 elections were fresh in their memories; c., they probably did not know how much they could trust the Nagy government — after all martial law had been imposed on October 24th, and the "uprising" was labelled "counter-revolutionary" until October 28th; so to the participants the change in terminology to "revolution" and the opportunity to organize came suddenly and they wanted to proceed with caution. This argument is supported by statements of the Christian Front, Catholic Popular and Democratic Popular Parties, which declared themselves "opposition" parties — yet they proposed solutions similar to those called for by the non-opposition parties.

Postscript: economic changes brought about by the Revolution

1957 was a year of political repression and the beginning of a less rigid economic system. To prevent the repeat of the uprising, the Kádár regime

introduced economic changes to improve the standard of living thereby to assuage popular discontent. The new regime appointed an Economic Committee (*Gazdasági Bizottság*), a group of reform-minded experts, to propose ways of revising Hungary's economic system. The committee's report marked the first step on Hungary's road to economic reform. Of the many changes introduced, only list a few will be listed. The introduction of hourly wages in November, mentioned above, was not reversed.[83] In 1957 companies were allowed to experiment with various wage schemes. A plan was drawn up to lease up to 6% of small retail outlets and restaurants to private individuals. To encourage private ownership in the service sector, tax rates were lowered.[84] The hated obligatory delivery system for peasants, which was initially abolished by the Nagy government, was never re-instituted. Over 60% of the peasants left the cooperatives during the revolution and many started or restarted their private farms. In 1957, Kádár to appease the party hardliners — both at home and in Moscow — restarted the collectivization of agriculture, but allowed peasants to keep some land private. In 1957 social insurance was extended to members of agricultural cooperatives.[85]

The result of all the changes was that between 1957 and 1960 consumption grew more rapidly than national income. Per capita real income was 50 percent higher in 1960 than it had been in 1950. (According to the University of Groningen data the Hungarian per capita GDP in 1960 was $3,649, a 47% increase compared to the per capita GDP of $2,480 in 1950.)

Hungary began to make its own goulash (communism), though for the time being there was little meat in the stew.

NOTES

A much shorter version of this paper was read at a conference on the Hungarian Revolution held at the University of Ottawa in October of 2006.

[1] Robert Blumstock, "Public Opinion in Hungary" in *Public Opinion in European Socialist Systems*, ed. Walter D. Connor and Zvi Gittelman (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977), 136-137.

[2] http://www.ggdc.net/maddison/ [accessed June 1, 2005.] The Geary Khamis PPPs is an aggregation method in which category "international prices" (reflecting relative category values) and country purchasing power parities (PP-

Ps), (depicting relative country price levels) are estimated simultaneously from a system of linear equations. http://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=5528 [accessed June 1, 2005.]

[3] Iván Pető and Sándor Szakács, *A hazai gazdaság négy évtizedének története 1945–1985. 1. Az újjáépítés és a tervutasításos irányítás időszaka* [Four decades of economic history of our country, 1945-1985. 1. The period of rebuilding and economic planning] (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1985), 217.

4 Iván T. Berend, *A szocialista gazdaság fejlödése Magyarországon, 1945-1975*, [The development of the socialist economy in Hungary 1945-1975] (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1979), 104.

[5] Pető and Szakács, *A hazai gazdaság*, 232.

[6] *The Washington Post and Times Herald*, Aug. 5, 1956, p. A1.

[7] László Rajk (1909-1949), minister of the interior, was executed as a "Titoist Fascist" on October 15, 1949.

[8] The leaders of the 1848 War of Independence against Habsburg rule were executed on October 6, 1849.

[9] Imre Nagy (1896 – 1958) served as Prime Minister from 1953-1955, during which he introduced the "New Course", a more liberal economic policy. Nagy was forced to resign in April, 1955 and was expelled from the Communist Party in December of the same year by hardline communists.

[10] *The Washington Post and Times Herald*, Oct 15, 1956. p. 7

[11] Lajos Izsák, József Szabó and Róbert Szabó, eds., *1956 plakátjai és röplapjai* [The posters and flyers of 1956] (Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 1991), 16. and *The United Nations Report of the Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary* (New York 1957), at http://mek.oszk.hu/01200/01274/01274.pdf, 127 [accessed February 1, 2005.]

[12] http://mek.oszk.hu/01200/01274/01274.pdf, 129 [accessed February 1, 2005.]

[13] Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne and János M. Rainer, eds., *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution, a History in Documents* (Budapest, CEU Press, 2002), 178.

[14] László Varga, *A forradalom hangja* [The Voice of the Revolution] (Budapest: Századvég Kiadó-Nyilvánosság Klub, 1989), 79.

[15] Lajos Izsák, József Szabó, and Róbert Szabó, eds., *1956 vidéki sajtója* [The press from the countryside in 1956] (Budapest: Korona Kiadó, 1996), 370; and http://mek.oszk.hu/01200/01274/01274.pdf, 142 [accessed February 1, 2006.]

[16] A special general meeting to discuss the Hungarian issue was called on November 4, 1956. This and the general meeting's 11th session in November and December passed several resolutions which called on the Soviet Union to withdraw its troops, and that the Kádár government receive the UN Secretary General and other UN observers; but the Hungarian government rejected this

proposal. The UN created a special committee on January 10, 1957 to draw up a report on the chronology and to evaluate the Hungarian events based on the accounts of those who had participated in the revolution and who had subsequently fled to the West, and on other available sources. The Committee's members were from Australia, Ceylon, Denmark, Tunisia and Uruguay. The report was finished in June 1957. The special general meeting of September, 1957 passed the report with majority. The resolutions related to Hungary could never be enforced, so the Hungarian issue was placed on the agenda of the UN general meeting every year until 1962.

Also: http://hungaria.org/1956/index.php?projectid=2&menuid=14 [accessed May 1, 2006.] and *The New York Times*, Nov. 4, 1956. p. 192, and January 2, 1957, p. 10.

On April 4, 1960 partial amnesty was granted in Hungary. In September of that year, Kádár traveled with Khrushchev to New York, and addressed the UN on October 3rd. The US wanted complete amnesty of the political prisoners before it would ease its pressure on Hungary. At the 8th Party Congress, in November 1962, Kádár announced that 95 percent of the political prisoners had already been released and on December 20, 1962, the "Hungarian question" was removed from the UN's agenda. (Felkay, Andrew, *Hungary and the USSR, 1956-1988: Kadar's Political Leadership*, Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1989.)

[17] http://mek.oszk.hu/01200/01274/01274.pdf, 131 [accessed February 1, 2006.]

[18] Varga. *A forradalom hangja,* 132

[19] *Ibid.*, 226

[20] *Ibid.*, 284 and Izsák, *1956 plakátjai és röplapjai,* 189.

[21] Béla Kovács was imprisoned on false charges, and then taken to the Soviet Union on February 26, 1947. He was permitted to return to Hungary on November 8, 1955. Charges against him were officially dropped on May 5, 1956.

[22] Varga, *A forradalom hangja*, 295 and Ernő Nagy, ed., *1956 Sajtója*, [The press from 1956] (Budapest: Tudósitások Kiadó, 1989), (*Magyar Nemzet*, Nov. 1; *Kis Ujság*, Nov. 1; *Magyar Ifjúság*, Nov. 1. p. 2.)

[23] Izsák, *1956 plakátjai és röplapjai*, 227

[24] István Vida, ed., *1956 és a politikai pártok, Politikai pártok az 1956-os forradalomban, 1956. október 23 – November 4*, [1956 and the political parties: Political parties in the 1956 revolution, October 23 and November 4, 1956] (Budapest: MTA Jelenkor-kutató Bizottság, 1998), 313.

[25] Vida, *1956 és a politikai pártok,* 338.

[26] Nagy, *1956 Sajtója* [n.p.] interview in Magyar Szabadság, 3.

[27] Tivadar Pártay, "1956-ban a Kisgazdapárt nem készitett pártprogramot, nem volt idönk erre" [In 1956 the Smallholders' Party did not prepare a

platform, we did not have time for it] in *Pártok 1956*, ed. Zsuzsanna Körösi, Péter Pál Tóth (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1997), 43.

[28] Ferenc S. Szabó, "Mindent az idő rövidsége határozott meg," in *Pártok 1956*, ed. Körösi, 146.

[29] Varga, *A forradalom hangja*, 291.

[30] *Ibid.*, 478-480.

[31] *Ibid.*, 463.

[32] Izsák, ed., *1956 vidéki sajtója*, 488.

[33] Sándor Kopácsi, *In the Name of the* Working Class (NY: Grove Press, 1986), 187; see also Johanna Granville, "István Bibó After 1956," http://-www.csseo.org/Papers/paperGranville.rtf [accessed Jan. 2, 2006.]; also in *The New York Times*, 1956, November 12, p. 1.

[34] Bill Lomax, ed., *Hungarian Workers' Councils in 1956 (*Boulder, CO.: Social Science Monographs; Highland Lakes, N.J.: Atlantic Research and Publications [New York]: Distributed by Columbia U. Press, 1990), 210-211.

[35] Granville, *"István Bibó After 1956", cit.* and Lajos Izsák, "Az 1956-os forradalom pártjai és programjaik" [The parties and their programs in the 1956 revolution] in *Múltunk* (1992, 2-3): 109.

[36] Lomax, *Hungarian Workers' Councils in 1956,* 223. Also see Sándor Kelemen, "Mindenki munkát kért, szerettek volna valamit csinálni" [Everybody asked for work, they all wanted to do something], in *Pártok 1956*, 131.

[37] Vida, *1956 és a politikai pártok,* 372.

[38] Varga, *A forradalom hangja,* 241.

[39] Anna Kéthly (1889–1976), a social democratic leader, opposed the merger of the Social-Democratic Party and the Communist Party in 1948, resulting in being placed under house arrest for two years, and then imprisoned in a show trial in 1954. She was released in April 1956.

[40] Gyula Kelemen (1897–1973) was also arrested on trumped-up charges and sentenced to life imprisonment in 1948. He was released in June 1956. Varga, *A Forradalom hangja*, 363.

[41] Izsák, *1956 plakátjai és röplapjai*, 220.

[42] Nagy, *1956 Sajtója*, 1956. November 1. *Népszava.*

[43] Péter Benkő, A szociáldemokrácia -56ban, [Social-democracy in 56], in *Múltunk* [Our Past] (1990, 3): 143-160.

[44] Izsák, *1956 plakátjai és röplapjai*, 439.

[45] *Ibid.*, 440.

[46] *Ibid.*, 244.

[47] Varga, *A forradalom hangja,* 32.

[48] *Ibid.*, 72, and Izsák, *1956 plakátjai és röplapjai*, 44.

[49] Varga, *A forradalom hangja*, 79.

[50] New housing construction was down in 1956 relative to 1955, especially in Budapest. It would be up considerably in 1957. See Iván Pető and Sándor Szakács, *A hazai gazdaság négy évtizedének története 1945–1985*, 315.

[51] Varga, *A forradalom hangja,* 132.

[52] *The New York Times*, 1956, Oct. 31. p. 32.

[53] Varga, *A forradalom hangja*, 371 and Izsák (ed.), *1956 plakátjai és röplapjai*, 259.

[54] Varga, *A forradalom hangja*, 489.

[55] Izsák, *1956 plakátjai és röplapjai*, 274.

[56] *Ibid.*, 276-277.

[57] Vida, *1956 és a politikai pártok,* 521.

[58] Robert Huckshorn, *Political Parties in America* (Monterey, Ca.: Brooks/Cole, 1984), 10. at http://www.apsanet.org/content_5221.cfm [accessed February 12, 2006].

[59] Izsák, *1956 plakátjai és röplapjai,* 192.

[60] *Ibid.*, 257.

[61] Varga, *A forradalom hangja*, 374.

[62] See Susan Glanz, "Economic Platforms of the Various Political Parties in the Elections of 1945," in Hungary in the Age of Total War, 1938-1948, ed. Nándor Dreisziger (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1998), 169-184.

[63] Vida ,*1956 és a politikai pártok,* 472.

[64] *Ibid.*, 451.

[65] *Ibid.*, 459.

[66] Varga, *A forradalom hangja*, 359.

[67] *Ibid.*, 362-363.

[68] Vida, *1956 és a politikai pártok*, 462.

[69] Calculations based on http://www.unc.edu/~rowlett/units/dictH.html [accessed January 13, 2006].

[70] Vida, *1956 és a politikai pártok.* 453, and Izsák, *1956 plakátjai és röplapjai*, 212.

[71] Izsák, *1956 plakátjai és röplapjai*, 230.

[72] Vida, *1956 és a politikai pártok.* 479.

[73] Izsák, "Az 1956-os forradalom pártjai és programjaik," 121.

[74] Vida, *1956 és a politikai pártok.* 516.

[75] *Ibid.*, 509.

[76] *The New York Times*, 1957, January 7, p. 3. Also see Vince Vörös' interview http://server2001.rev.hu/oha/oha_document.asp?id=326&order=1 [accessed Sep. 1, 2006.]

[77] *The New York Times*, 1957, February 14, p. 8.

[78] Vida, *1956 és a politikai pártok,* 532.

[79] http://www.apsanet.org/content_5221.cfm [accessed March 1, 2006.]

[80] Iván T. Berend, *Gazdasági Útkeresés 1956-1965* [Looking for the road of economic solutions, 1956-65] (Budapest: Magvető Kiadó, 1983), 79.

[81] http://www.rev.hu/sulinet56/online/szerviz/kronolog/sulikro5.htm [accessed January 12, 2006]

[82] Lomax, *Hungarian Workers' Councils in 1956,* 208.

[83] Berend, *Gazdasági Útkeresés,* 79.

[84] *Ibid.,* 89 and http://www.tozsdesztori.hu/idorend.pdf [accessed March 1, 2006.]

[85] http://mek.oszk.hu/02100/02185/html/231.html [accessed January 12, 2006.]

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The Revolution and Industrial Workers: the Disintegration and Reconstruction of Socialism, 1953-1958

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Just over three weeks after the arrival of Soviet troops in Budapest to remove the revolutionary government of Imre Nagy in November 1956, the party newspaper for the industrial county of Komárom-Esztergom, announced to local miners that "the workers' councils (the revolutionary organs in the factories) had been given responsibility for the economic life of the country." In negotiations with the new Soviet-imposed government of János Kádár, the authorities signalled a willingness to make marked concessions the demands of miners, a key group within the workforce of the county. The "restoration of certain old privileges" like "the annual coal entitlement, rent-free accommodation and lighting, the reintegration of factories that had belonged to the mining enterprises with the mines" and "an expansion in family house-building" featured on the agenda of such discussions.[1] Talk of such concessions occurred against the background of a miners' strike that supported the political goals of the Revolution and which paralysed the Hungarian economy. In Tatabánya, the centre of the largest of the county's two coal fields, the Revolution had been ignited by a combination of a sympathy strike of the city's bus drivers with the demonstrators in Budapest and a major demonstration led by younger miners. While the local party in the city and the mines did not collapse to the same extent as in the rest of the country, the implosion of the regime at national level allowed the demonstrators to seize control of the mines locally, set up anti-communist workers' councils, and effectively organize a strike in support of the political demands of the Revolution. Though they returned to work for three days in early November, believing the political demands of the Revolution to have been accomplished, the Soviet invasion provoked a protracted miners' strike,

which dragged on for a full two months, causing coal shortages that closed schools and undermined medical services into early 1957.[2]

The targeted use of repression was at least as central to breaking the strike in the coal fields, as was the promise of concessions. Yet, repression often proved to be counter-productive; in Tatabánya the local police were forced to concede that the operations of the reconstructed state security agencies throughout December had not only provoked open demonstrations, but had in fact bolstered support for the strike.[3] Where local state security forces intervened to arrest the organizers of demonstrations and strikes it was forced to legitimate their actions. When in December, one attempt to arrest such organizers provoked an explosion of armed conflict in one of the city's neighbourhoods, the party newspaper found it necessary to argue that the members of the new state security agencies were ordinary mine-workers dedicated to meet the demands of the "people" who "wanted to live in peace and quiet".[4] As the post-revolutionary regime was consolidated, it was forced to build on the fiction that no "honest" worker had anything to fear from repression; only groups of "counter-revolutionary" agitators. The myth, projected by the Kádár regime, of the events of late 1956 as a "counter-revolution", in which anti-socialist agitators, "reactionaries" and "agents of imperialism" had stirred up discontent in order to overthrow socialism, had its local counterpart.[5] In Tatabánya the overwhelmingly working-class character of the Revolution posed problems for the "revolutionary government of workers' and peasants". Therefore the local myth of the "counter-revolution", underpinned by the most significant political trials, sought to attribute the events to the most anti-communist activists in the factories and more significantly to local professionals, who, despite holding key positions in the city's revolutionary committee, were in reality either marginal or had been unable to control the consequences of the explosion of working-class anger.[6]

While repression was far from successful as a tool for consolidating the regime, the wave of working-class anger was beaten back through other means. The fear, rather than the fact, of political retribution had encouraged many of those who joined the demonstrations in the city to leave Hungary outright. In Tatabánya's Mine No. XI, at the end of January 1957, only 60 percent of those who had been employed the previous October continued to work there; some had left for other parts of the country, others had joined the flight from Hungary.[7] Furthermore, forms of moral coercion deployed by the regime about the effects of

shortages of coal, that were products of the miners' strike, on schools, hospitals and the economy in general, proved highly effective in mobilizing those who remained.[8] These were often backed by more naked forms of blackmail — in December 1956 the county party paper warned that "if there is no coal, then Tatabánya's food provision will be in danger."[9] The failure of protest to remove the regime and intensifying economic hardship provided the central motivating factor for miners to go back to work.[10] Yet breaking the strike alone did not translate into support for the regime; a sullen mood in the mines in early 1957 masked a climate of deep-seated, but silent anger, which occasionally broke through, carried in rumours of imminent strikes and protest.[11]

The regime consolidated its authority in Tatabánya, and among the working class nationwide by following through promises of addressing directly the material grievances of workers. Most miners expected the re-imposition of socialist rule to lead directly to the return of despotic policies of plan-based mobilization in the workplace and those that had produced goods shortage and penury before the Revolution outside it. During the year following the Revolution the apparent openness of the party to working-class opinion in the city generated "surprise".[12] Measures like the large increases in wages, the initiation of a housing construction programme, and other welfare measures underpinned this at national level; while more locally, unpopular systems of remuneration at the coal-face were abolished, and certain benefits-in-kind were restored.[13] Through such measures a year after the end of the strike, party officials were able to record, displaying some surprise, a degree a cautious optimism; "it seems", commented one, "that there is trust in the party and the government".[14] This popularity was conditional and to some extent belied the fact that few accepted the official arguments about the nature of the Revolution, when questioned by propagandists about their attitudes to what had happened in 1956 while miners began referring to it by calling it the "counter-revolution", they often slipped into describing it "a revolution". Most took the stance that "you should give us an honest wage, I'm not bothered with the rest."[15]

The defeat of the Revolution and the consolidation of the Kádár regime in Tatabánya, as in other working-class communities across Hungary, presented an ambiguous picture of an event defeated through the highly selective, rather than the very widespread use of force. Moral and economic coercion played a larger role, upon which were laid substantial concessions in the workplace and the community. While this produced a

degree of popularity and support for the Kádár regime by the end of 1957, it co-existed with profound awareness of the regime's deeper illegitimacy, as government imposed through force-of-arms by the armies of a foreign power. This outcome points to the need to look at the 1956 Revolution in a new and different way. It was certainly not "the first domino", which led irreversibly to the decay, decline and collapse of state socialism thirty-three years later as many have suggested.[16] While the revival of the memory of the 1956 Revolution played a fundamental role in the events of 1989 in Hungary, because of the way it symbolized the regime's illegitimacy, in the short and medium-term its defeat led to the regime's consolidation; yet this consolidation occurred on the basis of a very different pattern of socialist governance to that which had characterised its rule during the early 1950s, and which drew lessons from the outbreak of the 1956 Revolution.[18] Given that the Kádár regime was a "post-1956" regime,[19] it is not surprising that in its dynamic of construction, consolidation, decay and collapse it embodied many of the ambiguities that were visible during the outcome of the Revolution.

The paradoxical co-existence of the stability of the Kádár regime with perceptions of its deeper political illegitimacy was enabled, in part, by the fact that the Revolution and its outcome demonstrated definitively to Hungary's anti-communist majority that the country's post-war political order was not going to be dismantled either immediately, or easily. The collapse of the country's pre-war regime, German occupation and then Soviet occupation at the end of the Second World War, created a society that was deeply divided. Fear of communist dictatorship among the conservative majority, and a parallel fear of the right among the left-wing minority polarized Hungarian society during the immediate post-war years, creating the social roots of eventual dictatorship.[20] On the political right, many believed in the inevitably of conflict among the wartime allies, and that only an effective demonstration of anti-Soviet sentiment in Hungary would bring military intervention from Britain and the United States, in the interests of "liberating" the territory from the clutches of the Red Army. During preparations for the first post-war elections in autumn 1945 in conservative regions like the north-western county of Győr-Moson local opinion held that if the country "votes for the Smallholders' Party (the main party of the centre-right — M.P.) then the Soviets will leave the country, if they vote for the Communists they'll stay forever."[21] With the creation of overt socialist dictatorship in the similarly conservative south-west of the country, growing political control led many to

believe that the new socialist regime's days were numbered, as it would be removed as the result of an imminent war between the superpowers.[22] As the dictatorship intensified its politics of confrontation and social transformation, especially through agricultural collectivization campaigns in rural areas, the belief in imminent western intervention to end socialist rule motivated explicit resistance. In villages on the north-western border in August 1950, smallholders refused to pay taxes or deliver foodstuffs to the authorities on the grounds that "the English were coming".[23] These expectations of deliverance through foreign intervention encouraged many to interpret the aggressive propaganda of western radio stations and other propaganda actions, such as the balloon campaigns, launched by similar bodies, as a promise of "liberation".[24]

In this context the defeat of the Revolution and its failure to spark foreign military intervention against the Soviets produced a feeling of hopelessness and a gradual acceptance of the relative permanence of the socialist regime. Belief in the imminence of foreign intervention was conspicuous in anti-regime rumour during 1957 by its absence.[25] The deep seated climate of resignation was expressed by an engineer in one Fejér county factory in March 1957; "only a third world war can help us, which will break out sooner or later; in the meantime it will be difficult, but afterwards the system will disappear."[26] While one immediate popular response to this "culture of defeat"[27] among anti-communists was to retreat into the domestic sphere, into alcoholism or religiosity,[28] it laid the foundations for the tacit acceptance of the reality of Kádárism by many of its opponents, particularly its rural and urban middle-class ones, and thus, their integration into the system during the 1960s.[29] While the notion of the "culture of defeat" explains many of the paradoxes of the post-1956 period among those who always opposed Hungary's post-war socialist order, as well as the behaviour of those left-wing intellectuals, who initially supported socialism, but turned to Imre Nagy and notions of a reformed socialism in the mid-1950s, it does not explain dominant working-class attitudes and patterns of behaviour. Hungary's industrial workers were not homogeneous politically to be sure, but as the case of Tatabánya shows, their awareness of the illegitimacy of the Kádár regime, co-existed with an extraordinary popularity among many that was gained at a very early date. By 1958, the government's popularity was clearly discernible among workers in a number of different sectors and geographical locations.[30] This is especially surprising given the extensive participation of workers in the events of the Revolution. This, in turn,

points to the need to consider the role of workers in the Revolution in greater depth, in order to explain their behaviour afterwards and thus tease out the nature of the relationship between the socialist state and working class in the Hungarian context.

Despite the speedy consolidation of the Kádár regime in working-class communities, the party leadership remained deeply shocked at the extent of worker participation in and support for the Revolution. In early 1957 party officials commented with dismay that among the thousands who left the western county of Győr-Moson-Sopron for Austria, there were many "workers from traditional working-class families."[31] With the regime's consolidation party officials underplayed the role and extent of working class discontent in the Revolution, arguing that the majority simply remained "passive" in the face of "counter-revolutionary" mobilization. This was because "the working class was primarily disappointed in the party leadership and did not see the party as the true representative of their class."[32] The notion of industrial workers as "passive" during the Revolution was, however, a myth, but so too was the party's collective notion of what constituted the "working class". In general terms, the party's use of the term "working class" tended to subsume all wage workers into an imaginary and homogeneous entity, which universally shared the values of those of the skilled, urban, male elite of the workforce who had supported the labour movement pre-1948. This underpinned notions — prevalent in the discussions among leading party officials after 1956 — of the "working class" as a social body that would act as the bulwark of the regime.[33] These were underpinned by a hegemonic discourse of the working class outside the party leadership that stressed the pre-eminence of the male, skilled elite and subordinated other more peripheral groups — this discourse of the working class had structured hierarchical relationships between workers in workplaces and communities since the end of the nineteenth century. It was embedded in the practice and common-sense of the labour movement, and came to represent a pattern of relationships and cultural practices that shaped the contours of working-class identity by the mid-twentieth century.

The industrial and labour policies of Hungary's socialist regime after 1948, caused a fundamental breach between industrial workers and the "new" state. In the workplace the regime attacked the privileges of the skilled through the introduction of labour competition, new wage forms and different management structures. At the same time they expanded the workforce aiming to subvert the hierarchies of gender, generation and

those based on distinctions between the urban and the rural. Their economic policies produced endemic income insecurity, widespread penury and severe shortage, while they responded to the tensions these produced with repression. These policies caused the crumbling of working-class support for the regime during the early 1950s, but the patterns of relations in the workplace caused by the chaos produced by the state's industrialization drive, allowed hierarchical relationships to reproduce themselves under new circumstances. Skilled workers, though profoundly alienated from the regime, continued to sit at the apex of modified hierarchical relationship in which greater numbers of working-class youth, women and those from rural areas were cast to a discontented periphery.[34]

Considerable working-class anger alone was insufficient to provoke widespread mobilization — between 1953 and 1956, the initiation of the "New Course" under the government of Imre Nagy, followed by ever more bitter struggles within the party, led to the fragmentation of the authority of the regime. These were met, in turn, by a greater expression of the considerable working-class discontent that persisted in Hungary's factories, mines, and on its construction sites, that were never successfully alleviated by any of the protagonists in the struggle within the party. The onset of the revolutionary events in October 1956 was met with a social explosion in which many working-class Hungarians, particularly those young workers cast to the periphery, provided the most militant sections of the working-class crowds which drove forward the Revolution in the country's towns and cities. Different groups within the working class, especially the skilled, the young and rural workers, participated in the Revolution in highly distinctive ways. The re-construction the regime's authority was underpinned by different processes within different groups but, given the cultural power, employed by older, urban, skilled male workers within hegemonic discourses of the working class, it was the regime's ability to repair its relations with this group that was fundamental to the consolidation of its authority.

The Politics of Gradual Collapse: From Reform to Rebellion, 1953-6

The spring and early summer of 1953 was a period of intense worker protest across East-Central Europe that demonstrated the tensions, which socialist rule had created. In May workers in the tobacco plant in Plovdiv in Bulgaria rioted as a result of unfavourable changes made to work

norms. In Czechoslovakia a currency reform was introduced in the same month cutting into wages and eliminating savings, which resulted in generalised revolt in Plzeň. In the German Democratic Republic decisions to tighten work norms led to a wave of demonstrations and strikes on 17th June 1953 across the country.[35] Whilst the events in the GDR did not lead to open mass protest in Hungary, they had an electrifying effect in workplaces. The notion that a population could express its discontent openly in a socialist state began, albeit slowly, to lift the lid on a well of discontent. Industrial workers in Budapest stated openly that "the Hungarian party can learn from the German party that it is not correct to apply pressure all the time through the norms." In a neighbouring factory one party member called for the smallholders to be given back land that had been "donated" to agricultural co-operatives.[36]

Against this background of growing social upheaval and under instruction from the Kremlin the Hungarian leadership modified their course. The country's effective dictator, Mátyás Rákosi was forced to relinquish his position as Prime Minister, though not, crucially as secretary of the ruling party. His successor as head of government, Imre Nagy, launched a policy that suspended collectivization drives in rural areas and placed the problem of working-class material discontent at the centre of government action.[37] The announcement of the "New Course" led to both the growing public expression of working-class discontent,[38] and official attempts through the press to address the neglect of workers' "legitimate concerns" by the authorities in workplaces across the country.[39] More concretely it was met through a policy of concessions; the state moved to permit smallholders to leave agricultural co-operatives, fines and criminal penalties for work discipline infringements were revoked, an amnesty was granted to political prisoners, a higher priority was given to the implementation of protective legislation in the workplace, and wages were raised.[40]

In terms of their impact on the working class "New Course" policies had two effects. On the one hand they failed to transform decisively the material conditions of industrial workers, except the skilled elites in some sectors. On the other, they strengthened many of the hierarchies that had reproduced themselves under the circumstances of the shortage economy of the early 1950s. This reinforcing of hierarchy was the product of the effects of different policies on different groups of workers, and these shaped the political attitudes of these groups towards Nagy's reformist project. Among groups on the periphery of the work-

force, Nagy's project attained most popularity among anti-communist rural workers. This was not due, however, to the program's effect on industry, but on agriculture, as many felt the "New Course" heralded an end to agricultural collectivization. Some had greeted its announcement by attempting to quit their jobs and return to agriculture; at Mosonmagyaróvár's aluminum smelter the 250 workers, who owned land, tried to quit the moment the program was announced. Their attempts were blocked by the plant director. Though this resulted in an explosion of discontent, only 100 departed illegally.[41] As local party bodies and state authorities fought a rearguard action to prevent the dissolution of agricultural collectives and implemented more informal policies of administrative restriction against farmers,[42] this illusion dissipated. Despite this, however, the post-1953 period was a relatively good one for many rural workers, especially for those who belonged to a household with a farm that could produce for the market, as the incomes of individual smallholders rose faster, albeit from a much lower base, than those of industrial workers.[43] Though such workers had never accepted the legitimacy of the socialist regime, favourable policies towards agriculture did allow Nagy to win a degree of personal popularity in the rural milieux in which such workers lived. In one village in western Hungary Nagy's relaxation of the collectivization drive was compared to "the liberation of the serfs in 1848".[44] Yet the rising incomes of some rural workers and continuing problems of food shortage in urban areas exacerbated the unpopularity of such workers, with many urban residents, especially in Budapest, who argued that the "New Course" was a "peasants' policy" rather than a "workers' policy" — a sentiment which legitimized the casting of rural workers to the periphery of the workforce.[45]

The climate of the "New Course" reinforced the peripheral position of other groups within the workforce that had been generated by the reproduction of hierarchy within the working class during the early 1950s. This was especially the case with women, where Nagy's arrival in office accompanied attempts to implement protective legislation in the workplace, which it reinforced. This tended not to protect women in unhealthy and low-paying jobs in traditionally feminized sectors, but instead acted to remove women from those traditionally regarded as male, and high-paying, where they had gained a toe-hold as a consequence of the affirmative action campaigns of the early 1950s.[46] Working-class youth, including young skilled workers, remained in a relatively marginal position in workplaces across the country. Their peripheral positions and consequent

low wages led to considerable discontent that in turn drove many of them to seek better paid employment in neighbouring establishments.[47] Placed in a peripheral position and deeply alienated, and often influenced by propaganda in western radio broadcasts many rejected the socialist system absolutely; in the Tatabánya mines one young miner urged a work-mate to "go to the West where at least you are valued for as long as you can work, here you are just treated like a dog to whom they occasionally throw a bone so you don't starve."[48]

The hardening of reproduced hierarchies in the workforce was driven, in part, because Nagy's relaxation of despotic policies in the workplace had led to an intensification of informal bargaining that favoured the older, male, skilled elite. Often sympathetic party members, union officials and lower-level managers had participated actively in opening the floodgates to a wave of bargaining in late 1953 that enshrined considerable informal control over remuneration by the skilled elite in everyday workplace practice.[49] Often, despite state intentions and although they often complained about their "inadequacy",[50] the wage increases mandated by the Nagy government in late 1953 further boosted the position of experienced skilled workers.[51] In some sectors, especially coal mining the increases in skilled workers' wages were substantial, as they were linked to a premium system, which ensured that when it was introduced in late 1953 face-workers' wages increased by 22.3 percent in a two-month period, when production fell by 4 percent.[52] Wage increases of this order generated a degree of satisfaction among miners, which went some way to defuse discontent.[53]

Yet, despite the reinforcement of their position within the workforce as a result of the policies of the Nagy government in the workplace, the skilled elite as a whole were far from satisfied — something that was in part a product of economic chaos during 1954, when shortages intensified and power-supply problems forced industry into short-time working during the winter months.[54] Yet, it was also fed by a perception that in a climate that was relatively permissive to agriculture and to trade, urban workers were losing ground in income and prestige; a sentiment that led them to eventually welcome Nagy's dismissal in 1955.[55] It would take Imre Nagy's fall, and the policies pursued after his removal, to persuade the skilled elite of his merits. The turn away from reform, fronted by Nagy's successor, András Hegedüs, installed by Rákosi, who at the helm of the party had never accepted the "New Course", was prompted by the continuing economic chaos that gripped the country

during 1954 and early 1955, and aimed to return to policies of renewed socialist industrialization and collectivization. Young workers, whose peripheral position had been barely touched under Nagy, remained profoundly antagonistic to the regime. Rural workers were infuriated by the renewed collectivization drives in rural areas, although anti-rural sentiment remained strong among their urban colleagues.[56] The skilled elite were confronted with the regime's attempts to hold down the wage bill — their attempts to increase production norms in heavy industrial sectors and to limit the impact of the premium system in the coal mines, that had guaranteed higher wages provoked enormous opposition. This opposition was indeed greater in many factories than it had been to equivalent measures in the early 1950s — in some heavy engineering factories skilled workers were no longer frightened, and refused to work until the older, abolished norms were re-instated.[57] The tightening of the premium system in the mines provoked a storm of complaints often supported by local unions and party cells.[58]

The pattern of reform, followed by clampdown, had antagonized most of the working class, and crucially its skilled elite. It also ensured that the experience of restrictive policies in 1955 created a popular hunger for further reform, in a context in which the authorities faced a workforce that would not be cowed as easily as it had been in the early 1950s.[59] This provided an explosive social background for the crisis of the socialist regime during 1956.

The year of upheaval began in February with Nikita Khruschev's denunciation of Stalin, the purges and the cult of personality to the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. The speech had an electrifying effect in Hungary,[60] as it weakened fatally the confidence of many working-class party members in the regime. When Khruschev's denunciation of Stalin was revealed to closed party meetings across the country, working-class Communists reacted with total incredulity. In Sztálinváros party members in the factories questioned the local leadership asking them: "Stalin led the party for thirty years, how can it be that his mistakes have been discovered now?" and "What is the current situation in Hungary with the cult of personality? Was Rajk wrong?" alongside more mundane questions: "I own a copy of Stalin's complete works and have read them all. What do I do with them now?"[61] In Budapest's United Lighting and Electrical Factory the Khruschev speech soon became an open topic of conversation. Workers maintained that "the cult of persona-

lity was just as marked here (in Hungary) as in the Soviet Union, especially among the top leadership."[62]

As the year progressed, the growing militancy of the debates in the Petőfi kör, the intellectual debating forum of the opposition to Rákosi, especially its debate on press freedom increased the boldness of workers, especially those among the skilled elite, in expressing their views — it also underlined growing support for major political change among all sections of the working class. In the United Lighting and Electrical Factory, workers argued that "the leadership is destroying the national economy. The people no longer believe anything they say and they have no role anymore."[63] The news of the riots in Poznań and the mounting political crisis in Poland contributed to the snowballing of politicized discontent among the skilled elite; for many "the riots broke out in Poznań not because of the enemy and foreign spies, but because twelve years after the end of the war living standards remained low."[64] As Rákosi was removed as party leader and replaced by Ernő Gerő in July, the loss of regime control became more obvious as did the spread of open popular opposition. Workers complained not about Rákosi's removal from power, but the method by which it was achieved, arguing that it demonstrated Hungary's lack of national sovereignty. Furthermore there were growing signs of belief in the effectiveness of collective action; in the Ikarus bus plant it was argued that "under pressure from the masses the leadership has abolished the peace loans, if we exert even stronger pressure we will be able to force new measures to raise our living standards."[65] The effect of the combination of a loss of confidence within the party in its ability to govern and rising discontent was enormous; by September there was "a real feeling of panic" among members of the apparatus in Budapest.[66]

By summer 1956, the crumbling of the regime was met with greater political assertiveness from among the working class, particularly its urban, skilled, male elite. They were often supported by some factory and union committees who joined their rebellion. This climate was fuelled by an obviously worsening economic situation. In Budapest's Duclós Mining Machinery Factory in August 1956 the factory party committee issued a statement demanding that "the rights of the workers be secured" in disputes with management; that workers were right "to demand a just wage system" and that the overly "formal monthly production meetings" be replaced with true forums of factory democracy.[67] Within other workplaces working-class anger was directed at the autocracy and arrogance of management, and the official functionaries of the party, union and youth

organization. In the Chinoin Pharmaceuticals Factory, skilled workers complained in spring 1956 that "the cult of personality manifests itself inside the factory, particularly among the middle and upper level economic cadres. It has been common for workers not to criticize, or make suggestions just because they were scared of the management."[68] Generalized rebellion among oil workers at the Lovászi Oil Drilling Plant in July 1956 was provoked by what workers saw as the "unjustified" payment of large plan fulfilment premiums to management, at a time when workers' wages had fallen. Most complaints concerned low wages and social provision, the focus of their attack was on management. Károly Papp, the director of the plant, was attacked openly for promoting a "cult of personality" around himself, and using factory property to celebrate his birthday lavishly.[69]

As part of this wave of criticism, the skilled demanded greater democracy in the factories. One fitter in the Duclós Mining Machinery Factory complained in August that "it is useless complaining to the party and factory committee because they can't do anything. What happens here is basically what the director says." He saw the only remedy as being "to give the trade union a greater role."[70] By September the factory press began publishing similar complaints. One former trade unionist wrote in the paper of Budapest's Danube Shoe Factory that

> in the period following the liberation old, committed trade unionists were promoted to become managers. We should say clearly that later these comrades became detached from the workers, they became one sided and didn't speak up sufficiently for their interests... new people filled the trade union and the beginnings of the co-option, not the election of the (new) leaders (of the unions) began... the union leaders regarded anyone who stood up for their interests as the enemy, and dealt with them in this manner.[71]

Yet as the mood for change in workplaces gathered pace, the regime was close to collapse. The growing thaw in relations with Yugoslavia, the re-burial of László Rajk on the 6th October, the retention of power by Gerő, discredited by his Stalinist past, and the lack of any clear leadership from the regime pushed the situation to crisis point. When the Revolution began on the 23rd October, with student demonstrations in Budapest, industrial workers would play more radical roles than they had done beforehand.

The Power of the Working-Class Crowd: October-November, 1956

In the prison camp attached to Mine No. XVIII in the geographically isolated, western Hungarian mining town of Oroszlány, many of the prisoners, who worked in the mines under sentence, concluded in mid-October that "they wouldn't be shut inside for much longer". As students prepared to demonstrate in Budapest to secure political change, at noon on 23rd October the prisoners attempted to overpower the guards at the mine entrance and break out. The factory guard was only able to restore order by firing on the prisoners, killing three. When three days later, the local Revolution was launched by a crowd of around 500 young workers, who marched through the town shouting "Work! Bread! Rákosi to the Gallows! (*Munkát! Kenyeret, Rákosinak kötelet*)", they were motivated as much by solidarity with the prisoners as with demonstrators in Budapest. After the leaders of the demonstration delivered their demands to the local radio station, around 150 proceeded to Mine No. XVII where they freed the prisoners, after the guard refused to fire on the demonstrators.[72]

While much of the historiography of the revolution has tended to see revolutionary mobilization as being sparked by the events in Budapest on 23rd October, the opening of the archives and research into the "local revolutions" has qualified this Budapest-centred account, unveiling evidence of much unrest, just as in Oroszlány, that took place before or as the events in Budapest got underway.[73] Student mobilization in provincial centres such as Debrecen, Miskolc and Szeged was marked, while the authorities were made aware of the simmering discontent and strained patience of industrial workers in their cities.[74] Even where the explosion of revolution occurred in response to the events in Budapest, as in many of the capital's working-class suburbs, or in Tatabánya as was discussed above, the signs of political mobilization were present prior to the 23rd October, while local events themselves were driven by dynamics particular to their location.[75]

The Revolution, right across the country, involved a rapid relocation of political power from the party and regime to the revolutionary crowd, which during the last week of October and the first days of November acted as the locus of political legitimacy. In cities across the country, the crowd, organized through initially peaceful demonstrations, assumed the role as the representative of the "will of the people", demanding a change in the political order.[76] Crowds played a central role

in the "cleansing" of public space, through the deliberate and at times, almost theatrical removal of monuments and artifacts associated with either the Red Army or the socialist regime.[77] The frequent incidents where representatives of either the army or state security services fired on initially non-violent crowds after 23rd October, both radicalized the revolution and underlined the illegitimacy of the regime.[78] Such acts of violence against revolutionary crowds bolstered their claim to act in the name of the people as a whole. Furthermore, they could and frequently did confer their legitimacy on revolutionary organs set up during the Revolution, while they played a role in supervising the actions of other organs that displayed an ambiguous attitude towards the will of the revolutionary crowd.[79]

Though the revolutionary crowd appeared as the unified embodiment of the will of the nation, the crowds were far from homogeneous either politically or socially. In many towns, like Zalaegerszeg, secondary school students and industrial workers provided the core of the demonstrations that ignited local revolutions, which attracted members of other occupational groups to join vocal demands for change.[80] Workers played a central role in the demonstrations in urban centres right across the country, and often were over-represented among the dead and injured when crowds were fired upon; of those killed when the state security agencies fired on demonstrators in Mosonmagyaróvár on 26 October workers made up 65.15 percent.[81] Workers were not the only people in the revolutionary crowds, though they played a crucial role in many, but the different groups within the workforce played very different roles either within the crowd; had very different relationships to the crowd; or, participated in crowds in different locations from many of their workmates. Working-class youth were the most radical group in that they drove political change, and were most likely to participate in armed groups during the Revolution. The skilled were the most split politically and participated most actively in the struggles for control of the factories, while rural workers tended to return to spread the Revolution to their villages, and largely sought the reversal of agricultural collectivization.

The role of young workers in providing a group of militants who were prepared to drive forward the Revolution was fundamental. In Budapest, younger workers were frequently drawn to the initial demonstrations; played a central role in radicalizing those demonstrations, and then in spreading disturbances back to the industrial suburbs. One second-year industrial apprentice in the United Lighting and Electrical Factory, I.M.,

was working on 23 October when "I heard that there was a demonstration in Budapest in Stalin square." Immediately catching the tram and trolley-bus into central Pest he was forced to get off some way short of the square, because "the crowd was so big, that the trolleybuses stood in a jam and everyone went on foot."[82] Often youth participation in the early stages of the Revolution resembled lower-level and less political forms of youth disorder in industrial communities.[83] One group of young working-class males on hearing the demonstrations determined to go to the hostel for local student nurses, and "take the girls off to the demonstration" in Budapest. Once they discovered that the director of hostel had locked the inhabitants in, they began to shout "Russians go home, Rákosi to the gallows" until the police arrived.[84]

Outside the capital, young workers played a central role in the first demonstrations in many communities. In Tatabánya, while striking local bus drivers provided the catalyst for the local revolution, they joined younger workers in seeking to transform their strike into an occupation of public space, as apprentices from the mining technical school and young miners from the workers' hostels provided the core of initial demonstrations. The spontaneity of the demonstrations was demonstrated by the confusion of different slogans — some shouted the old, socialist slogan of "bread! work!" while others sang the *himnusz* — Hungary's national anthem — as they marched.[85] As the number of participants in the demonstrations increased, young workers took key roles in the "cleansing" of public space of monuments associated with either the Soviets or the socialist regime; in Nagykanizsa, those who pulled down the Soviet war memorial in the town were led by a twenty-six year old worker, whose working life had been filled through a series of jobs in the mining and construction sectors.[86] The activities of working-class youth extended not merely to violence against the symbols of the socialist regime, but they played a direct role in violence against those they perceived to be representatives of the regime. They frequently acted as the "agents" of the revolutionary crowd in carrying out demands for removing Communists from the head of public institutions. In Újpest's Danube Shoe Factory, the belief of the crowd that "the workers' council was in the hands of the Communist director", led to four armed young workers, led by the son of one factory employee, deciding they would storm the factory and "arrest" the director, as part of a process through which the workers' council would be purged.[87]

The issue of violence raises the question of the process by which working-class youths within demonstrations armed themselves and formed themselves into armed groups. The boundaries between these armed groups of young workers and the informally-organized "national guards", that nominally served local revolutionary committees answerable to the crowd was a fluid one. In Tatabánya, a small section of the official demonstration successfully laid siege to the local police station freeing prisoners and gaining access to weapons. These were supplemented by those given to them after laying siege to a local army barracks. While some of the radical, armed demonstrations went to join the "fight" in the capital, a core of around thirty remained to form a "national guard" detachment, to guarantee the local revolution.[88] In Budapest, where peaceful demonstrations were fired upon, and with the subsequent intervention of Soviet troops, young workers who had joined the demonstrations moved to arm themselves, by demanding the weapons that were stored in factories for civil defense purposes. During the early hours of 24th October, young workers joined other demonstrators in raiding factories for weapons — not all were undefended; in some, remembered one young worker "the porter on the door was already armed with a machine gun."[89] In some factories, armed bands made up of young workers, and factory security guards engaged in gun battles at factory gates; in some cases, workers reporting for the morning shift were caught and injured in the cross-fire, though in the vast majority of cases the authorities were able to repel these attacks.[90]

The attempts of the authorities to retain control over both factories, and more broadly, working-class communities foundered on the breadth of support among workers for the overthrow of the regime; even though many workers were less radical than their younger workmates. In factories in Budapest suburbs like Újpest, the student demonstrations provoked considerable sympathy among workers on 23rd October; in one meeting in the Chinoin Pharmaceuticals Factory "a university student spoke and read out their demands expressed as a series of points... some of the points were met with enthusiastic applause."[91] On the morning of the same day the "sixteen points" — the demands of the Budapest student demonstrators[92] — were circulated among the workers of the neighbouring United Lighting and Electrical factory, where they had "a considerable impact".[93] In the Chinoin the mood had only been defused by the director urging workers to "await the view of the party of the demonstration".[94] The denunciation of the demonstrators as "counter-

revolutionaries" by Ernő Gerő in his radio broadcast, the consequent demonstrations in front of the headquarters of national radio and the firing on crowds by the state security services there, followed by the news of the intervention of Red Army troops overnight turned the mood in the capital's industrial suburbs into one of fury. In the United Lighting and Electrical factory the following morning two-thirds of the workers arrived at work, but during the morning the skilled workers in the tool workshop and in the vacuum plant stopped work to organize a mass meeting of all workers that launched the strike and decided to remove the red star from above the factory gate.[95] With the spread of the strike a large number of workers took to the streets to demand political change; over the course of the morning there "were many people in front of the State Department store, and leaflets were distributed from a black car. They shouted and told me that we were all on strike."[96] The crowd destroyed the Soviet war memorial; its more radical wing turned on the local police station, yet a majority remained at the site of the war memorial and as a result of local activists addressing the crowd they chose a body of people to represent them and thus take over public administration. Thus the crowd delegated a local "revolutionary committee" through chaotic acclamation, rather than election as such.[97]

The dynamic of a strike in support of the Revolution, providing the spark for the creation of the working-class crowd through demonstrations was one which was replicated in other industrial areas across the country. In Nagykanizsa, the work stoppage began in the Transdanubian Oil Mining Machinery Factory where strikers called for support "for Budapest University students", on the "Russians to go home", "the introduction of a multi-party system", "the removal of Communist leaders and managers", "withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact" and "the removal of the Gerő government".[98] Joined by workers from other workplaces and carrying national flags the demonstrators removed the emblems of the peoples' republic from public buildings as they passed, converging on and demolishing the town's Soviet war memorial.[99] The "election" of revolutionary organs was conducted under the same kind of chaotic circumstances as with the revolutionary committee in Újpest; though the election of the revolutionary organ in Tatabánya was to be conducted by a meeting of representatives of the city's factories and mines, it was chosen in confused circumstances and effectively drew its legitimacy from the fact that it represented the crowd that had assembled in the city the previous day.[100]

The confusion in which revolutionary organs were created to oversee local public administration, and their problematic role given that their legitimacy was located in the revolutionary crowd, was replicated inside enterprises. As many striking workers left to take to the streets; new organs inside workplaces — the workers' councils — were created. Their ambiguous position was not only generated, as the example of the machine plant of Tatabánya's Coal Mining Trust shows, by the chaos in which they were created, but also by the fact that they could be used by local Communist cells as part of an attempt to maintain control of their enterprises. The election in this plant took a disorganized form: "they shouted out names, and the workers replied whether they agreed to their election or not. The first to be elected was L.I., the party secretary, then me, then F., and then the others."[101] The first workers' council in an enterprise, that of Újpest's United Lighting and Electrical Factory, was organized by the factory party committee, precisely with the intention of ensuring that "trustworthy people would be elected." This attempt was unsuccessful.[102] Before revolution convulsed the whole country, the creation of workers' councils had been endorsed as a strategy by both the party and the official trade unions as means of controlling the economy in the circumstances of outright revolution.[103] In the Gheorgiu-Dej Shipyards the plant's party organization used its workers' council as cover to prevent local revolutionary activists empowered by the territorial revolutionary committee from gaining access to the site.[104]

Even among the workers' councils where the party's attempts to influence the elections had foundered, and a coalition of skilled workers and engineers was able to take control, the councils were less radical than those elected on the streets — at least until the very end of October. In the forty-eight hours that followed the election of the United Lighting and Electrical Factory's Workers' Council, it re-made the institutions of the factory. The factory's managing director and one production director were removed; the managing director was replaced with the president of the workers' council. It announced that it saw itself as provisional, existing only until full elections could be held. It abolished the Personnel Department which under Rákosi had been used as the representative of both the party and the state security agency within the management of the factory. It further announced that the strike would be maintained and full wages would be paid, whilst low paid workers would be given a 15% wage rise and other workers 10%. It began the process moreover of more fundamental reforms to factory administration, beginning administrative

de-centralisation and the elimination of bureaucracy, an overhaul of the payment-by-results wage system in the factory, and called for the establishment of a 71 member general workers' council and for the creation of shop workers' councils under it.[105] The skilled worker majority whose thinking dominated the changes instituted by the workers' councils made their philosophy and distrust of centralization clear at a meeting of all the councils in Újpest on 29th October; "the mistakes of recent years show that we have to build from below, we have to solve problems using our own strength." Yet, they also underlined their distrust of the radicalism of bodies like the territorial revolutionary committee in Újpest that drew their legitimacy from the crowd; "it seems that the power that has been paid in the blood of our young people is falling into the hands of different, fractious elements."[106]

The skilled elite that dominated the early workers' councils built on the calls for factory democracy that preceded the Revolution, forcing radical transformation of structures of management and working conditions. But politically they tended to be more moderate than much of the crowd; in the words of the newspaper of the workers' council of the Ganz Carriage and Machine Factory "with the help of Imre Nagy, we have already been able to start out on a road that will bring about the realization of our other demands.... But... we aren't going to demand the immediate implementation of demands for which time is needed."[107] This stance, coupled with the knowledge that many Communists continued to participate in workers' councils, brought them into conflict with the revolutionary crowd and its delegated representatives. Distrust could deteriorate into conflict; on 29th October an incorrect statement on national radio that 1,500 workers reported for work at the United Lighting and Electrical Factory provoked demonstrations against the workers' council, whom they accused of sabotaging the Revolution, despite the fact that the workers' council stated clearly that it "will not re-start work, until Soviet troops leave the country."[108] The failure to pay wages to strikers at the neighbouring Duclós Mining Machinery plant provoked similar demonstrations at the factory gates,[109] provoking complaints from the more radical workers in the crowd that this was because there were many "who did not represent the workers' interests" on the workers' council, leading to demands it be purged of Communists.[110] The growing radicalization of the crowd, and the consolidation of the authority of territorial revolutionary committees, restricted the room for manoeuvre of many of the workers' councils, especially those which were more weakly led. In

Újpest, largely against the will of many of the workers' councils, especially that of the United Lighting and Electrical, the local revolutionary committee decided that all the district's workers' councils were "provisional", and that "persons who had been functionaries could not be elected."[111]

In many of the workers' councils the removal of former Communist functionaries provoked a marked radicalization of their policies. In the Chinoin Pharmaceuticals Plant, the Újpest revolutionary committee succeeded in re-constituting the workers' council. The Revolution inside the factory was instantly radicalized, moving further politically than earlier workers' councils, by banning Communists from organizing but allowing the newly re-founded Smallholders' Party to set up a work-based cell, and forcing the director to resign after he refused to renounce Communism.[112] In workplaces where the influence of skilled workers and a labour movement tradition was weaker workers' councils tended to be more radical from the start. At the Nagylengyel Oil Drilling Plant, a workplace that was relatively new and located in a rural area, the formation of the workers' council took a very different direction to those in Budapest. On 28th October, the local official union organization attempted to call workers together to elect a workers' council — when the head of factory-level union began his speech by addressing the assembled workers as "Comrades!" he was shouted down by workers who responded with "your time is up!" An anti-communist workers' council was elected as a result of the meeting, whose president proclaimed that "the time of the Stalinists is over; we have to wipe them out." The mass meeting sacked most of the management, and crucially those responsible for setting norms.[113]

While the democratic socialist vision of the urban, skilled elite that was implicit in the early workers' councils was eclipsed by the growing radicalism of crowds, and was largely absent in workplaces in which this group was less well-represented, worker-peasants focused rather on joining a rural revolution directed against agricultural collectivization. Among Komló's miners there were many who "regularly went home for the weekend. So when the real Revolution came and the work was stopped, most of the people went home and did not return to Komló for several weeks."[114] While long-distance commuters melted away returning to their home villages, in areas where there was substantial commuting from villages to industrial establishments on a daily basis, the Revolution in urban, working-class communities ignited Revolution in

rural areas. In the village of Várgesztes, on the fringes of the Tata coalfield, all but 6 of the 97 households had members working outside agriculture in 1956, virtually all in mining. News of revolutionary events in neighbouring Oroszlány fed growing anger in the village that, in turn led to the overthrow of the local council, and its replacement by a national committee elected by the crowd.[115] In rural areas, the largest local industrial enterprise and its worker-peasant workforce played a crucial role in spreading revolution to the villages. In Bázakerretye after demonstrators destroyed the Soviet war memorial, worker-peasants commandeered the trucks owned by the local oil drilling plant and used it to spread the revolution to their home villages, where they proclaimed that "there has already been a demonstration in Bázakerretye, it is time to burn the portraits of Stalin and Rákosi, and all red flags too."[116]

In rural communities dominated by worker-peasants, issues of agricultural land ownership figured prominently, together with demands for Soviet withdrawal and anti-communism. Worker-peasants were as likely to join the anti-collectivization revolt as were other village dwellers; in the mining village of Vértesszöllős, next to Tatabánya, demonstrators demanded the break-up of the local collective farm and the return of land to its previous owners.[117] In Dömeföld, in the far south-west, the degree to which anger, even among rural dwellers with jobs in industry or mining was directed against those responsible for implementing the regime's agrarian policies was underlined. The first acts of the worker-peasant revolutionaries were to break into the offices of the village council and burn the paperwork connected with the local collective and the taxation of farmers.[118] In nearby Becsehely, worker-peasants joined with individual landholders, in demonstrations against the local collective farm, demanding its dissolution and the distribution of its property, though failed to achieve their goal in the face of resistance from the members of the collective.[119]

The Fragmentation of Resistance and the Dynamics of Post-Revolutionary Consolidation, November 1956-June 1958

During his trial for "participation in a movement that aimed at the overthrow of the peoples' democratic order" in September 1957, Imre Kovács, who had led the anti-communist workers' council in the Tatabánya Mining Enterprise machine plant during the strike that followed

Soviet intervention in November 1956, defended himself in part by denying his anti-Soviet stance. Yet, he also did so, by arguing that the demands of revolutionary bodies in Tatabánya that he had supported had "been largely met by the Kádár government" since the Revolution.[120] In making this rather strange defence, Kovács put his finger on the split opinion of many urban, and especially skilled workers of the government that the Red Army had brought to power; they felt, on the one hand, that many of their material aspirations were met, though they still continued to be fearful and mistrustful of the regime that ruled them. In the Domestic Worsted Mill in the capital, most workers in June 1958 spoke of the poor economic situation "before 1956", and the better one "after 1956", arguing that "the counter-revolution played a definite role in the improvement of the situation."[121] The deep-seated distrust of the regime, and perceptions of its illegitimacy were revealed in the working-class reactions to the execution of Imre Nagy in the same month. In the Csepel Works, many compared it openly to the show trial conducted against László Rajk in 1949 and wondered how long it would take the party to "re-habilitate" him. Others argued that "Imre Nagy died a freedom-fighter", while some maintained that "had the trial not been held in secret, then Imre Nagy's supporters would have hindered his execution."[122]

Yet this split opinion did not emerge overnight with Soviet intervention, nor was it shared by all workers, but emerged slowly over the course of the eighteen months that followed the arrival of Soviet tanks in many industrial communities in the days following their attack on Budapest on 4th November 1956. The overthrow of Imre Nagy and the attempt to replace him with Kádár initially met with the same kind of explosion of working-class anger that had ignited the Revolution twelve days before. In Tatabánya's new town, remembered one local journalist, "there was a large telegraph pole with a loudspeaker, which carried the news from the miners' radio; one evening — Wednesday 7th November — they announced that the city's Soviet commander was speaking to the city's population. The crowd, with their bare hands, brought down the pole, broke it completely, and smashed up the loudspeaker when it crashed to the ground."[123] One other local miner spoke of the "blind rage" which greeted Soviet intervention and fuelled the strike. "Everyone was stunned that their independence, their neutrality was over," he remembered, "the people were most happy about neutrality.... There was Austria as an example, because they were neutral. The Russians went,

they became neutral, and their living standards just went up.... Because of that neutrality was very important."[124]

The motivations of working-class crowds were complex, but behind the political demands lay deep seated fury at the material poverty experienced by many workers under Rákosi. The role of penury in fuelling political protest presented the regime with both a problem and an opportunity. It offered the difficulty that without addressing material grievances successfully it would be unable to consolidate its authority; but it offered them a possibility, that if they succeeded in offering material improvement, combined with selective repression, they could encourage enough of the working class to forget their political demands and aspirations and accommodate to the situation. Yet, workers were also far from united about the extent to which they accommodated to the new regime, or, indeed, resisted it.

Armed resistance on the streets, in which working-class youth were over-represented was effectively smashed within days of the Soviet intervention. The armed guerrilla groups in the capital continued to resist before they were overwhelmed by superior Soviet firepower on the 8th November.[125] In Csepel armed resistance lasted for a further three days, falling to the Soviets on the 11th November.[126] It is very difficult to estimate the total casualties of the street fighting; official statistics that almost certainly underestimate the number of casualties give an indication. They show that in Budapest some 16,700 were injured and 2,502 were killed. Of those killed, a majority were under thirty and were industrial workers.[127] In the provinces resistance was more sporadic; in Tatabánya news of the Soviet intervention was greeted with anger, though many believed that armed resistance would be futile and the revolutionary bodies resisted calls to arm angry youths with petrol bombs to stop the advance into the town.[128] In Sztálinváros this was not the case; as news of the Soviet intervention spread "at least 80 percent of the male residents" prepared to fight Soviet tanks with petrol bombs. Aware of the preparations being made, the Soviets held back until the 7th November attacking the town initially by air and then by land. In the ensuing battle eight were killed and thirty-five wounded before the town was overrun.[129]

In the factories the immediate reaction to the news of the Soviet intervention was one of furious shock. The result was an immediate and solid strike against the new government and its Soviet patrons. In the capital this strike remained solid for up to a week. In the United Lighting and Electrical Factory, the moderate workers' council backed the strike,

not allowing workers into the factory until the 12th November. Even then due to reduced electricity supplies work was unable to start, while the workforce remained deeply distrustful and fearful.[130] More generally in Újpest "a mood behind the strike" remained,[131] while the radical territorial Revolutionary Committee struggled to master a situation over which, following the Soviet intervention, they had no real control. With the drift back to work they attempted to seize the initiative. Renaming themselves the Újpest Revolutionary Workers' Council, they threw down a challenge to the Kádár government. Proclaiming that "every worker in Budapest wants to see order in the capital. Of course we do not wish to see any sort of order, but revolutionary order, one which is based on the realization of the demands of the Revolution." In order to achieve this aim they invited representatives of all factories in the capital to Újpest's town hall, in order to found a Budapest workers' council.[132]

In response to the move the Kádár government and its Soviet allies adopted a two track strategy. It issued a decree allowing the workers to elect legal Workers' Councils within three weeks of returning to work.[133] At the same time they attempted to prevent the Újpest meeting taking place. Soviet tanks surrounded the town hall and the members of the Újpest Revolutionary Workers' Council were arrested.[134] The meeting was postponed and held the next day under the auspices of the more moderate United Lighting and Electrical Factory's Workers' Council, which established the Budapest Central Workers' Council. The new council was split between relative moderates, who argued for a political compromise with the Kádár regime, and members of anti-communist workers' councils who demanded that the Soviet-imposed government not be recognized.. The workers' representatives were much more militant, and it was only one of them, Sándor Báli from the Workers' Council of the Standard factory who gave the new body a clear strategy; to refrain from recognising the Kádár government but to negotiate with it.[135] The new council called for the introduction of a mutli-party system, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary and greater democracy in the Hungarian workplace. It negotiated with the government, though relations between the Workers' Council and the state were tense and by the beginning of December agreement seemed to be highly unlikely. Furthermore, it continued to be dogged by splits between moderates and radical anti-communists over both strategy and tactics.[136]

At the same time that it became clear there was no basis for agreement between the council and the government, the body was

becoming a de-facto national workers' council, and thus a focus of opposition to the Kádár government.[137] Taking these factors into consideration Kádár shifted from a policy of negotiation to one of repression. On 5th December some two hundred activists in the workers' council movement and the former intellectual opposition were arrested. This and the active prevention of plans to call a meeting to found a National Workers' Council and growing government intransigence led to a serious stand-off between the Budapest Central Workers' Council and the state. The Council called for a two day general strike on the 11th and 12th December and was immediately outlawed. Its members were gradually arrested over the next few days and by the morning of the 11th with the arrest of the two leaders of the council, Sándor Rácz and Sándor Báli, the government succeeded in effectively eliminating its most dangerous adversary.[138] Following the removal of the Budapest Central Workers' Council state policy moved to one of explicit repression. Fear of retribution created a situation in which factory-level workers' councils refused to heed the strike call on 11th December, though much of the workforce did. Arrests of workers' council members continued throughout December.[139] On the 13th December the government banned strikes and demonstrations, a position that was to be strengthened in January 1957 when the government decreed that striking or incitement to strike be made a capital offence.[140]

Yet Kádár's turn to repression was informed by a knowledge that by early December industrial workers were becoming ever more weary of strike action, in part because they came to see the eventual victory of Kádár as inevitable, but largely because of the effect of the collapsing economy on their incomes and the food supply situation. The Budapest party committee noted that "in the first half of November at a decision of the Workers' Council without any sign of resistance the factories would stop" yet "by the second half of November they (the Workers' Councils) tried to find better justifications for work stoppages: wage demands, solidarity, strike" yet even at this stage "the desire to work is growing."[141] On the first day of the forty-eight hour general strike — the 11th December — in Újpest in most of the factories no work was done. In the Magyar Pamutipar cotton factory, however, work began as normal on the morning shift and only when the news of the arrests of the leaders of the Greater Budapest Central Workers' Council arrived, did workers walk out. Despite this on the 13th the Workers' Council in the plant vowed that it would re-start production and take greater care over the maintenance of

work discipline. By this point, however, it was not merely a recognition of the defeat of the Revolution or growing fear of police retribution that was deterring workers from resorting to the strike weapon, but the growing fear of unemployment given the crisis ridden state of the economy and the lack of strike pay.[142]

Despite the gradual breaking of the strike, and the elimination of revolutionary organs in cities and villages alike, the situation in industrial communities remained tense well into 1957. Many younger workers had fled the country, while worker-peasants remained in their villages for months afterwards. Among urban and skilled workers a culture of protest simmered. During the early part of the year anti-regime leaflets were still being circulated throughout the United Lighting and Electrical. One leaflet stated that "Kádár still keeps the Rákosite Antal Apró, out with the swindler Márosan, bring Imre Nagy into the government, out with the Soviet Army, declare Hungarian neutrality, why is the Kádár government scared of arming the peasants and workers? Perhaps they are fascists".[143] On the national holiday of 15th March anti-government leaflets circulated in the Stalin Steel Works.[144] On the first anniversary of the outbreak of the Revolution, 23rd October 1957, rumours — "they are striking in Csepel," or "in Újpest there were demonstrations" — were widespread.[145] In the United Lighting and Electrical Factory some of the workers engaged in a deliberate act of sabotage to commemorate the Revolution by destroying the electrical box that supplied power to light the red star on the front of the building, thus ensuring that during the week following the 23rd October it did not light up.[146]

Yet, during the first half of 1957, what was marked, was the way in which even urban workers underlined their distrust of the government, through support for cultural practices and institutions associated with anti-communism, even though they had not done so in the Rákosi years. One of the concrete manifestations of this was the growth of popular religious observance following the suppression of the Revolution. In the capital in 1957 the population was considerably more assertive about its perceived right to celebrate Christmas than it had been in previous years. For midnight mass and for the Christmas day services the churches in many working-class districts of the capital were full, according to one party official "there hasn't been such attendance (at church) for years."[147] In contrast to the pre-Revolution years when church congregations in the capital had been made up of elderly women, during Christmas 1957 in one industrial district 25 to 30 percent of the congregations were aged

between 18 and 20. In another similar district some 60% of those attending the Christmas morning service were male manual workers. During 1958 it was noticed that a significant minority of manual workers in one district spent ten minutes in their local church before and after work each day. Furthermore in schools in the same districts, the parents of 38% of children from worker households opted for religious education.[148]

This was combined with a retreat from the public realm entirely, which was especially marked among the young, and among worker-peasants. Alienation from official political activity could be seen among younger workers who tended to develop more individualistic and exclusively material aspirations. One young female commuter who worked in the Zalaegerszeg Clothing Factory illustrated the attitudes of this group. She was described as "exhibiting passivity" as far as political questions were concerned, and refused to participate in any political organization established in the factory, and her sole ambition was reported to be becoming a skilled worker.[149] These attitudes fed through to the newer skilled workers; another party brigade that spoke to three newly trained skilled workers in 1958 found them uninterested and uninformed about politics at all. In many cases interest in things material was strong.[150] Furthermore one other symptom of withdrawal from the public realm after 1956 that was particularly pronounced among male workers was the increase in the already high number of alcoholics and in alcohol related domestic violence as a consequence.[151]

It was in a climate dominated by withdrawal and distrust of the government, that the Kádár government offered tangible material improvements – improvements that met working-class hunger for better economic circumstances for their own households; something which had lain behind the anger that stimulated working-class mobilization during the Revolution. By the end of 1957 as a result of wage increases the average income of a working family in Budapest was 18 percent higher than it had been a year previously.[152] In Újpest in 1958 there was much greater satisfaction with wage rates than there had been several years earlier, though workers felt that not all problems with wages had been solved.[153] In the Zalaegerszeg Clothing Factory Kádár's policies had a similar effect; in 1952 the average wage of workers in the factory had stood at 703 Forints per month, by 1957 the average wage level had risen to 1,147 Forints per month. The problems of the wage system for the workers on the production line changed little. Though the intensity of

work was reduced, and the situation with raw material provision improved, as wages were raised many of the problems of the wage systems remained.[154] The visible improvements in living standards had led to the development of a degree of trust between the government and industrial workers by early 1958 in Budapest, as in other working-class areas.[155]

It would be a mistake to overestimate this degree of trust, however. The memory of the 1956 Revolution was never far below the surface in 1958. Many workers attributed their improved financial situation as due in a large part to the 1956 Revolution. Workers, furthermore, remained to some extent distrustful and were uncertain as to what extent the increases in living standards were a kind of temporary phase before the wage increases were withdrawn and the state reverted to Stalinism. In Újpest "the influence of old, bad experiences still has a big impact on people, fluctuations in earnings, even the slightest falls in wages that are pretty frequent cause disquiet, discontent and distrust among the workers".[156] The reconstruction of socialism after 1956 and its limits in Hungary's industrial communities bore the imprint of both socialism's decay and its outright collapse in those areas before and during the 1956 Revolution. Though in the short and medium-term this reconstruction paved the way for the consolidation of socialist rule in Hungary, its ambiguous nature would come back to haunt the regime during its eventual and final collapse in the 1980s.

NOTES

[1] Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, Kézirattár (National Széchényi Library, Manuscripts Collection, hereafter OSZK Kt.), 1956-os gyűtemény, Komárom-Esztergom megye (1956 Collections, Komárom-Esztergom county, hereafter 412.VIIf)., 7d. – Tatabánya Városi Tanács VB. Tárgy: Az 1956.okt.23.-i és követő ellenforradalmi események leirása. Hiv.rsz: T.260/1957.; on the strike and its impact see OSZK Kt. 412.VIIf.6d. – Komárom Megyei Tanács VB 1957; Beszámoló az 1957 május hó 16-i tanácsülésre, a végrehajtóbizottság munkájáról, pp. 2-3; on the nature of the strike in the mining enterprises see OSZK Kt. 412. VIIf.1d. – Komárom Megyei Bíróság, Elnökségi iratok 1958; Az Esztergomi Megyei Bíróság Elnökétől, Esztergom, Tárgy: 1958. évi április havi jelentés, pp. 1-3.

[2] "Tatabánya, 1956. december 11. 13 óra 27 perc. Komárom megyei rendőrkapitány jelentése," in Erzsébet Kajári, ed., *Rendőrségi Napi Jelentések: 1956. október 23. – December 12. Első kötet*, (Budapest: Az 1956-os Intézet, 1996), pp. 478f.

[3] "Kik és miért félnek a tatabányai karhatalomtól?" *Komárom Megyei Hírlap* (22nd December, 1956), p. 3.

[4] For the official presentation of the events of 1956 and how they were represented in official propaganda see the five volumes of the so-called "white book", *Ellenforradalmi erők a magyar októberi eseményekben. I-IV kötet*, (Budapest: A Magyar Népköztársaság Minisztertanácsa Tájékoztatási Hivatala – Zrínyi Nyomda, 1957), and *Nagy Imre és büntársai ellenforradalmi összesküvése* (Budapest: A Magyar Népköztársaság Minisztertanácsa Tájékoztatási Hivatala – Zrínyi Nyomda, 1958).

[5] For representations of the local "myth" of the "counter-revolution" in propaganda, see *Az ellenforradalom Komárom megyei eseményeiből*, (Tatabánya: MSZMP Komárom megyei Intézőbizottsága, 1957); see the series of articles in the county party newspaper – the first of which was "Hogyan Történt? Az ellenforradalom tatabányai napjaiból," *Komárom Megyei Hírlap* (26th January, 1957), p. 4; on how the particular local construction of this "myth" shaped the post-revolutionary political trials see the indictments and/or verdicts in the two most important of the political trials that concerned the events in the city – OSZK Kt., 1956-os gyüjtemény, Győri Megyei Bíróság Népbirósági Tanácsának anyaga (1956 Collection, Material of the Győr Peoples' Court, hereafter 1956-os gy., Gy.NB.) 1127/1957, 1d.; Győr Sopronmegyei Ügyészség, Győr. 1957. Bül.372 szám. Vádirat népi demokratikus államrend megdöntésére irányuló szervezkedés vezetésének büntette miatt dr. Klébert Márton és társai ellen inditott bünügyben; OSZK Kt. 412.VIIf.4d. – Győri Népbíróság B.0027/1957/16 – Mazalin György és társai; A Magyar Népköztársaság Legfelsőbb Bírósága népbirósági tanácsa. Nbf.I.5198/1958/31.szám.

[6] "Újra az Élen! Ismét elsők a tatabányai XI-es aknaiak," *Komárom Megyei Hírlap* (26th January, 1957), p. 3.

[7] OSZK Kt.412.VIIf.2d. Esztergom Megyei Bíróság – 429/1957; B.429/1957/5 szám. Jegyzőkönyv készült a Nép.d.áll.rend.megdönt.ir. mozg.való részv.btte. miatt Kovács Imre és társai ellen inditott bűnügyben az Esztergomi Megyei Bíróság Tatabány-án bíróságnál 1957 évi szeptember hó 2 napján tartott zárt tárgyalásról, p. 13.

[8] "Ha nincs szén – veszélyben Tatabánya élelmiszerellátása," *Komárom Megyei Hírlap* (15th December, 1956), p. 1.

[9] Komárom-Esztergom Megyei Önkormányzat Levéltára (Archive of the Government of Komárom-Esztergom County, hereafter KEMÖL), Az MSZMP Tatabánya Városi Bizottságának iratai (Records of the Tatabánya City Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.2f.) 3/1957/8 ő.e., pp. 7-15.

[10] Komárom-Esztergom Megyei Önkormányzat Levéltára (Archive of the Government of Komárom-Esztergom County, hereafter KEMÖL), Az MSZMP Tatabánya Városi Bizottságának iratai (Records of the Tatabánya City Committee

of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.2f.) 3/1957/8 ő.e., pp. 7-15.

[11] "A tatabányai bányászok válasza: a sztrájkra, a munkanélküliségre," *Komárom Megyei Hirlap* (6th January, 1957), p. 3.

[12] KEMÖL XXXV.2f.2/2 ő.e., p. 28.

[13] On wages see "A szakmány berezésről," *Komárom Megyei Hirlap* (6th January, 1957), p. 2

[14] KEMÖL XXXV.2f.3/1958/17 ő.e., p. 2.

[15] KEMÖL Az MSZMP Komárom Megyei Bizottságának iratai (Records of the Komárom County Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.lf.) 3/1957/23 ő.e., pp. 4-5.

[16] The phrase is borrowed from Johanna Granville, *The First Domino: International Decision Making during the Hungarian Crisis of 1956*, foreword by Raymond L. Garthoff (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004); See also Csaba Békés, ed., *Az 1956-os magyar forradalom helye a szovjet kommunista rendszer összeomlásában* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1993), and Gregorz Ekiert, *The State Against Society: Political Crises and their Aftermath in East Central Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[17] Janos M. Rainer, "A rendszerváltás és ötvenhat," in *A rendszerváltás forgatdkonyve: Kerekasztal-targyalasok 1989-ben*, vol. 7 *Alkotmányos Forradalom. Tanulmányok*, ed. András Bozoki (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2000), pp. 651-58.

[18] There is a growing historical literature in Hungary on those patterns of governance — for two conflicting approaches which concentrate on different decades and draw different conclusion about Kádár's regime see Janos M. Rainer, ed., *"Hatvanas Évek" Magyarországon: Tanulmányok* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2004), and Károly Szerencsés and István Simon, eds., *Azok a Kádári "Szep" Napok: Dokumentumok a hetvenes évek történetéből* (Budapest: Kairosz Kiad6, 2004). For studies and collections that concentrate on aspects of Kádár's rule, see Tibor Huszár, ed., *Kedves Jó Kádár Elvtárs! Válogatás Kádár János Levelezéséből, 1954-1989* (Budapest: Osiris, 2002); Melinda Kalmár, Ennivaló és hozomány: *A korai Kádárizmus ideologiája* (Budapest; Magvető, 1998); Zsuzsanna Varga, *Politika, paraszti érdekérvenyesités és szövetkezetek Magyarországon, 1956-1967* (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2001).

[19] This notion is adapted from the author's introduction to János M. Rainer, *Ötvenhat Után* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2003).

[20] I make this case in Mark Pittaway, "The Politics of Legitimacy and Hungary's Postwar Transition," *Contemporary European History*, 13, 4 (2004): 453-75.

[21] Győr-Moson-Sopron Megye Győri Leveltár (Győr Branch of the Győr-Moson-Sopron County Archive, hereafter Gy.MSM.Gy.L.), Győr-Moson megye és Győr thj. város főispánja 1945-1950, Általános iratok (Records of the Lord-Lieutenant of Gyor-Moson County and of the City of Győr 1945-1950, General

Papers, hereafter XXIf.Ib.) Id.; Gyor-Moson megye és Győr thj. város főispánjától. 75/5.foisp.1945.sz. Tárgy: Szeptember havi tájékoztató jelentes, p. 1.

[22] Zala Megyei Levéltár (Zala County Archive, hereafter ZML), Az MDP Zala Megyei Bizottságának iratai (Records of the Zala County Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.57f.) 1/ 70 ő.e., pp. 26-31.

[23] GyMSMGy.L., Az MDP Győr-Moson-Sopron Megyei Bizottság, Mezőgazdasági Osztály iratai (Records of the Agricultural Department of the Győr-Moson-Sopron County Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party, hereafter Xf.402/2/Mezogazdasag) /8 ő.e.; M.D.P. Járási Bizottság Mosonmagyaróvár, Sallai Imre út 3 sz, Jelentés. Mosonmagyaróvár, 1950. augusztus 9-én., p. 1.

[24] For the actions of such radio stations and their interaction with domestic opinion, see Mark Pittaway, "The Education of Dissent: The Reception of the Voice of Free Hungary, 1951-6," *Cold War History*, 4, 1 (2003): 97-116.

[25] See the documents in ZML, Az MSZMP Zala Megyei Bizottságának iratai (Records of the Zala County Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.1f.) 1957/9 ő.e.

[26] Fejér Megyei Levéltár (Fejér County Archive, hereafter FML), A MSZMP Fejer Megyei Bizottságának iratai (Records of the Fejér County Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.19f.) /1957/14 ő.e., p. 59.

[27] For a discussion of this phenomenon in general terms, which reveals parallels with the climate inside Hungary after 1956, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery*, translated by Jefferson Chase, (London: Granta Books, 2003).

[28] Budapest Főváros Levéltára (Archives of the City of Budapest, hereafter BFL), Az MSZMP Budapesti Bizottságának iratai (Records of the Budapest Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.1f.) /app./1958/138 ő.e., pp. 289-95.

[29] For the generation of this settlement in rural areas see Varga, *Politika, paraszti érdekérvenyesités és szövetkezetek*; the issue of the acceptance of the regime among conservative members of the middle class is addressed best in Janos M. Rainer, "Submerging or Clinging On Again? Jozsef Antall, Father and Son, in Hungary after 1956," *Contemporary European History*, 14, 1 (2005): 65-105.

[30] Magyar Országos Levéltár (Hungarian National Archive, hereafter MOL), A Magyar Szocialista Munkaspárt Központi Bizottságának iratai (Records of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, hereafter M-KS-288f) 21/1958/20 ő.e., pp. 252-3; MOL M-KS 288f.2111958/23 ő.e., p. 502; ZML XXXV.1f.1958/12 ő.e.; Feljegyzés a Zalaegerszegi Ruhagyár pártszervezetének agitációs munkájáról, pp. 25-6; BFL XXXV.1f.1958/42 ő.e., pp. 49-52.

[31] MOL M-KS-288f.5/23ő.e./1957.aprilis 23., p. 92.

[32] MOL M-KS-288f.5/96ő.e., p. 3.

[33] For a good example of these cultural assumptions manifesting themselves in internal discussions see MOL M-KS-288f.21/1958/20 ő.e., pp. 1-8.

[34] I outline this argument in the following articles: Mark Pittaway, "Az állami ellenőrzés társadalmi korlátainak újraértékelése: az ipari dolgozok és a szocialista diktatura Magyarországon, 1948-1953," in *Munkástorténet – Munkás-antropologia*, ed. Sánor Horváth, László Pethő and Ezster Zsófia Tóth (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2003), 71-82; Mark Pittaway, "The Reproduction of Hierarchy: Skill, Working-Class Culture and the State in Early Socialist Hungary," *The Journal of Modern History*, 74, 4 (2002): 737-69; Mark Pittaway, "The Social Limits of State Control: Time, the Industrial Wage Relation and Social Identity in Stalinist Hungary, 1948-1953," *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 12, 3 (1999): 271-301.

[35] For the Plovdiv events see R.J. Crampton, *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 176; on the revolt in Plzen the best available account is still Otto Ulc "Pilsen: the unknown revolt," *Problems of Communism*, 14, 3 (1965): 469; for a summary of the 1953 events in the GDR see Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR, 1949-1989* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 177-87.

[36] BFL, Az MDP Budapesti Bizottságának iratai (Records of the Budapest Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.95f.) 2/215 ő.e., pp. 54-5.

[37] For the political background the best account is provided in János M. Rainer, *Nagy Imre: Politikai életrajz. Első kötet 1896-1953* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1996), 489-542.

[38] For some examples see, Politikatörténeti és Szakszervezeti Levéltár (Archive of Political History and the Trade Unions, hereafter PtSzL), A Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa iratai (Records of the Central Council of Trade Unions, hereafter XI1.2f.)7/33d./1953; Feljegyzés a kormányprogrammal kapcsolatos üzemi tapasztalatokról, p. 1; ZML XXXV.57f.2/Agitprop/15 ő.e.; Jelentés Nagy Imre országgyűlési beszéde utáni megnyilvánulásokról, p. 1.

[39] For some examples see "Forditsunk nagyobb gondot a dolgozók kéréseire," *Futószalag* (4th July, 1953), p. 2; "Türhetetlen körülmények között dolgoznak a vigonyfonoda tépő dolgozoi," *Pamut Újság* (9th July, 1953), p. 3.

[40] Miklós Vásárhelyi, "Az első meghiúsitott reform kisérlet," *Medvetánc*, 2-3 (1988): 149-205.

[41] Open Society Archives (OSA), Records of the Radio Free Europe Research Institute, Hungarian Unit (300-40); Item No. 08699/53, p. I.

[42] For an excellent insight into this "rearguard" action in anti-communist western Hungary, see Gy.MSMGy.L.X.402f.2/Mezogazdasag/20o.e.; Magyar Dolgozók Pártja Sopron Járási Bizottsága, Magyar Dolgozók Pártja Megyei Pártbizottsága Mezőg.Osztály Bognár Elvtársnak, Sopron, 1953. augusztus. 11;

for a useful account of official harassment of individual landholders, see OSA 300/40; Item No. 10105/54, pp. 1-7.

[43] No reliable figures are available, but for an indication which is likely to understate the true effects of this phenomenon see MOL, A Magyar Dolgozók Pártja Központi Vezetőségének iratai (Records of the Central Leadership of the Hungarian Workers' Party, hereafter M-KS276f.) 65/251 ő.e., p. 147.

[44] GY.MSMGY.L.X.402f.2/Mezőgazdaság/24 ő.e.; A Győri Textilművek Patronálási csoport jelentese a páli "Sarló Kalapács" TSZCS-ben tett látogatásról, 1953.VII.7, p. 1.

[45] BFL XXXV.95f.2/215 ő.e., p. 139.

[46] On the implementation of protective legislation in 1953, see Mark Pittaway, "Industrial Workers, Socialist Industrialisation and the State in Hungary, 1948-1958" (PhD thesis: University of Liverpool, 1998), p. 276; MOL M-KS-276f.94/593 ő.e., pp. 1-4.

[47] MOL M-KS-276f.94/827 ő.e., pp. 319-20.

[48] OSA 300/40; Item No. 8083/54, p. 12.

[49] PtSzL XII.2f.7/4d./1953; Jelentés a kormányprogramm utáni bérhelyzetről, p. 4, PtSzL XII.2f.7/30d./1953; Levél az Élelmiszeripari Minsztérium Munkaügyi- és Bérfőosztály Vezetőtől a Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa Munkabér-Osztálynak, 1953. oktober 8., p. 4.

[50] MOL M-KS-276f.94/743 ő.e., pp. 83-89.

[51] For some of the specific wage measures aimed at the skilled and experienced, see PtSzL XII.2f.7/28d./1953; Minisztertanács Bértitkársága Javaslat az 1954. évben végrehajtandó bérügyi intezkedésekre.

[52] MOL M-KS-276f.94/743 ő.e., p. 58.

[53] PtSzL, Bányaipari Dolgozók Szakszervezetének iratai (Records of Mineworkers' Union, hereafter XII.30f.)745d./1954; Bányaipari Dolgozók Szakszervezete, Szénbanyaszati Trözt Bizottság, Tatabánya. Jelentés Bányaipari Dolgozók Szakszervezeti szénbanyaszati tröszt Bizottságának 1953.évi IV. negyedévi Jelentése, p. 4.

[54] See the documents in BFL XXXV.95f.4/62 ő.e.

[55] FML, Az MDP Dunai Vasmű épitkezés és Dunapentele /Sztálinváros/ Városi Bizottságának iratai (Records of the Danube Steel Works' Construction Site and Dunapentele/Sztálinváros City Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party, hereafter 17f.)2/PTO/22 ő.e.; Kivonat II. A K.V. márciusi határozatával kapcsolatos hangulatról beszámoló, pp. 5-7; BFL XXXV.95f.2/215 ő.e., p. 139.

[56] Gy.MSMGy.L., Az MDP Győr Városi Bizottságának iratai (Records of the Győr City Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party, hereafter X.405f.) 5/117 ő.e.; Jegyzőkönyv felvetetett 1956. augusztus 21-en az Öntöde és Kovácsológyárban megtartott Párt-Csucsbizottsági értekezletén, pp. 2-3.

[57] MOL M-KS-276f.94/829 ő.e., pp. 90-2.

[58] PtSzL XII.30f.922d./1955; Jelentés a bérezés egyszerűsitésének, és Összevonásának levitele, annak eredményei és hibái.

[59] This is clear from the article "Teljesithetok-e bányaüzemeinkben a normák?" *Harc a Szénért: Tatabánya Város PártBizottságának Lapja* (4th November, 1956), p. 3.

[60] BFL, Az MDP Budapest IV. Kerületi Bizottságának iratai (Records of the Budapest IVth District Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.176f) 2/158 ő.e., p. 32.

[61] FML XXXV.17f.2/8 ő.e.; A rendkívüli taggyűlésen felvetett kérdések, pp. 1-10.

[62] BFL XXXV.176f.2/154 ő.e., p. 275.

[63] BFL XXXV. 176f.2/154 ő.e., p. 188.

[64] BFL XXXV.176f.2/154 ő.e., p. 274.

[65] MOL M-KS-276f.66/23 ő.e., pp. 42-3.

[66] MOL M-KS-276f.66/23 ő.e., p. 63.

[67] BFL XXXV. 1 76f.2/149 ő.e., p. 216; BFL XXXV. 1 76f.2/149 ő.e., pp. 7-8.

[68] BFL XXXV.176f.2/147 ő.e., p. 16.

[69] ZML, Az MDP Letenye Járási Bizottságának iratai (Records of the Letenye District Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.61f.)1/42 ő.e.; Lovászi üzem helyzetéről feljegyzések és tajékoztató, pp. 1-2; ZML XXXV.61f.1/42 ő.e.; Nagyaktiva ülésen készült feljegyzések, p. 1.

[70] BFL XXXV. 1 76f.2/149 ő.e., p. 4.

[71] "Régi harcos szemmel látom," *Futószalag* (22 September 1956), p. 3.

[72] OSZK 412.Vllf.7d. – Komárom Megyei Tanács – Titkárság; Városi Tanács VB. Elnöketől, Oroszlány. 775/1957. Tárgy: Az ellenforradalmi események leirása, pp. 1-2.

[73] For some useful accounts of the Revolution in the east of the country, see Attila Szakolczai and László A. Varga, eds., *A vidék forradalma, 1956. I kötet* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet – Budapest Főváros Levéltára, 2003).

[74] Tibor Filep, *Debrecen, 1956: Forradalom, nemzeti ellenállás, megtorlás* (Debrecen: Csokonai Kiadó, 2000); István Gazdag, ed., *1956 Dokumentumai Hajdu-Biharban: Az 1956-os forradalom Hajdu-Bihar megyei történetének válogatott dokumentumai* (Debrecen: Az 1956-os Intézet Hajdu-Bihar Megyei Kutató-Csoportja, 1993), pp. 29-49; Attila Szakolczai, "Borsod-Abauj-Zemplen megye," in Szakolczai & Varga, *A videk forradalma, 1956*, pp. 121-35; Csaba Farkas, "Csongrad megye," *ibid.*, pp. 201-32.

[75] For the former, see János M. Rainer, "Helyi Politikai Szerveződés 1956-ban – Az Újpesti Példa," in *Az Ostromtol a Forradalomig: adalekok Budapest multjarol*, ed. Zsuzsanna Bencsik and Gábor Kresalek (Budapest: Budapest Főváros Levéltára, 1990), pp. 101-112; for the latter see KEMÖL, XXXV.2f.3 /1958/23 ő.e., pp. 4-9.

[76] For two provincial examples, see Erzsébet Csomor, *1956 Zalaegerszegen* (Zalaegerszeg: Millecentenárium Közalapítvány, 2001), pp. 25-33; "Győr-Sopron megyei Ügyészség, 1957 Tük. 0019 szám. Feljegyzés," in József Bana,

ed., *Győr 1956 III. Munkástanács-vezetők pere a Győri Megyei Bíróság előtt, 1957-1958* (Győr: Győr Megyei Jogu Város Önkormányzata, 2002), pp. 5-6.

[77] For one example from Nagykanizsa, see ZML, Az 1956-os Magyar Forradalom és Szabadságharc gyűjtemény (1956 Revolution and Struggle for Freedom Collection, hereafter XXXII.15f.) ld.; Zalamegyei Ügyészség Zalaegerszeg. 1957. Bül.59/3 szám. Izgatás büntette miatt Gáti József nagykanizsai lakós elleni bünügyben a nyomzati iratokat az alább vádirat benyujtásával teszem át., pp. 1-2.

[78] See, Frigyes Kahler *et al.*, eds., *Sortüzek 1956*, 2nd ed. (Budapest & Lakitelek: Igazságügyi Minisztérium – Antológia Kiadó, 1993).

[79] An excellent example of the confused ways in which revolutionary councils were elected and the way in which they reflected the preferences of the crowd is provided by events in Tatabánya, see OSZK Kt. 1956-os Gy., Gy.NB.1127/1957, ld.; Győri megyei bíróság népbirósági Tanácsa. Nb.1122/1957.3.sz. Jegyzőkönyv készült a népi demokratikus államrend megdöntésére irányuló szervezkedés vezetésének büntette miatt Dr Klébert Márton és tarsa ellen inditott bünügyben a Győri megyei birósag népbirósági Tanácsa előtt 1957. október 26-napjan megtartott nyilvános tárgyalásról, pp. 2-3.

[80] Csomor, *1956 Zalaegerszegen*, pp. 25-8.

[81] Adapted from "Halottak – Mosonmagyaróvár Anyakönyvi Hivatal," reprinted in Kahler *et al.* eds., *Sortüzek 1956*, pp. 61-66.

[82] Az 1956-os Magyar Forradalom Történetenek Dokumentációs és Kutató Intézete, Oral History Archivium (Oral History Archive of the 1956 Institute, hereafore 1956-os Intézet, OHA) 449, p. 5.

[83] For some of these see Sándor Horváth, *A kapu és a határ: mindennapi Sztálinváros* (Budapest: MTA Történettudomanyi Intézete, 2004), pp. 172-85.

[84] OSZK Kt., 1956-os Gy. Budapest Fővárosi Bíróság Népbirósági Tanácsának anyaga, Kósa Pál és társai (Peoples' Court Council of the Budapest City Court, Pál Kósa and associates, hereafter Bp.NB. 4491/74), 3d./4; Budapest Rendőrfőkapitányság Politikai Nyomozó Osztály, Vizsgálati Osztály. Jegyzőkönyv Kollár József kihallgatásáról. Budapest, 1957. augusztus 1, p. 1.

[85] "Hogyan történt? Az ellenforradalom tatabányai napjaiból," *Komárom Megyei Hírlap* (26th January, 1957), p. 4.

[86] ZML, XXXII.15f.1d./B.322/1957; Zalamegyei Ügyészség Zalaegerszeg. 1957. Bül.59/3 szám. Izgatás büntette miatt Gáti József nagykanizsai lakós elleni bünögyben a nyomzati iratokat az alább vádirat benyujtásával teszem át, p. 1.

[87] OSZK Kt., 1956-os Gy. Bp.NB. 4491/74, 3d./8; Budapest Fővárosi Bíróság Népbirósági Tanácsa NB.11.8017/1958. LXXXVIII Jegyzőkönyv készült a szervezkedés és egyéb büncselekmények miatt Kósa Pál és 32 társa ellen inditott büntető ügyben a Budapesti Fővárosi Bíróság Népbirósági Tanácsanal 1959. február 9-én megtartott zárt tárgyalásról, p. 3.

[88] 1956-os Intézet, OHA 417, p. 17; OSZK Kt.412.Vllf.1d.-Komárom Megyei Bíróság Elnökségi iratok 1958; Az Esztergom Megyei Bíróság Elnökétől, Esztergom, Kossuth Lajos u.5.sz.Tel:212. 1958. EI.IX.B.27.sz. Tárgy: 1958.évi május havi Jelentés, pp. 2-3.

[89] 1956-os Intézet, OHA 449, p. 9.

[90] BFL, Az MSZMP Budapest IV. Kerületi Bizottságának iratai (Records of the Budapest IV District Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.9f.)1957/15O.e., p. 102; OSZK Kt. 1956-os gy., Bp.NB. 4491 /74, 1d./8; Bp.Főkap.Pol.Nyom.Osztály Vizsgáló.57 nov 6, Bp., pp. 1-2.

[91] OSZK Kt., 1956-os Gy. Bp.NB. 4491/74, 1d./6; Budapesti Rendőrfőkapitányság Politikai Nyomozó Osztály, Vizsgálati Alosztály. Jegyzőkönyv Leszai/Lothringer/Béla őrizetes kihallgatásáról. Budapest, 1957. augusztus 23., p. 1.

[92] These are reprinted as "The "Sixteen Points" Prepared by Hungarian Students, October 22-23, 1956," in *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution. A History in Documents,* ed. Csaba Békés, Malcom Byrne & János M. Rainer (Budapest & New York: Central European University Press, 2002), pp. 188-90.

[93] BFL, XXXV.9f.1957/15O.e., p. 102.

[94] OSZK Kt., 1956-os Gy. Bp.NB. 4491/74, 1d./6; Budapesti Rendőrfőkapitányság Politikai Nyomozó Osztály, Vizsgálati Alosztály. Jegyzőkönyv Leszai/Lothringer/Béla őrizetes kihallgatásáról. Budapest, 1957. augusztus 23., p. 1.

[95] BFL, XXXV.9f.1957/15 ő.e., p. 102.

[96] OSZK Kt., 1956-os Gy. Gy.NB. 4491/74, 2d./6; Budapesti Rendőrfőkapitányság Politikai Nyomozó Osztály VI/7 csop. Jegyzőkönyv Bpest, 1957. VI. 24. Tóth Gábor gyanusitott kihallgatásáról, p. 2.

[97] OSZK Kt., 1956-os Gy., Bp.NB. 4491/74, 2d./3; A Budapesti Fővárosi Bíróság Népbirósági Tanácsa. T.NB.8017/1958/III Jegyzőkönyv készült a szervezkedés és egyéb büncselekmények miatt Kósa Pál és 32 társa elleninditott büntető ügyben a Budapesti Fővárosi Bíróság Népbirósági Tanácsanál 1958. április 30-án megtartott zárt tárgyalásról, p. 4.

[98] ZML, XXXII.15f.3d./B.695/1958; Zalamegyei Ügyészség Zalaegerszeg. B.10.050/1958/3 szám. Megyei Bíróságnak, Zalaegerszeg. A népi demokratikus államrend megdöntésére irányuló szervezkedés büntette miatt Villányi József pilisszentlászlói lakós és társai ellen inditott bünügyben a keletkezett nyomzati iratokat a következő vádirat kiseretében teszem át, pp. 1-2.

[99] "Éjszakai Jelentések Kanizsáról," reprinted in, Erzsébet Csomor & Imre Kapiller, eds., *'56 Zalában: A forradalom eseményeinek Zala megyei dokumentumai 1956-1958* (Zalaegerszeg: Zalai Gyűjtemény 40, 1996), p. 56.

[100] OSZK Kt. 1956-os Gy., Gy.NB.1127/1957, 1d.; Győr Sopronmegyei Ügyészség, Győr, 1957. Bül. 372 szám. Vádirat népidemokratikus államrend megdöntésére irányuló szervezkedés vezetésének büntette miatt dr. Klébert Márton és tarsai ellen inditott bünügyben, pp. 1-2,

[101] OSZK Kt. 412/Vllf.2d.-Esztergom Megyei Bíróság-429/1957-Kovács Imre és társai; B.429/1957/5 szám. Jegyzőkönyv készült a Nép.d.áll.rend. meg-

dönt.ir.mozg.való részv.btte. miatt Kovács Imre és társai ellen inditott bünügyben az Esztergomi Megyei Bíróság Tatabányán bíróságnál 1957 szeptember hó 2 napján tartott zárt tárgyalásról, p. 3.

[102] BFL, XXXV.9f.1957/15 ő.e., p. 102.

[103] Pittaway, "Industrial Workers, Socialist Industrialisation and the State in Hungary," pp. 347-48.

[104] PtSzL, Az 1956-os gyüjtemény (1956 Collection, hereafter IX.290f.) 37 ő.e., p. 57.

[105] For the deeds of the worker's council in its first three days of operation see Dobricia Cosic, *7 nap Budapesten 1956. oktober 23-30* (Budapest: Bethlen Gábor Könyvkiadó, 1989), pp. 80-2; Bill Lomax, ed., *Worker's Councils in 1956*, translated by Bill Lomax & Julian Schöpflin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 15-7.

[106] PtSzL, IX.290f.39 ő.e., pp. 1-2.

[107] "The Workers Council of the Ganz Wagon and Machine Factory," in Lomax, *Worker's Councils in 1956*, p. 51.

[108] PtSzL, IX.290f.37 ő.e., pp. 95 & 107.

[109] OSZK Kt. 1956-os Gy., Bp.NB.4491/74,3d./8; Budapesti Fővárosi Bíróság Népbirósági Tanácsa NB.11.8017/1958.szám. L. Jegyzőkönyv készült a szervezkedés és egyéb büncselekmények miatt Kósa Pál és 29 társa ellen inditott büntető ügyben a Budapesti Fővárosi Bíróság Népbirósági Tanácsanál 1958. október 13-án megtartott zárt tárgyalásról, p. 11.

[110] OSZK Kt., 1956-os Gy., Bp.NB.4491/74,2d./6; B.M. Budapesti Rendőrfőkapitányság Pol.Nyom.Oszt.Vizsg.Alosztálya. Jegyzőkönyv Sohonyai János gyanusitott kihallgatásáról. Budapest, 1957. augusztus 15-én, p. 4.

[111] OSZK Kt. 1956-os Gy., BP.NB.4491/74,3d./5; Budapesti Rendőrfőkapitánysag Politikai Nyomozó Alosztály Vizsgálati Alosztály. Jegyzőkönyv, Budapest, 1957. június 10-én, p. 3.

[112] PtSzL, IX.290f./52 ő.e., pp. 5-20.

[113] ZML, XXXII.15f.2d./B.833/1957; A zalaegerszegi megyei Bíróság. B.833/1957.6.szám. Jegyzőkönyv készült a népidemokratikus államrend megdöntésére irányuló szervezkedés és egyéb büntette miatt Mecseri József ellen inditott bünügyben a zalaegerszegi megyei Bíróságnál Zalaegerszegen 1958 január 14-én megtartott nyilvános tárgyalásról, pp. 1-6.

[114] Columbia University Libraries, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Bakhmeteff Archive (hereafter CUL RB&ML, BAR), Hungarian Refugees Project (hereafter CURPH), Box 16., Interview No. 524, pp. 5-6.

[115] OSZK Kt., 412/VIIf.7d.–Komárom Megyei Tanács, Titkárság; Várgesztes kőzsegi Tanács V.B. Az 1956. évi október 23.-utáni események megörökitése, pp. 1-7.

[116] ZML, XXXII.15f.2d./B.781/1957; Zalamegyei Ügyészség Zalaegerszeg. 1957.Bül.189.szám. Vádirat. Népidemokratikus államrend megdöntésére irányuló büntette miatt Papp Imre és társai ellen inditott bünügyben, pp. 3-4.

[117] OSZK Kt., 412/VIIf.7d.– Komárom Megyei Tanács, Titkárság; Vértesszöllős községi Tanács V.B.től. 572/1957.szám. Tárgy: 1957. október 23-I és azt követő ellenforradalmi cselekmény leirása, p. 1.

[118] ZML, XXXII.15f.2d./B.1003/1957; A zalaegerszegi megyei Bíróság. B.1003/1957-6.szám. A Népköztársaság Nevében! A zalaegerszegi megyei Bíróság Zalaegerszegen 1958. január 28 és 29 napján nem nyilvánosan megtartott tágyaláson meghozta a következő itéletet, p. 5.

[119] ZML, XXXII.15f.2d./B.780/1957; A zalaegerszegi megyei Bíróság. B.780/1957/6.szám. A Népköztársaság Nevében! A zalaegerszegi megyei Bíróság Nagykanizsán 1957. november 11-19-én megtartott nyilvános tágyalás alapján meghozta a következő iteletet, p. 7.

[120] OSZK Kt., 412.VIIf.2d.-Esztergom Megyei Bíróság-429/1957-Kovács Imre és társai; B.429/1957/5 szám. Jegyzőkönyv készült a Nép.d.áll.rend. megdönt.ir.mozg.való részv.btte miatt Kovács Imre és társai ellen inditott bünügyben a Esztergomi Megyei Bíróság Tatabányán Bíróságnál 1957 évi szeptember hó 2 napján tartott zárt tárgyalásról, p. 3.

[121] MOIL M-KS-288f.21/1958/22 ő.e., p. 241.

[122] BFL, XXXV.1f.1958/46 ő.e., p. 44.

[123] 1956-os Intézet, OHA 484, p. 44.

[124] 1956-os Intézet, OHA 449, p. 21.

[125] László Eörsi, *Ferencváros 1956: A kerület fegyveres csoportjai* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1997); László Eörsi, *A Tűzoltó Utcai Fegyveres Csoport a Forradalomban* (Budapest: Szazadvég Kiadó–1956-os Intézet, 1993); László Eörsi, *Corvinisták 1956: A VIII kerület fegyveres csoportjai* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2001).

[126] Tibor Drucker "A felszabadult Csepel," in Jenő Adamovits *et al.*, eds., *Csepel Története* (Budapest: Csepel Vas- és Fémmüvek Pártbizottsága, 1965), pp. 476-77.

[127] András B. Hegedüs *et al.* eds., *1956 Kézikönyve. Megtorlás és Emlékezés* (Budapest 1956-os Intézet, 1996), pp. 303-5.

[128] OSZK Kt. 1956-os Gy., GY. NB.1127/1957,2d.; B. M. Komárom megyei Rendőrfőkapitányság Politikai Osztály, Vizsgálati Alosztály, Jegyzőkönyv, dr. Klébert Márton kihallgatásáról. Tatabánya, 1957.aug.3, pp. 2-3.

[129] FML, Az MSZMP Dunaújvárosi Bizottságának iratai (Records of the Dunaújváros City Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.22f.)1957/4/a ő.e.; Október 23-tól November 7-ig, p. 41.

[130] PtSzL, IX.290f./38 ő.e., pp. 10-2.

[131] BFL, XXXV 9f 1957/15 ő.e., p. 104.

[132] PtSzL, IX.290f./31 ő.e., p. 5.

[133] "The First Decree of the Kádár Government concerning the Workers' Councils," Lomax, ed., *Worker's Councils in 1956*, p. 97.

[134] Rainer, "Helyi Politikai Szerveződés 1956-ban," pp. 107.

[135] PtSzL, IX.290f./31 ő.e., pp 5-8; Balázs Nagy "Budapest 1956 The Central Workers' Council," in *Eyewitness in Hungary*, ed. Bill Lomax (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1980), 165-81; and those of Miklós Sebestyen, Ferenc Tőke and Sándor Rácz reprinted in István Kemény & Bill Lomax, eds., *Magyar munkástanácsok 1956-ban* (Paris: Magyar Füzetek, 1986), pp. 160-7, 167-89 & 217-39.

[136] BFL, XXXV.1f.1957/29 ő.e., pp. 24-6; PtSzL, IX.290f./31 ő.e., pp. 138-43.

[137] PtSzL, IX.290f./31 ő.e., pp. 172-84.

[138] For the final elimination of the Greater Budapest Central Workers' Council see Bill Lomax, *Hungary 1956* (London: Allison & Busby, 1976), pp. 165-9; BFL, XXXV.1f.1957/29 ő.e., pp. 24-85.

[139] Kajári, ed., *Rendőrségi Napi Jelentések, Első kötet*, pp. 383-4, 415, 432, 467, 478-9, 505; MOIL M-KS-288f.25/1957/7 ő.e., p. 135.

[140] FML, XXXV.19f.1957/14 ő.e.; B.M. Fejérmegyei Rendőrfőkapitányság Politikai Nyomozó Főosztálya Feljegyzés, p. 2; MOL M-KS-288f.25/1957/7 ő.e., p. 75; MOL M-KS-288f.25/1957/8 ő.e., p. 152; Lomax, *Hungary 1956*, pp. 168-69.

[141] BFL, XXXV.1f.1957/42 ő.e., p. 121.

[142] BFL, XXXV.1f.1956-7/41 ő.e., p. 160; BFL, XXXV.1f.1956-7/41 ő.e., p. 170; BFL, XXXV.1f.1956-7/41 ő.e., p. 23.

[143] BFL, XXXV.1f.1957/43 ő.e., pp. 16-7.

[144] FML, Az MSZMP Fejér Megyei Bizottságának iratai (Records of the Fejer County Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.9f.)/1957/14 ő.e.; B.M. Fejérmegyei Rendőrfőkapitányság Politikai Nyomozó Osztálya, p. 2.

[145] BFL, XXXV.1f.1957/45 ő.e., p. 243.

[146] BFL, XXXV.1f.1957/46 ő.e., p. 46.

[147] BFL, XXXV.1f.1958/41 ő.e., pp. 28-9.

[148] BFL, XXXV.1f.1958/134 ő.e., p. 372.

[149] ZML, XXXV. 1 f. 1958/12 ő.e.; A tapasztalatok összefoglalása, p. 12.

[150] ZML, XXXV.1f.1958/12 ő.e.; Feljegyzés a Zalaegerszegi Ruhagyár pártszervezetének agitációs munkájáról, pp. 5-6.

[151] BFL, XXXV.1f.1958/134 ő.e., p. 29.

[152] MOL M-KS-288f.23/1957/34 ő.e., p. 34.

[153] MOL M-KS-288f.21/1958/20 ő.e., pp. 252-3.

[154] ZML, XXXV. 1f.1958/12 ő.e.; Feljegyzés a Zalaegerszegi Ruhagyár pártszervezetének agitácios munkájáról, pp. 25-6.

[155] BFL, XXXV.1f.1958/42 ő.e., pp. 49-52.

[156] MOL M-KS-288f.21/1958/20 ő.e., p. 250.

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The Impact of 1956 on the Relationship between the Kádár Regime and the Peasantry, 1956-1966

Zsuzsanna Varga

Nothing illustrates better the strength, political maturity and on occasion the wisdom of the Hungarian peasantry than the fact that it was able to realize its aspirations and satisfy its interests during the Kádár Era. From the second half of the 1960s on, it was customary in Hungary to brag about the achievements of Hungarian agriculture. The politicians who did this, however, failed to mention the decisive role that was played in the attainment of this success by the demands the peasantry voiced in 1956 and the gradual though reluctant granting of these by the Kádár regime. The compromise that had come about between the Communist Party and the peasantry in this period had dramatic precedents.

For us to arrive at a realistic assessment of the Kádár regime's agrarian policies we must make a brief survey by way of comparison of the principal elements of Hungary's pre-1956 agrarian politics, the peasantry's grievances and the demands that arose from these during the autumn of 1956.

The regime and the peasantry during the first half of the 1950s

The tactless and forceful attempt at the sovietization of Hungary's countryside and agriculture during the first half of the '50s left a deep mark on the practices and especially the mentality of the country's peasantry. This should not surprise us as the Rákosi regime's decisions impacted on every aspect of the peasants' existence. We can outline these decisions only in a cursory manner.[1]

The regime continued and even expanded the system of compulsory deliveries that had prevailed during the war. The hardship this

system placed on producers increased from one year to the next. The tax burden on private farmers, especially the better-off ones, was increased exponentially. Disregarding all local precedents, the regime embarked on the establishment of large collective farms on the pattern of the Soviet *kolkhozes*. This process brought with it the consolidation of the cultivated fields that usually involved the expropriation of the lands of peasants who had not joined the collectives. These peasants were compensated with fields elsewhere, similar in size but often inferior in quality — and scattered at greater distances from the settlements. This practice created uncertainties for the producers and undermined the peasantry's sense of the sacredness of private property. Already during the early '50s, these and other measures resulted in the increase of incidents of traditional legal practices being violated. Moreover, in the establishment of the collectives the authorities began resorting increasingly to the use of physical violence. Thousands of peasants, especially the well-to-do ones, the so-called *kulaks*, were deported to internment camps, or were imprisoned — and their property confiscated.

The subjugation of village residents to unprecedented arbitrary measures did not result in open resistance but its negative consequences grew by leaps and bounds: hundreds of thousands abandoned agricultural work, more and more land went uncultivated, agricultural output declined — as did the productivity of the land. In the meantime tension grew throughout the countryside.

The changes that followed Stalin's death in March 1953 served to arouse expectations of better times and resulted in a declining chance of a violent explosion of resentment. In Hungary these changes were associated with the person of Imre Nagy. The "New Course" he announced in July 1953 involved a re-assessment of Stalinist agrarian policies and their partial "correction". The subsequent directives of Nagy's government significantly reduced the peasantry's tax burdens and compulsory deliveries. They also decreased the uncertainty involved in agricultural production. What was even more important, they allowed peasants to leave the collectives.

Hungary's population welcomed these changes, especially in the countryside where their impact was more direct and immediate. Soon it became obvious however that the rejoicing was premature. Hardly two years passed when in the spring of 1955 Nagy was forced from office as Hungary's Stalinist dictator Mátyás Rákosi regained power. He and his supporters returned to the policies that had prevailed before 1953. In the

agrarian sector this meant increase in taxes and deliveries, as well as the resumption of campaigns to drive people into the collectives. The new turn of events caused huge disappointment for the people of the country's villages.

As we mentioned, in the years before 1953 the individual and collective grievances of the peasantry did not lead to open rebellion. Active resistance did not manifest itself after the re-establishment of the old Stalinist order in 1955 either. Instead, the peasants availed themselves of various means of protesting at an individual level.[2] They made their deliveries late and failed to fulfil them completely. They resisted with renewed determination the demands that they enter the collectives. Even if they signed the declaration of intent to join, they kept postponing the act of joining for months and when they became members, they did everything possible to avoid collective work. In the summer of 1956, furthermore, in Hungary's western counties (especially in Zala, Vas, Baranya, Somogy and Győr-Sopron), where agriculture was traditionally more productive, attempts to leave the collectives multiplied.[3] Recent research suggests that during the first half of 1956 despair and hopelessness kept increasing in the villages and a serious crisis was in the making.[4]

The revolution and fight for independence started on October 23rd with student demonstrations and the subsequent armed clashes. The revolution arrived in Hungary's villages after a few days of delay. In just about every settlement in the country, without any coordination from above, revolutionary activity started. This manifested itself in the establishment of new political organizations: national councils, revolutionary committees, national assemblies, etc., and in the election of new leaders. These new forums of authority defined the areas of their concern about which they expected the national government to take action. It speaks to the gravity of the accumulated tension that they did not compile suggestions and requests but presented demands.

It is enlightening to examine the documents that the assemblies of the villages drew up and accepted during the end of October and the beginning of November. If we compare these, the similarity of their contents is striking — despite the fact that these villages were often far from each other and they did not communicate with each other.

The demands of the villages can be divided into two categories. To the first of these belong those demands that coincided with the Revolution's fundamental goals. There are three basic demands that can be found in every document that hails from the villages. Namely, that Soviet

troops leave the country, the strong arm of the communist dictatorship (the hated secret police or Államvédelmi Hatóság) be disbanded, and that political parties be allowed to function freely. Among the second category of demands were those that emanated from the grievances of the peasants. When we examine these, we see that they called for the wholesale rejection of Stalinist agrarian policies. There were differences in emphasis, in the phrasing of these demands, but in essence they were the same. They demanded the end of forced collectivization, the restoration of the expropriated lands, the abolition of compulsory deliveries, and sharp reductions in taxes.[5]

It was this unanimity of demands that the Kádár regime, which had been established with Soviet help in November, had to consider and understand. This was not an easy task. In the rest of this study we plan to outline this process and the increasing inclination toward a compromise with the peasantry in the years after 1956.

The fate of peasant demands after the revolution's defeat

The tragic fate of the 1956 revolution had taught definitive lessons to both society and the regime in Hungary. The Hungarian people realized that they couldn't count on the West to achieve their aspirations and that their country had to remain a part of the Soviet bloc. At the same time Hungary's new leadership realized that they not only had to avoid repeating the excesses of their predecessors but that they had to make fundamental changes. The most important lesson the leaders of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSzMP) drew from the revolution was that the "building of socialism" could not come at the expense of the living standards of the country's masses. As János Kádár pointed on at the Dec. 2, 1956 meeting of the Party's Provisional Central Committee, "In connection with the solving of the [country's] economic problems, our policy is that, whenever we face a decision as to where the proceeds from production should go, the first priority should be the gradual increasing of the working people's living standards."

While the authorities from the close of 1956 on dealt with their enemies through the harshest of measures, they also sought the means of compromise with Hungarian society. In this respect the most effective tool proved to be the policies pertaining to the standard of living.[7] This was in contrast to what prevailed before 1956 when the forced development of

the heavy and military industries was predicated on the low production of consumer goods.

The realization of the new policies regarding living standards in the early years of the new regime — and for some time even after — depended on the supply of foodstuffs, since the population spent much of their income on the buying of food.[8] This is not surprising as the bulk of Hungarian society subsisted on little and often not very nutritious food not only before 1945 but in the 1950s. As a result, during the early Kádár era, people became interested in improving their nourishment.

The importance of supplying food to the masses made the improvement of agricultural output a significant goal for the regime. This involved giving incentives to the private producers who had the greatest potential for increasing overall agricultural production. To improve the relationship between the authorities and the agrarian sector of society the communist party first had to reduce the tensions that its previous policies had created. In this the regime found an effective tool in the emergency program that had been developed by the Agricultural Department of the Party's central organization. A draft of this program, through a historical coincidence, had come up for discussion with the representatives of the agricultural committees of the party's county leadership, on 22 October 1956, the day before the Revolution broke out.[9] In this meeting existing agrarian policies were heavily criticized. This is indicated by some of the statements that were voiced: "Unfortunately the majority of the cooperatives produce less than the private peasants, they sell less, make less profit and they have to deal with more bureaucratic obligations."[10] This conclusion was known at the time to statisticians, still its acknowledgement in public was very important. To this had to be added the following radical observation. "In the future we must not follow unthinkingly the experience of the Soviet Union in the establishment of *kolkhoses* but we have to take into consideration our own peculiar conditions... our traditions with cooperatives."[11]

The participants in this meeting agreed that both the cooperatives and private producers had to be assured that they could carry on with their operations without arbitrary interference and that they would be allowed to profit by them. "In order to assure the producers that their work would be rewarded the present pricing system had to be revamped,... and the regime of compulsory deliveries abandoned."[12]

The Kádár government's very first directive regarding the agrarian sector redressed the greatest grievance of the peasantry by abolishing compulsory deliveries.

The government program announced on the t of November had already promised the ending of the deliveries. This momentous decision was brought about by certain circumstances. The government of Imre Nagy, recognizing the most important demand of the peasantry, on the 30th of October had proclaimed the abolition of compulsory deliveries. Kádár's Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Government did not dare to reverse this decision. The peasants were in the midst of gathering the harvest and were in possession of the produce, at a time when industrial production was at a halt because of the general strike in the country. To provoke a conflict with the peasantry under these circumstances could have had grave and unforeseen consequences.

Under these conditions the Kádár government not only did not rescind the decision of the Nagy government, but it wanted to create the impression that it was responsible for the abolition of compulsory deliveries. This is indicated by the fact that the order of the Presidential Council of 12 November, made the abolition of the deliveries retroactive to the 25th of October.[13]

In the fall of 1956, within a time-span of two weeks, the regime of compulsory deliveries was abolished not once but twice. The burden that had been placed on the shoulders of the peasantry during the war, came to an end. This burden had existed for more than a decade. After the war it continued, purportedly to assure the country's food supply and to enable the payment of reparations demanded by the victorious Allies; and, staring in 1949, they became more onerous in accordance with the demands of the newly introduced planned economy. With the abolition of the regime of deliveries ended a state of everyday dependency of the producers on the state. The result was a substantial improvement in the situation of producers.

It has to be pointed out that with this step a component of the planned economy was altered that up to then had been considered unalterable — and Hungary was the first to do this among socialist states.[14] In the interest of consolidating its power, the Kádár regime gave up a mechanism that up to then enabled the communist state to gain possession of produce virtually without cost, and to transfer significant income from agriculture to industry.

With the dismantling of compulsory deliveries a situation emerged in which the state could gain access to agricultural produce only if it offered realistic prices to the producers. From this time on the state, instead relying on compulsion, established new bases for its relations with the producers, both the individual peasants and the collectives. It began to use market mechanisms and tried to make producing profitable for the people of the villages. After 1956 then, in an important sector of the Hungarian economy, the market and production for profit gained some limited legitimacy. Soon it became evident that the new system was more effective in supplying of the country's population with foodstuffs than the previous one had been.[15]

The Kádár government seemed ready to remedy the peasantry's grievances in other respects as well. The elements of its new agrarian policies were announced on November 27, 1956, in its proclamation to the peasantry:

> The Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Government condemns fully the erroneous agrarian policies of the previous years, the aggressive collectivization, the harassment of potential members, and all the measures that had resulted in the setting-back of Hungary's agriculture by years. These measures had caused material and moral damage not only to the peasantry but also impaired the supply of foodstuffs to the workers and the people of the cities. The government has already abolished forcible collectivization... and the regime of compulsory deliveries.... The government is determined to use every means available to it to support that efforts of the peasantry to improve agricultural production and will provide economic support to both the collectives and individual peasants.[16]

This government proclamation promised to support both the private and the collective sector of the agriculture without any discrimination between the two. What is even more important, it left the decision to choose between the two to the peasants. This was strengthened by the directions issued by the Department of Agriculture for the leaving of the collectives and for their dissolution by the members.[17]

These promises were repeated in newer and newer directives that lightened the duties of the producers. They revoked the compulsory plans for planting and for the selling of produce according to state regulations. They made the buying of fire and hail insurance optional, abolished the

special "kulak-tax" and permitted, with certain restrictions, the selling and buying of land.[18]

As a result of these measures, two-thirds of the existing collectives dissolved themselves and, with that, several hundred thousand private agricultural units started functioning. The general trend was for formerly landed peasants to leave the collectives and those who originally had little or no land, to stay in them.

At the end of 1956 not only those people said no to the regime of *kolkhozes* who left the collectives but also those who, lacking other economic opportunities, had stayed in them. The fact was that the collectives that survived found that their members wanted them to function differently from the way they had functioned before. This amounted to a wholesale abandonment of the Soviet-style model for collectivised agriculture.[19]

This aspiration on the part of members of the collectives is not surprising since among the peasants' demands of the fall of 1956 we can find those that insisted on the complete independence of the collectives. They urged the enacting of legislation that enabled the creation of the widest range and variety for producer's collectives and assures their financial and administrative independence.

The Kádár regime supported these aspirations as indicated by the following passage of its November 27 proclamation: "The government deems it necessary that the law regarding the collectives should enable these to determine the conditions of their functioning and the distribution of their profits. The government does not tolerate interference in the affairs of the collectives."[20]

In this changed atmosphere the collectives that continued functioning began formulating their own destiny in more and more aspects of their existence. They searched out the more effective forms of producing and they regulated their lives according to their local circumstances.[21] The democratically elected leadership in more and more places took on arguing with the local authorities, especially those of the Party which out of old habit wanted to exercise the principle of Party supremacy.

The greatest ambition of the co-operatives' members was a regular and adequate income. Instead of waiting for being allocated certain work units after the end of the financial year, the cooperatives switched to rewarding the members with shares of the produce. This was done through the traditional means of share-cropping or through related systems of reward.[22]

The most important consequence of the above initiatives by the members of the collectives was the fact that they got income throughout the year either in form of cash or through receiving a share of the produce harvested. Through this the needs of the members were met before those of the state or local authorities.

As the Party was reconstructed after 1956, it took a survey of the transformation that had taken place in agriculture. The changes they discovered in the functioning of the collectives that had survived generated a lot of argument among the Party leaders. The conservative elements of the leadership vehemently attacked the initiatives that had been taken in the collectives as they saw in these the implementation of "capitalist means" — and they argued that it was not possible to build socialism by capitalist methods.[23] At the same time another faction of the leadership, those with a reform spirit argued that through the implementation of formulas that allowed the members to profit through their work they would become interested in increasing the collectives' output and efficiency, and all this would serve the interests of the state as well.[24]

Collectivization through new methods

In the first half of 1957 it seemed that the HSWP expected Hungarian agriculture to come be multi-sectored in the long run.[25] The emphasis had been put on the increase of produce rather than the re-establishment of big collective farms. At the end of 1958 however, came a sudden change in the Party's agrarian policies. On pressure from the Soviet Union the Party set out to complete the transformation of Hungarian agriculture into large-scale collectivised agriculture.[26] For the peasantry this was the third occasion in a decade that it became obvious that the communists would tolerate the practice of individual farming only on a temporary basis. The disappointment was again great.

The winter of 1958-59 was a difficult time for the Communist Party of Hungary as well. First of all, the acceleration of collectivization meant that the earlier promises made to the peasantry had to be abandoned. Secondly, the Party had to cope with the fact that the memory of the forced collectivization campaigns of the past were still vivid both among the peasants and among the party functionaries. The latter had not forgotten the failures of these campaigns. But the new campaign was

important: the Kádár regime had to prove its ability to rule Hungary in the eyes of the Kremlin.

At the beginning of the new collectivization campaign during the winter of 1958-59 only 13 percent of the country's land was in the hands of the collective farms. By the end of March, 1961, this had increased to 71 percent. Concomitantly the number of collective members had grown in the first three months of 1959 from 200,000 to 500,000, during the winter of 1959-60 from 500,000 to 900,000, and finally, during the following winter from 900,000 to 1,200,000. This meant that from 80 percent of the people being in the private sector of the agrarian economy at the beginning of the campaign, by the time of its completion 75 percent of the peasants were members of collectives.[27]

Precisely because the transformation was so important, the Kádár regime, in addition to old measures of compulsion, used new, innovative means of achieving success. Unlike in previous campaigns which focused on the poor peasants, the government looked to the more experienced and knowledgeable small and middle elements of the peasantry as their potential base. The men in charge of the campaign first approached the most respected men in the villages and tried to convince them to enter, hoping that the others would follow their example. In this way they expected to accelerate the new transformation of the countryside. This method assured the village elite that it would not be displaced from its place in the social hierarchy. While in the 1950s the regime usually placed politically reliable city dwellers at the head of the collectives, now such positions were often awarded to a local farmer. An important aspect of this process was the fact that entry into the collectives was open also to the peasants who used to be deemed "kulaks" in the 1950s. They could even join the leadership. To gain the support of the peasantry, the land that was brought into the collective remained nominally in the possession of the peasant, who had nevertheless to be paid a fee for such land. It was also proclaimed that every collective member had to be given a certain amount (up to half a *hektar*) of household land for his private use. This land would play an important role in supplying each household with its basic food needs. Also important was the fact that members of the collectives were made eligible for state pensions and the other benefits of the country's social safety net. From 1959 to 1961 relatively more — compared to previous practices — funds as well as technical personnel, were allocated to the agrarian sector of the economy.[28]

On the surface the new collectivization campaign was successful, but in reality problems arose already during the process of transforming Hungary's agriculture. The defensive strategies that had been used by the peasantry in the first half of the 1950s re-surfaced. The villagers surveyed their chances of existing outside the collectives: if there was a chance of getting a job in industry, the most productive member of the family took that chance and the others, usually the wife and elder members, joined the collective. The person who represented the family in the collective often worked just enough to maintain the family's entitlement to the private household plot of land. Wherever the head of the household was unable to get a job in industry, he tried to get temporary work outside the collective. He would work illegally in construction, or undertook contract work in a nearby state farm. For such work pay was immediate.

The situation regarding labour in the village of Dúzs in Tolna County was not uncharacteristic of the general situation. Here according to a contemporary press report "... even the members of the Party left, at the time of peak demand for labour, for the neighbouring village of Szakály, to do some hoeing of corn for private producers..." At the same time in the collective the corn remained uncultivated to the end of the growing season. According to the report someone added to this story information on what the wife of the party secretary was doing all this time: "She spent the entire summer in their family's summer residence on Lake Balaton where she cooked for and did the laundry of house guests and brought home the proceeds to her husband."[29]

The tendencies revealed by such anecdotal evidence are corroborated by national statistics.[30] As a result of the transformation of agriculture the number of people gainfully employed in agriculture declined by 350,000. Their proportion among the wage-earners declined from the 1959 figure of 42.5 percent to 35 percent by the end of 1962. The membership of the collectives also declined from the point of view of age and sex composition. In 1958 half the members were under 40, while at the end of 1961 two-thirds of the members were over 40, in fact 36 percent of them were made up of members over 60. The average age of a collective member in 1958 was 41, while in 1961 it was 52. Since most of the members who had left the agricultural sector had been men, the proportion of women engaged in agriculture increased also: from the 1958 figure of 26 percent to 38 percent in 1961.[31]

In addition to this the problems of work discipline worsened — especially in the newly established collectives. A good portion of the members (varying from 25 to 60 percent) took no part or took an inadequate part in the work of the collectives. Furthermore, the amount of work the members performed on the average kept declining from one year to the next. The number of work units preformed by the average family in 1958 was 390, in 1959 it was 301, and in 1960 it was 169.[32] Family members became less and less involved in the collectives' activities. It took years for the peasants to become accustomed to the new, collective work organization of the agricultural cooperatives.

To understand the labour problems of the collectives we have realize that the mechanization of production did not ante-date the exodus of manual labour but followed it with a considerable time-lag.[33] As a result of this in the majority of collectives detrimental co-relations developed between the available machinery and manual labour. Even though, when compared to previous collectivization campaigns, after 1959 the actual amount and the proportion of funding increased significantly, the provision of machinery could not keep up with the rapid increase in both the number a size of collectives.[34]

Dialogue between the Collectives and the Authorities

Despite the success and quick conclusion of the collectivization campaign the Communist Party was faced with the issue of being able to force the peasants into a communal form of agriculture but not being able to ensure that they performed their duties diligently and conscientiously. On top of this it proved impossible to compensate within a short while for the departure of the thousands who had left the agricultural sector with the increased mechanization of the collectives.[35] The vast majority of these faced the problems of scarcity of machinery, shortages of labour, and an unenthusiastic and even disgruntled membership, and for years could not prove the superiority of large-scale production.[36] Under these circumstances the Kádár regime, that had promised to improve the food supply of the country, had to rely on food imports. This in a country that before 1945 had been a significant exporter of food. Between 1959 and 1962 Hungary had to import 227,000 tons of grains a year on average.[37]

Early in 1960, on his return from a trip to Moscow, Kádár said the following about this problem:

> The situation in connection with the production of grain is that in our [socialist] camp... is that... not only can we make no impact on world markets... but we can supply our own internal needs only with difficulties.... In this connection the opinion was expressed [in Moscow] ... that the first duty of every member of the socialist camp is to assure its own grain supplies. In this regard Comrade Khrushchev, speaking in the name of the Soviet delegation, announced in an unmistakably clear manner, that [the Soviet Union] could not assume in the long term the role of producing all the cereal needed and having everyone come to [it] for grain.[38]

By 1961 it had become obvious: for the newly established collective farms to become true large-scale enterprises they had to overcome their problems. For the regime to achieve its food production objectives it would have to rely on the traditional strengths of the country's agriculture. These included the Hungarian peasant's eagerness for work, his diligence, as well as the capacity of his private household plot for production. We have to keep in mind that, until as late as the middle of the '60s, agricultural co-operatives were based on a traditional, handicraft-based production.[39]

The regime was in a difficult situation. Because of its experiences in 1956 and its promises regarding a higher standard of living, it was compelled to make newer and newer compromises. What concessions it had given after 1956 to the collectives that had survived — concessions that many in the Party considered temporary — had to be extended to the newly re-established collectives as well, including share-cropping and premiums in kind made to the members. Through this "dialogue" with the regime, the members of the collectives gained the right to keep more livestock than the regime had originally intended. It has to be kept in mind that for the private farmers much of their income had traditionally derived from such sources. Such demands contradicted the Soviet, in particular the Stalinist model — as well as theory — of collective agriculture. Since the Kádár regime did not want to turn formally against these tenets, it tolerated the practices established in the collectives for the motivation of the members to produce more, but for many years did not sanction them formally through legislation.[40]

According to official ideology, the essential elements of socialist agriculture were such things as work units, organization into brigades, work teams, etc., and anyone who wanted something else in their place —

as has been mentioned above — was an opponent of socialism. The acceptance of the contradiction between ideology and practice, and the institutionalization of the practices that had been developed, took place in stages. Instrumental in the development of policies that facilitated this process was an increasingly organized and vociferous agrarian lobby. Among those who played significant roles in it were Lajos Fehér, Ferenc Erdei, János Keserű, Ernő Csizmadia and János Hont.[41]

The resolution of this problem had started with the 16 February 1960 decision of the Party's Political Bureau that, on an interim basis, allowed the collectives to deviate from the use of the work unit system. With this decree the regime accepted those locally-produced solutions that were designed to take advantage of the membership's interest in material profit. "The Political Bureau considers it necessary that the remuneration of the workers according to the locally proven methods receive the widest possible dissemination.... What constitutes the best way of doing this has to be decided by the general meeting of the cooperatives in every case."[42]

The Bureau's decision was closely connected to the change that had been implemented in the leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture where the dogmatically oriented Imre Dögei was replaced by the practically minded Pál Losonczi, the president of a cooperative. This decision signalled an important change in the Party's policies regarding the cooperatives. In the implementation of the new policy the greatest problem was caused by the fact that everything that provided incentives for the membership remained illegal as it conflicted with the laws governing the cooperatives.[43] To counteract this situation, a specific dialogue ensued between the cooperatives and the authorities.

Early in 1961 the Minister of Agriculture announced his proposals for the means of distributing the profits of the cooperatives and for the remuneration of the work of its members.[44] He proposed to accept those methods of rewarding and organizing work that had been practiced hitherto even though they had not been sanctioned legally. The Department of Cooperatives of the Ministry of Agriculture suggested in the spring of 1961 the following:

> The cooperatives must receive further substantial assistance so that they can make the most of the work of their members, that they can use methods that had proven effective and though this they can implement the formulas for profit distribution and remuneration. The regular payment of advances have to be introduced everywhere. The way profits are distributed has to

> be systematically monitored. Making use of the lessons learned, the proven methods have to be disseminated in ever widening circles.[45]

In the dissemination of the profit-sharing and remuneration practices that had proved themselves effective an important role was played by the press. At the same time the members of the Party's Agitation and Propaganda Department organized local seminars for party and government functionaries to familiarize themselves with these practices.[46] That this was very necessary was revealed by the speech Lajos Fehér made on Dec. 20, 1961, before one of the Party's organs known as the Political Academy:

> The initiatives of the cooperatives in regard to the distribution of proceeds deserve to be noticed and studied by the various organs of our Party. You should see to it that in every cooperative the methods of distributing the profits that are more conducive to interesting [the membership] in more effective production are propagated as fast as possible.... We must combat... those tendencies that try to protect the [traditional way of remunerating work through work units] against the [new] methods of providing incentives....[47]

In the course of my research, I managed to discover the true dynamics of the dialogue between the state and the agricultural cooperatives. In particular, I found that from 1961 on, the formulation of the directives by the Ministry of Agriculture was always preceded by an analysis of the experiences of the cooperatives in the preceding year.[48] The directives for the new year were issued on the basis of these. For example for the year 1961 it was suggested that premiums be paid to members only in cases where such premium was due only in the case of the fulfilment of production plans. During the year it turned out however that this policy did not contain enough incentives for the membership and as a result for 1962 a more practical policy for the paying of premiums was introduced.[49]

Parallel to these developments the Party's and the State's opinion of share-cropping also changed. In 1961 this practice had gone from being illegal to being tolerated — at least for the time being. From 1962 on its spread became legal, when the Party acknowledged that this practice too, served the interest of both the cooperatives' members and the

state.[50] By doing so in effect an old tradition that had its origins in feudal times gained acceptance. Interestingly this practice better served the interests of both the peasants and the practice of large-scale production than did previously employed routines.

One of the developments of 1962 was that the practice of cash payments to members became universal. With this a means of remuneration became accepted, one that had little to do with the system of work units. The Stalinist dogma, according to which the cooperatives could distribute their profits only through the principle of work units, was abandoned.[51]

The plans for the members' remuneration in 1962 was influenced by the fact that in that year the three-year ban of 1959 on withdrawal from the collectives was coming to an end. It could be expected that many of the people who entered then — since they did so under duress — would use this opportunity to leave. The new system of remuneration, as well as more widespread practice of share-cropping was expected to decrease the number of departures — and this is what happened.

The dialogue between the cooperatives and the authorities over the years resulted in the fact that practices introduced locally went from the illegal but tolerated category into the accepted and even state-supported one. Through this the collectives gained greater room for manoeuvre. The resourcefulness of the peasants thereby alleviated the impact of the system based on work-units as a result of which in more and more places the old dogmas of remuneration were circumvented. At the same time, because the management of the cooperatives from above adhered to the Soviet model, the return of the old ways was not an impossibility.

The knowledge of this fact, and the pressure exerted by the reformers grouped around Lajos Fehér, resulted in the undertaking by the Party's leadership of a comprehensive reform effort during the winter of 1961-62.[52] The reform focused on three areas: the working out of new pricing, taxation and financing policies for agriculture, the review of the system of managing agrarian policies, and the formulation of new laws for the collectives.[53]

The program of reform was worked out by 1963.[54] Its implementation was delayed beyond the winter of 1963-64 because the economic problems Hungary faced at the time both at the local and the national level. Nevertheless the mere existence of these plans had an energizing effect in the emergence of a movement for the reform of the country's agriculture. This movement resulted in the revamping of Hungary's

agrarian policies starting with 1966, two years before introduction of the famous New Economic Mechanism, a major revision of national economic policies that was introduced on 1 January 1968.

Conclusions

In the relationship between Hungary's communist regime and the peasantry 1956 brought new departures. While during the first half of the 1950s the country's Communist Party pursued aggressive, strife-inducing agrarian policies, the post-1956 Kádár regime tried to minimize and even resolve the many conflicts it encountered in its dealings the Hungary's agricultural producers.

This trend manifested itself already in November of 1956. The new government was compelled to realize that confrontation with the producers of the country's food supply, just when a general strike was paralyzing industrial production, could have disastrous consequences. This fact explains the new regime's apparent readiness to remedy the peasantry's most conspicuous grievances. Furthermore, the government even made promises that in the future it would respect the peasantry's tradition of the private farming and its right to the ownership of land on a small scale.

This approach to resolving the problems of the countryside existed, to a varying degree, not only during the period that followed the crushing of the Revolution but also during subsequent years. The leadership of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party had learned that the abuses that had led to the revolution of 1956 had to be avoided. Boosting the living standard in Hungary became a priority for János Kádár's government. Accordingly, increasing agricultural output and, in this connection with this, the providing of incentives to the producers, became crucial to the government. Because of the regime's commitment to improve living standards, the country's agrarian sector, and thereby the peasantry, attained greater strategic importance.

The relationship between the regime and the peasantry came under stress again when collectivization, as result of pressure from Moscow, reemerged as a policy at the end of 1958. The Party's leaders were faced with a dilemma and in order to make sure that agricultural production not suffer as a result of collectivization, they had to make concessions to the peasantry. This pragmatic approach was not the result of

conscious planning but was implemented as a byproduct of random decisions made in response to the developments in the countryside. The political decision-makers did play a role in it, as did the initiatives of the cooperatives and their membership. The policy came about as an interaction of pressures from above and below. As a result of the dialogue between the country's leaders and its agrarian society we can observe in Hungarian agriculture, from the early 1960s on, a cautious and gradual deviation from the Soviet model.

We have to emphasize however, that this departure from the Soviet-style *kolkhoz* pattern was never openly admitted by the Hungarian leadership. Kádár and his associates did not want to get into an ideological dispute with the leadership of the Soviet Communist Party; they satisfied themselves with implementing procedures that were at variance with Soviet agrarian practices. The result of this pragmatic approach to the solution of agricultural problems was the beginning of the development of a unique Hungarian model of collective agriculture. Yet the above-outlined duality of Kádárian agricultural policies continued into the late 1960s and beyond, and often caused strife between the regime and village society.

NOTES

[1] On the subject of the agrarian policies of the Rákosi era see Gyula Erdmann, *Begyűjtés, beszolgáltatás Magyarországon 1945-1956* [Compulsory collections and deliveries in Hungary, 1945-1956] (Békéscsaba: Tevan, 1993); Martha Lampland, *The object of labour. Commodification in socialist Hungary* (Chicago-London, 1995), 144-160; József Nagy, "A kulákkérdés és megoldása az 1948-1953-as években" [The "kulak question and its solution, 1948-1953], *Múltunk*, 1999, no 3. 41-97; József Nagy, "A szántóföldi művelés állami irányítása és a paraszti gazdálkodás feltételei az 1950-es években (1949-1956)" [The state management of production on the fields and the conditions of peasant husbandry in the 1950s] *Századok*, 2001, 5, pp. 1075-1124; József Nádasdi, "Tagosítások és birtokrendezések Magyarországon, 1949-1956," *Agrártörténeti Szemle*, 1992, 1-4, pp. 154-218; Sándor Szakács: From Land Reform to Collectivization (1945-1956), in: *Hungarian Agrarian Society from the Emancipation of Serfs (1848) to the Re-privatization of Land (1998)*, ed. Péter Gunst (New York, 1998), 257-298; Pál Závada, *Kulákprés. Család- és falutörténeti szociográfia Tótkomlós, 1945-1956* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi – Széphalom, 1991).

[2] About the special value systems and traditions of the peasants see Edit Fél and Tamás Hofer, *Arányok és mértékek a paraszti gazdálkodásban* [Ratios

and scales in peasant husbandry] (Budapest, 1997); Samuel L. Popkin, *A racionális paraszt* [The rational peasant] (Budapest, 1986).

[3] The crisis of the collectives became so serious that the Party's top leadership was obliged to ponder the problem. Magyar Országos Levéltár (hereafter: MOL) [National Archives of Hungary] M-KS-276.f. 53/298. őrzési egység (unit of records for keeping, hereafter ő.e.), Jegyzőkönyv a Politikai Bizottság 1956. augusztus 9-én tartott üléséről.; 276.f. 53/304, ő.e., I. kötet: Jegyzőkönyv a Politikai Bizottság 1956. szeptember 28-án tartott üléséről.

[4] On the situation of the agricultural section during the spring and summer of 1956 see Iván Pető and Sándor Szakács, *A hazai gazdaság négy évtizedének története 1945-1985* [The history of four decades of the national economy] vol. I (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1985), 273-280; László Szántó, "A Somogyi összegzés kaposvári vitája," *Agrártörténeti Szemle*, 1995, 1-4, pp. 353-437; Varga Zsuzsanna, "A falusi társadalom feszültséggócai az 1950-es évek közepén," *Múltunk*, 2006, 4 (in print).

[5] Belényi Gyula, "Párhuzamos falurajzok. Kistelek és Mórahalom 1956-ban," in: *'56 vidéken* (Zalaegerszegen 1991. november 13-án rendezett Levéltári Napon elhangzott előadások), manuscript, Zalaegerszeg, Zala Megyei Levéltár, 1992. 12-22.; Béres Katalin, "Egy zalai kisfalu a forradalom idején – Ozmánbük 1956. In: *'56 Zalában* (A forradalom eseményeinek Zala megyei dokumentumai 1956-1958) Zalai Gyűjtemény 40., Zalaegerszeg, 1996. 7-17.; Magyar Bálint, "1956 és a magyar falu," *Medvetánc*, 2-3 (1988): 207-212.; Rainer M. János, "Budapest és vidék 1956-ban," *A vidék forradalma* (Az 1991. október 22-én Debrecenben rendezett konferencia előadásai) Debrecen, 1992, 37-48.; Tyekvicska Árpád, "Helyi forradalom. Önszerveződés Nógrád községben, 1956-ban," in: *'56 vidéken*, Zalaegerszeg, 1992.; Valuch Tibor, "Agrárkérdések és a magyar falu 1956-57-ben," *Évkönyv* VIII. 2000, Budapest, 1956-os Intézet, 286–302.; Attila Szakolczai and László Á. Varga, eds., *A vidék forradalma, 1956* vol. I (Budapest, 2003); Attila Szakolczai, ed., *A vidék forradalma, 1956* vol. II (Budapest, 2006).

[6] *A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt ideiglenes vezető testületeinek jegyzőkönyvei. I. (1956. november 11–1957. január 14)* (Budapest: Intera Rt., 1993), 151.

[7] György Földes, *Hatalom és mozgalom, 1956-1989* (Budapest: Reform Könyvkiadó–Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1989), 49-73.; Péter Kende, *A párizsi toronyból (Válogatott politikai írások, 1957-1989)* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1991), 79-95.

[8] Valuch Tibor, "A bőséges ínségtől az ínséges bőségig – a fogyasztás változásai Magyarországon az 1956 utáni évtizedekben," *Magyarország a jelenkorban – Évkönyv 2003* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2003), 51-78.

[9] MOL M-KS-288. f. 28/1957/5. ő.e., A KV Mezőgazdasági Osztályának előterjesztése a Politikai Bizottsághoz a mezőgazdasági politikában szükséges főbb változásokra. 1956. október 22.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] Törvények és rendeletek hivatalos gyűjteménye, 1956 (Budapest, 1957), 62.

[14] K-Eu. Wädekin, *Agrarian Policies in Communist Europe* (The Hague/ London, Allanheld, Osmun Publishers; Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982), 65.

[15] MOL M-KS-288. f. 28/1957/13. ő.e., Az Élelmezésügyi Minisztérium előterjesztése az MSZMP Politikai Bizottságához az új felvásárlási rendszer eredményeiről és tapasztalatairól (19 November 1957).

[16] *Magyar Közlöny*, 27 November 1956, 579-580. A Magyar Forradalmi Munkás-Paraszt Kormány felhívása a parasztsághoz!

[17] *Törvények és rendeletek hivatalos gyűjteménye, 1956*, p. 263.

[18] *Ibid.*, 68-69, 263-265.

[19] This is supported by the documents related to the cooperatives of the Communist Party's Department of Villages (later, the Department of Agriculture). MOL M-KS-M-KS-288. f. 28/1957/1. ő.e., Feljegyzés a tsz-ek helyzetéről és legfontosabb problémáiról (10 January 1957); Jelentés a mezőgazdaság helyzetéről (26 January 1957); Jelentés a parasztság különböző rétegeinek problémáiról és a falusi pártmunkáról (18 February 1957).

[20] *Magyar Közlöny*, 27 November 1956, 580. This position was supported by the order of the Minister of Agriculture no. 65/1956 which concluded that only the membership of the cooperatives had the right to organize production and the sale of produce as well as the management of the co-ops. See the *Magyar Közlöny*, 27 November 1956, 580-581.

[21] MOL M-KS-288. f. 28/1958/14. ő.e., A tsz-ek törvényes és alapszabályszerű működésének vizsgálata. (A Legfőbb Ügyészség összefoglaló jelentése).

[22] MOL M-KS-288. f. 28/1957/2. ő.e., Jelentés az Intéző Bizottság számára a termelőszövetkezeti mozgalom helyzetéről (29 May 1957), 28/1957/17; ő.e., Megyei jelentések a termelőszövetkezeti mozgalom helyzetéről.

[23] MOL M-KS-288. f. 17/2. ő.e., Dögei Imre feljegyzése a mezőgazdaság szocialista átszervezésének néhány problémájáról. 16 April 1957.

[24] The advocates of the hard line in agrarian pilitics came not from the Party's Agricultural Department (headed by Lajos Fehér), but from the leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture, lead by Imre Dögei. On the debates between the two factions see Levente Sipos, "Reform és megtorpanás: Viták az MSZMP agrárpolitikájáról (1956-1958)," *Múltunk*, nos. 2-3 (1991): 188-197; Zsuzsanna Varga, *Politika, paraszti érdekérvényesítés és szövetkezetek Magyarországon 1956-1967* (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2001), 43-51.

[25] This was revealed in the document "Agrárpolitikai Tézisek" [Agrarian Theses] published in July 1957. See, *A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt határozatai és dokumentumai 1956-1962* (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1973), 102-122.

[26] Ferenc Donáth, *Reform és forradalom* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1977), 166-175; Sándor Orbán, *Két agrárforradalom Magyarországon* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1972), 217-258; Iván Pető and Sándor Szakács, *A hazai*

gazdaság négy évtizedének története 1945-1985, vol. I (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1985), 440-454.

[27] Béla Fazekas, *A mezőgazdasági termelőszövetkezeti mozgalom Magyarországon* (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1976), 129, 137.

[28] Pető and Szakács, *A hazai gazdaság*, 441-454.

[29] *Népszabadság*, 26 Feb. 1961, Dúzson sem más az igazság.

[30] MOL M-KS-288. f. 17/5. ő.e., A Központi Statisztikai Hivatal (KSH) feljegyzése a paraszti családok és a paraszti népesség számának alakulásáról.

[31] *Mezőgazdaságunk a szocialista átszervezés idején, 1958-1962* (Budapest: KSH, 1963), 147.

[32] *Mezőgazdasági Statisztikai Zsebkönyv* (Budapest: KSH, 1964), 272f.

[33] According to contemporary propaganda the process happened exactly the opporite way. In the daily *Népszabadság* the following picture was painted about the situation of labour shortage as late as the spring of 1963: "The decrease in the agrarian labour force was made possible by the increased mechanization of agriculture," *Népszabadság*, no. 83, 1963.

[34] While during the early 1950s the investment in agriculture amounted to between 10.5 and 13.3 percent of the investment in the economy, from 1959 to 1964 this ratio icreased to between 18 and 21 percent. The real difference becomes obvious only when we add the fact that between 1958 and 1964 the actual amount of investment doubled, while from 1951 to 1953 the increase was much slower. *Mezőgazdasági Statisztikai Zsebkönyv* (Budapest: KSH, 1962), 135; and the same source for 1965, page 17.

[35] The decline in the opportunities for investment on the eve of the second five-year-plan affected also the agricultural sector by three billion *forints*. At the same time the sudden completion of collectivization in many areas — such as the mechanization of the cultivation of the soil, of transporation, etc. — should have required, as early as 1961 and 1962, the fulfilment of the plans for 1965. MOL M-KS-288. f. 28/1961/29. ő.e., A mezőgazdaság második ötéves tervének néhány főbb irányelve és megvalósításának fő feltételei. Manuscript.

[36] During the first five years of the reorganization of agriculture (1960-1965) production hardly reached the yearly averages attained during 1958-1959. For years the country's livestock, excepting sheep, continued to decline, as did the livestock's quality. On this see Pető and Szakács, *A hazai gazdaság*, 466-474.

[37] MOL M-KS-288. f. 5/354. ő.e., Jelentés az MSZMP Politikai Bizottsága részére a magyar-szovjet gazdasági tárgyalásokról (15 Dec. 1964).

[38] A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt Központi Bizottságának 1959-1960. évi jegyzőkönyvei (Budapest: Magyar Országos Levéltár, 1999), 420.

[39] Fazekas, *A mezőgazdasági termelőszövetkezeti mozgalom Magyarországon*, p. 187.

[40] Zsuzsanna Varga, *Politika, paraszti érdekérvényesítés és szövetkezetek Magyarországon, 1956-1967* (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2001), 82-103.

[41] *Ibid.*, 58–66.

[42] MOL M-KS-288. f. 5/170. ő.e., Jegyzőkönyv a Politikai Bizottság 1960. február 16-ai üléséről.

[43] A Népköztársaság Elnöki Tanácsának 1959. évi 7. számú törvényerejü rendelete a mezőgazdasági termelőszövetkezetről és a termelőszövetkezeti csoportról. Törvények és rendeletek hivatalos gyűjteménye. 1960. 95-104.

[44] The Minister published such a document for the first time in 1961. See: "Javaslatok a jövedelemelosztás és munkadíjazás formáira a termelőszövetkezetekben," *Mezőgazdasági Értesítő*, 11 Jan. 1961, pp. 9-14.

[45] MOL M-KS-288. f. 28/1961/ 5. ő.e., Jelentés az FM Kollégiumához a termelőszövetkezeti mozgalom és megszilárdítás helyzetéről (1961. március 10.)

[46] In addition to the *Népszabadság* the periodical *Pártélet* is also worthy of attention.

[47] Lajos Fehér, "Erősítsük termelőszövetkezeteink szocialista jellegét," *Társadalmi Szemle*, 1961, no. 2., pp. 18-31.

[48] MOL M-KS-288. f. 28/1962/9. ő.e., Megyénkénti jelentések a termelőszövetkezetek anyagi ösztönzése és vezetése területén történt változások hatásairól.; 288. f. 28/1963/13. ő.e., Jelentés a Földművelésügyi Minisztérium Kollégiumához a termelőszövetkezetek jövedelemrészesedési és munkadíjazási tapasztalatairól.

[49] Javaslatok a jövedelemelosztás és munkadíjazás formáira a termelőszövetkezetekben. Az FM kiadása, 1962.

[50] MOL M-KS-288. f. 28/1963/5. ő.e., Feljegyzés a termelőszövetkezeteknél alkalmazott részesművelési és százalékos eredményességi részesedési rendszerről.

[51] MOL M-KS-288. f. 17/6. ő.e., A Földművelésügyi Minisztérium Szövetkezetpolitikai Főosztályának feljegyzése a pénzbeni díjazást alkalmazó termelőszövetkezetek vezetőinek értekezletéről.

[52] MOL M-KS-288. f. 5/245. ő.e., Jegyzőkönyv a Politikai Bizottság 1961. szeptember 26-ai üléséről; 288. f. 4/45. ő.e., Jegyzőkönyv a Központi Bizottság 1962. február 9-ei üléséről; 288. f. 4/47-48. ő.e., Jegyzőkönyv a Központi Bizottság 1962. március 28-30-ai üléséről.

[53] For further details see: Zsuzsanna Varga, "Mezőgazdasági reformmunkálatok (1961-1964)," *Múltunk*, 2000, no. 2., pp. 253-282.

[54] MOL M-KS-288. f. 5/322. ő.e., Jegyzőkönyv a Politikai Bizottság 1963. december 10-ei üléséről. Napirend: 1. Előterjesztés a mezőgazdaság állami irányító szervezetéről. 2. Előterjesztés a mezőgazdasági ár-, adó- és pénzügyi rendszer továbbfejlesztésének irányelveiről. 3. Előterjesztés mezőgazdasági politikánk kérdéseiről.

[55] MOL M-KS-288. f. 5/326. ő.e., Jegyzőkönyv a Politikai Bizottság 1964. február 4-én megtartott üléséről. Napirend: 1. Mezőgazdasági politikánk kérdései.; 288. f. 4/66-67. ő.e., Jegyzőkönyv a Központi Bizottság 1964. február 20-22-i üléséről. Napirend: 2. Mezőgazdasági politikánk kérdései.; in the same collection: 68. ő.e., Jelentés a Központi Bizottság számára a mezőgazdaság helyzetéről.

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Falsifying History in János Kádár's Hungary: Early Cinematic Representations of the Revolution

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In the 1970s and 1980s, the Hungary of János Kádár, Communist Party chairman from 1956 to 1988, was widely recognized as the most liberal and open of the Eastern European communist regimes. With a mixed economy, the nation enjoyed relative prosperity and the status of "the happiest barracks in the Soviet camp." The Kádár era was also marked by a depoliticized citizenry more concerned with personal than public affairs. Kádár had been installed during the 1956 revolution, when he abandoned his initial support for the uprising and conspired with Soviet leaders to form a new government. The economic and social permissiveness that Kádár tolerated was the reward accorded the public for its political quiescence and acceptance of the legitimacy of his administration. This tacit bargain was struck as the communists sought to bring stability to the nation in the aftermath of the failed revolution and the period of brutal reprisals that followed it.

Miklós Sulyok points out that this grand compromise required the public to do more than eschew politics.[1] The communist regime's message was, "don't choose from that world that's closed to you, don't read anything we don't place in your hands, don't look at anything we don't show you, don't think about anything we don't ask you to." This effort at mind control was intended not only to foster political apathy, but to erase memory of the past. In the words of Gábor Gyáni, the essential element of the Kádárian depoliticization of society was the leaching out of collective historical memory.[2] The compromise between the regime and the people "rested on nontalk,"[3] and foremost among the taboo historical subjects was the 1956 revolution.

However, the effectiveness of the state's policy of forced forgetting and the government's ability to erase memory has been questioned

recently, as writers have noted the many ways in which information about the uprising circulated, either unofficially or as products of command culture.[4] Gyáni, for instance, disputes the myth of total amnesia, noting that 1956 leaked into public consciousness in countless ways: The sight of Russian soldiers stationed in Hungary was a visible reminder of the uprising they had suppressed. The absence of the hundreds of thousands of people who fled the country in 1956 reminded their families and friends of the nation's loss. Even the experience of living under the relative comfort of "goulash communism" was an indirect reminder of the source of the compromise.

János M. Rainer also refines the notion of collective national amnesia when he writes that the silence of the Kádár era hardly meant that people had forgotten what happened.[5] The silence may have signalled acquiescence, he argues, but it did not imply public approval of the regime nor acceptance of its explanations about the "crimes" committed by the martyred revolutionary prime minister, Imre Nagy, and thousands of others. Besides, he points out, the silence was far from complete. The "counter-revolution" was taught in history classes, and it was the subject matter of television documentaries and journal articles on major anniversaries. Rainer makes a useful distinction when he points out that the *revolution* was off-limits as a historical subject in Hungary and was kept alive by emigres and picked up in the late 1970s by dissidents, but the *counter-revolution*, that is, the version of the events promulgated by the authorities, was indeed discussed.[6]

This paper explores the role of film in the constitution of national memory about Hungary's 1956 revolution. From the period of massive arrests and reprisals, film was one site where images and interpretations of the events were presented to the public.[7] During the high Kádár years, 1956 was treated more subtly in such films as Zoltán Fábri's *Twenty Hours* (Húsz óra, 1965) or István Szabó's *Father* (Apa, 1966). In the decade leading up to the collapse of communism, the uprising was addressed openly by film-makers including Péter Gothár (*Time Stands Still* [*Megáll az idő*], 1982), Pál Sándor (*Daniel Takes a Train* [Szerencsés Dániel], 1983), and Péter Gárdos (*Whooping Cough* [*Szamárköhögés*], 1986). This paper is a first step in examining the shifting modes of presentation of the events of 1956 in feature films made during the Kádár years. My purpose is to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the collective amnesia of the Kádár era as a case study in the formation of collective memory and national identity.[8] Research questions to be

addressed include the following: How have films about the 1956 uprising contributed to the establishment of collective historical memory about the events? What archetypal themes, images, icons, and musical motifs associated with 1956 have been constructed and conveyed through film? How are the events and the historical agents involved in the events named? What is the relationship between the representation of these events and the historical backdrop against which they were produced and presented to the public? This paper will deal with films made during the immediate post-revolutionary period, that is, *At Midnight* and *Yesterday*. Before presenting my analysis, I want to offer some general remarks about feature films that touch on 1956.

An Overview of films about 1956

There have been at least a couple of attempts to compile comprehensive lists of films that deal with the revolution. In 1991, Tibor Sándor published a slim volume that comprises short descriptions of fifteen such films made between 1957 and 1990 (see Appendix A). The 1956 Institute published a comprehensive filmography in 1996 that includes feature films, documentaries, and television programs related to the uprising. Casting a broad net, the editors included films that can be read as veiled references to 1956, such as Miklós Jancsó's *The Round-Up* (Szegénylegények, 1965), where reprisals after the 1848 revolution could be interpreted in light of more recent experiences, Péter Bacsó's *The Witness* (A tanú, 1969), where a show trial can be read as the Rajk trial, or Károly Makk's *Another Way* (Egymásra nézve, 1982), where the repression and intimidation of the characters recalls the climate of the times.[9] Thus, the filmography lists 28 feature films that appeared between 1957 and 1989 (see Appendix B).

However, little sustained attention has been paid to film as a medium through which interpretations of 1956 were made available to the public. One exception is a chapter of Péter György's *Néma hagyomány* (2000) in which he touches upon several films in the context of analyzing literature relevant to the uprising.[10] In fact, there is a misconception on the part of some writers that few such films were made. In his recent history of Hungarian film, John Cunningham writes that of the films released from 1957 to 1959, only *Yesterday* "relates directly to 1956."[11] Later in the book, he writes that the 1965 film *Twenty Hours* was "the

first film to broach the subject of 1956."[12] I hope this paper will begin to direct attention to the films of 1956 as a body of work rich for analysis.

A word about terminology: In an address to Parliament on November 25, 1956, János Kádár argued that the October events "cannot possibly be defined as a counter-revolution."[13] However, as resistance among intellectuals and the workers' councils intensified, he reversed his position at a meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party on December 2, lashing out against the "counter-revolution."[14] This term would remain the official designation for the October events until 1989. In February of that year, the reform communist minister of state, Imre Pozsgay, remarked on the radio show *168 Hours* that the 1956 events constituted a popular uprising. He was quickly corrected by the secretary general of the Communist Party, Károly Grósz, who stated that only the Central Committee of the party was in a position to assess the events. Nevertheless, within two week's of Pozsgay's pronouncement, the Central Committee recognized 1956 as a popular uprising.[15] My project focuses on films made during the thirty-two years when 1956 was deemed a "counter-revolution." But the power to determine the use of political language was not always exercised, nor did it go unchallenged, and one of my aims is to examine the terminology used in the films to refer to the historical episode and its agents. In the interests of clarity, when writing about the actual events, I will use neutral terms, such as "uprising" or "October events."

At Midnight

At Midnight was released on December 25, 1957, just over a year after the uprising. Directed by György Révész and written by Iván Boldizsár, this film addresses the theme of expatriation. Between 220,000 and 250,000 Hungarians, over 2 percent of the population, fled the country during and after the uprising. More than half left by the end of November 1956, and another forty percent left between December 1, 1956, and January 1, 1957.[16] Some were forced to flee because of their involvement in the uprising, "but others were students and workers simply looking for greater personal liberty and a better life."[17] The film dramatizes the momentous question of whether to leave or stay through the story of a young couple. János Károlyi (Miklós Gábor) is a successful actor married to Viki Dékány (Éva Ruttkai), a ballet dancer whose career has been

shackled by her bourgeois family background. Frustrated by her inability to realize her artistic potential in Hungary, Viki is determined to move to Brussels where a position awaits her. János's livelihood and identity are bound to the Hungarian language, and he resists the idea of leaving the homeland.

The plot spans the hour between 11 p.m. and midnight on New Year's Eve of 1956. The couple are in the living room of their apartment, waiting for a car that will arrive at midnight to take them to Vienna. As they wait, they toss photographs and papers into the fireplace and reminisce about the past. The photographs motivate a series of chronological flashbacks that tell the story of their relationship, their experiences during the uprising, and their arguments over the question of whether to leave the country. The flashbacks begin just a couple of minutes after the credits end. With the exception of a couple of short cuts back to the present early in the film, the flashbacks extend until the last five minutes of the film.

At that point, the plot returns to the present where it is now 11:55 p.m. János has evidently agreed to defect, because a happy Viki flits around preparing to leave, seemingly oblivious to his morose demeanour. As the radio announces midnight and the national anthem begins, she hands the brooding János a glass of champaign and proposes a toast to their success in crossing the border. He slowly shakes his head no, and a quarrel ensues. While Viki is heard off-screen warning János that the car will arrive at any moment, the camera focuses on his hand as he turns up the volume of the radio. The national anthem fills the diegetic space as the film ends.

How is the uprising presented?

The opening scene provides the viewer with several clues that *At Midnight* is set against the backdrop of 1956. Shot in black and white, the film's credit sequence consists of several still shots of deserted city streets at night. When the credits end, the camera begins to move, panning up the exterior wall of an apartment building to a window. The sound of a gong acts as a sound bridge to a close-up shot of a radio. The announcer identifies the station as Kossuth Radio and states that in an hour, "we will take leave of the year 1956 and greet 1957." The year, 1956, is a synecdoche for the October and November events, so the announcement

immediately triggers an association with the uprising. The medium through which the announcement is made, the radio, is itself a signifier of the uprising in a couple of respects. First, memories of the October events are firmly grounded in the everyday, material culture of the 1950s. We see this, for instance, in the Budapest History Museum's display of 1956, where a typical kitchen of the period is exhibited. Secondly, the radio was widely used to access information during the chaotic days of the uprising. In the early days of the uprising, Kossuth Radio served as the mouthpiece of the Nagy government. However, on October 30, as the government adopted a multi-party system and Soviet troops began to vacate Budapest, Kossuth Radio became Kossuth Free Radio, with control in the hands of the Revolutionary Workers' Council of Free Hungarian Radio.[18] The radio plays a prominent role throughout *At Midnight*, linking the couple to the world outside their apartment and to the public events that intrude into their private lives and ultimately determine their fate.

The camera lingers on the radio briefly and then scans the room, revealing scattered photographs, letters, and theatre handbills. An unseen hand tosses such items into a burning fireplace, suggesting the destruction of incriminating material and hinting at the house searches and arrests that began in early December of 1956. However, that grim reading is reined in by upbeat dance music emanating from the radio. The film cuts to a shot of Viki seated on the floor in front of the fireplace. As she continues to toss papers into the fire, she beams at János and reminds him that tomorrow they will be in Vienna. The viewer is now certain that the couple have committed no offense; they are purging themselves of a past that is soon to be irrelevant when they start a new life in the West. The final allusion to 1956 in this opening scene also evokes memories of the state's crack-down as it sought to restore order. Emil, a film director who works with János, telephones to say that he will stop by to wish the couple a happy new year, and János asks whether Emil has forgotten that going out at night is prohibited. This remark also accounts for the empty streets shown during the credits.[19]

The narrative structure of *At Midnight* — the lengthy flashbacks framed by brief scenes of the present — allows Révész to devote most of the screen time to the couple's on-again, off-again courtship. Experiences such as the unexpected pregnancy, miscarriage, and recuperation of János's first wife, Ági (Zsuzsa Bánki), suggest that the story takes place over the course of about a year. However, the characters are seemingly untouched by the dramatic political developments of 1956 — the Petőfi

Circle gatherings, the ejection of Rákosi, the reburial of László Rajk — until October 23, the day the uprising began. The first reference to that date occurs while the couple are on their honeymoon at Lake Balaton. Playfully enacting the role of a police agent, Viki asks János for his identity papers. She reads the information aloud: "Budapest, 6th District. Central Registry Hall. Married to Viktória Dékány on October 9, 1956." She then adds, "And today is Tuesday, the 23rd. It's just been a couple of weeks." Viki is of course oblivious to the significance of her carefree remark, but it sets the viewer up for what is to come.

At the hotel that evening, as János and Viki dance to "their song," one of the guests receives a long distance telephone call from Budapest. His side of the terse conversation reveals that something is amiss ("Why? What happened? Don't be so theatrical, Comrade Bódó, why can't you tell me over the phone?"), but neither he nor the other characters is yet aware of what is taking place in the capital. However, a delivery driver arrives, and when the desk clerk asks him what is new is Budapest, he replies that the students were holding some kind of demonstration and the streets were crowded when he left. János overhears this information, and the troubled expression on his face reveals his concern.

The scene then shifts abruptly. Through an eye-line match, János is shown staring at the lobby door as it closes behind the delivery driver. The screen goes dark for several seconds, with Beethoven's Egmont Overture, "the anthem of the revolution,"[20] beginning to play. This piece was written to accompany Goethe's tragedy, *Egmont*, which tells the heroic story of Count Lamoral Egmont, executed by King Philip II of Spain for his role in the Netherlanders' struggle for freedom. Played endlessly by Hungarian Radio during the uprising, its melancholic strains and glorious conclusion evoke the tragedies and triumphs of those October days. When the picture comes back into view, it is a nondiegetic insert consisting of a series of quick shots of waves breaking on the shore of Lake Balaton. One shot is particularly effective in conveying a sense of danger. The camera is positioned just above the water, squarely facing the incoming waves, so that viewers feel as if they are about to be inundated. In an earlier scene, János referred to Balaton as "Hungary's sea," underscoring its significance in national mythology and hinting at Hungary's tragic history.[21] Backed by the haunting sounds of the Egmont Overture, this montage provides a powerful transition to the scenes that deal directly with the uprising.

As the music continues, the action resumes at the hotel where it is now the morning of October 24. János and Viki are greeted by confusion and chaos when they go down to the lobby, as people scurry around, checking out or fruitlessly trying to place telephone calls. Among those who leave is an Austrian couple whom János and Viki have befriended. Their hasty, sheepish departure can be read as the abrogation of responsibility by the West to intervene on Hungary's behalf. When János asks a police officer what has happened, he is told that "there are public disturbances in Budapest, with fighting in several parts of the city." The music, which started off as non-diegetic, is interrupted by the voice of a radio announcer saying, "Attention, attention!", followed by the sound of static and a close-up shot of the radio. As the hotel manager tries to tune the radio, the camera pans the anxious faces of the group that encircles it. When he finally manages to find a station, the program consists once again of the Egmont Overture.[22] All of the technological means of accessing the outside world — the radio, telephones, trains — have been disrupted, signalling the turmoil caused by the uprising.

The next scene is set several days later. Still unable to get through to Budapest, János and Viki speculate about what is happening. János's wording offers a characterization of the events that is similar to the interpretation presented through the dialogue of the delivery driver and the policeman. He says, "I can't imagine what's going on in Budapest.... Fighting in the streets, men in arms. What is all this?" While János is clearly concerned, Viki is frightened. She bursts into tears and repeatedly states that she is afraid. The next day, the couple set out hitchhiking. The truck that picks them up is ambushed by a small band of rebels and János suffers a minor wound. A village doctor patches him up, but he cannot travel for several days. The couple finally make it back to Budapest around October 31. Arriving at the flat of Viki's mother, they find a note telling them she is leaving for Vienna where they can find her at 10 Spiegelgasse. For the first time, Viki proposes that they leave the country. There is no response from János, and the scene shifts to the National Theatre where he wanders among the ruins, visibly torn over the decision he is forced to make.

Back at the flat, he and Viki have it out. He tells her of his love for the stage, emphasizing that the Hungarian language is his only means of creative expression. As a near-hysterical Viki reminds him of the sacrifices she made for him, the frame is canted and the camera closes tightly in on her face, signifying that she is out of control. She storms out

of the room, and the viewer's attention is refocused on the radio, where an announcer is relaying messages about people searching for relatives: "Three Indians send word to their parents that they're well. They've lost Little Brother. Micus... hasn't found Vera yet; they should take Ferike to Grandmother's house." János changes the frequency to Kossuth Radio, where the program is no less indicative of the nation's continuing crisis: "Dear Listeners, now a female worker from Újpest will make a request to the striking miners."

Viki returns to the living room after a short temporal ellipsis to find a now-drunk János composing his own radio messages: "János Károlyi sends word to Budapest that the Stefanskirche is beautiful. But he would gladly exchange it for the little Újlak Church, because when he was a little boy, his mother always took him there.... János Károlyi sends word to Budapest that the Champs Elysees and the Boulevard St. Michel are marvellous. It's just that if you step on somebody's foot on the metro, nobody says, 'Idiot, can't you watch out?!'" In this scene, the camera is canted to the left when it focuses on János and to the right when it focuses on Viki, signalling their conflicting points of view over the fundamental question of whether to go or stay and the despair each is feeling. As Viki attempts to calm him down, János laments the deterioration of family relations without naming the obvious cause: "Fathers send messages to their families. Children to their parents. Husbands to their wives. Everything is falling apart, even us."

Viki reaches her breaking point in the final scene of this lengthy flashback. She and János are standing in the middle of a crowd in front of a bakery. Desperate for bread, people are pushing and shouting as they try to work their way to the front of the line. Shots are fired as fighting breaks out in the vicinity, and the frightened crowd disperses. Viki and János run to the safety of a nearby building, but the distraught Viki cries that she cannot take it any longer. She vows to leave, even if János refuses to go with her. This scene is unusual in several respects. First, it is the only scene that takes place outdoors in Budapest during the uprising, thus virtually demanding some visual representation of the events. Along similar lines, with the exception of the ambush near Balaton, a brief and restrained scene, it is the only occasion in which violence is shown. Second, most of the film is quite stylish, with gorgeous actors playing elegant, sophisticated characters against the backdrop of András Bágya's easy-listening music and Barnabás Hegyi's atmospheric shots of the Danube, Margit Island, and other familiar landmarks. The footage here

has a grainy, documentary look, particularly a crane shot of the crowd dispersing. Like the characters themselves, the viewers are jolted out of an affected world of glamour and artifice, and brought face to face with the historical reality of 1956. Finally, it is the only scene that casts the uprising in a decidedly negative light. Now, the uprising is remembered as an episode in which the Hungarian people showed great selflessness and solidarity, unified as never before by a common desire for national autonomy.[23] In this representation, however, the mob is ugly — shouting at the baker, fighting with each other, divided by greed and self-interest.

The work as a whole presents a surprisingly nonjudgmental representation of the uprising. In the words of Erzsébet Báthory *At Midnight* treats 1956 as a shocking event that fundamentally shook up Hungarian society, but it neither condemns nor celebrates the uprising.[24] The film focuses mainly on how it disrupted lives and separated loved ones. Conveniently, the couple are in the countryside during most of the uprising, far from the centre of the storm.[25] There are no images of fighting or physical destruction, and both the events and agents are named only in the mildest terms: "student demonstrations," "public disturbances," "street fighting," "armed men." With his dedication to the homeland, János is clearly presented more sympathetically than Viki.[26] However, Viki's desire to leave is justified by the discrimination she is subjected to by virtue of her social class. Indirectly, this premise casts attention on the fundamental problems of the dictatorial state that culminated in the uprising.

In a 1977 television interview, the writer of the film, Iván Boldizsár, was asked if he always wrote the truth. At first he answers affirmatively, but later in the interview he modifies his claim:

> Montaigne said when he was about as old as I am now: "I always wanted to write the truth, but I did not always dare to. Now that I am older, I am more daring." I don't think that the daring to speak the truth depends on your age, more on the age in which we live.[27]

Ignác Romsics writes that the early period of the Kádár regime "was one of dealing out bloody retribution on the insurgents, restoring the machinery of dictatorship, consolidating his personal authority, and winning international recognition for the regime."[28] The period began with the establishment of the legal and institutional framework for carrying out the retaliations.[29] *At Midnight* was made soon after the uprising, during

the transitional phase when authorities were just beginning to restore order and stabilize the country. Once the system had rigidified and the apparatus of terror was fully engaged, a very different interpretation of 1956 would be offered to the public.[30]

Yesterday

By the time *At Midnight* actually appeared on Hungarian theatre screens, the arrests, imprisonments, and executions had reached massive proportions.[31] *Yesterday*, directed by Márton Keleti and written by Imre Dobozy, was released on January 29, 1959, just over a year after *At Midnight*. In the interim, the communist government published a series of White Books that established the official historical account of the uprising. Illustrated with graphic photos of the mutilated bodies of lynched policemen, soldiers, and party officials, the White Books provided the public with a gruesome source of visual memory. The final volume, *The Counter-revolutionary Conspiracy of Imre Nagy and His Accomplices*, claimed to "prove beyond all doubt that well before the counter-revolution erupted, a secret underground organization led by Imre Nagy existed for the purpose of overthrowing the state."[32] In the period between the release of the two films, the popular prime minister and several members of his inner circle were tried, convicted, and executed.

Yesterday was adapted from Dobozy's stage play, *Windstorm* (Szélvihar), performed at the Jókai Theatre the previous year. It recalls the events of the uprising in two settings, an army garrison in a provincial town (shot in Vác) and a nearby village called Varjas. The two sites are linked by a father and son. Lt. Imre Csendes (Tibor Bitskei), is a young army officer stationed at the garrison, and his father, also named Imre (Zoltán Makláry), is a respected member of the Red Dawn cooperative farm near the village. The narrative begins at the garrison, which is threatened by an unruly mob demanding weapons. The government has given the insurgents until 10 p.m. to lay down their arms, and as a result, the commander of the post, Lt. Col. Szabó (Ferenc Ladányi), has been ordered to avoid shooting unless it is absolutely necessary. Lt. Csendes is troubled by the ambiguity of the situation as is Szabó himself; nevertheless, Csendes leads a platoon out into the square where they face off against the crowd.

Among the soldiers is a young recruit, András Szusza Kis (Gyula Szabó, Jr.), who is also from Varjas. His crippled father was forced through torture to join the cooperative. He later left it, but his small parcel of land was not returned. The crowd implores the soldiers to join their ranks, and, uncertain of his loyalties, Szusza Kis finds himself pulled to the other side. Even though the security of the garrison is at stake, Csendes cannot shoot his childhood friend. The soldiers withdraw to the garrison, where Csendes, humiliated by insults hurled at him by the crowd and frustrated by his impossible position, argues with Szabó about whether revolt and mutiny are justified by the political mistakes of the past.

The action then shifts to the village. The unpopular leader of the cooperative farm has fled, and the peasants are ransacking the place, carrying off livestock, feed, and equipment. At the same time, the deposed squire, Géza Mácsay (Antal Páger), is taking inventory and plotting to regain his ancestral lands. Old Csendes hastens to the farm and restores order, threatening both the peasants and the former gentry with a pitchfork. Back at the garrison, the situation is becoming increasingly tense. The insurgents have secured weapons and wait only for the imminent arrival of a tank before launching their attack. However, when the tank arrives in the square, Szusza Kis appears from behind the turret, announcing triumphantly that the government has reached a cease-fire agreement with the rebels. Once again, the officers are divided over how to respond to the government's inconsistent orders and capitulation to the rebels. In the heat of the argument, Csendes professes loyalty solely to his father. He storms out in defiance of Szabó's orders and heads home.

Meanwhile, in the village, Mácsay and other members of the old gentry meet in the headquarters of the Varjas Revolutionary Committee. In order to subdue the peasantry, they decide to get rid of Old Csendes. Szusza Kis arrives and demands that the gentry return his father's land. When Mácsay, the squire, refuses, Szusza Kis rushes off to warn Old Csendes of their plans to capture him. However, Szusza Kis is shot by the gentry's ruffians just as he leaves the Csendes homestead. They then go after Old Csendes. He resists at first, but when they tell him that his son has joined their cause, he surrenders in despair. Lt. Csendes arrives in the village just in time to learn of the plot against his father from the dying Szusza Kis. He chases down the ruffians as they lead his father away and shoots them. Father and son join the other peasants now defending the collective property they have worked so hard to develop. The final scene

shows the two of them at night standing guard at the entrance to the Red Dawn cooperative farm.

How is the uprising presented?

As was the case with *At Midnight*, Beethoven's Egmont Overture plays an important role in *Yesterday*. In this case, it is heard only at the beginning and end of the film, framing *Yesterday* as a drama about 1956. The opening bars of the music are heard for about twenty seconds against the backdrop of a black screen and the piece continues as the credits begin to roll. As with *At Midnight*, the film is shot in black and white, and the credit sequence establishes the location of the opening scene. Here, it consists of several shots in which the camera pans buildings of a typical provincial Hungarian town. While it is daytime, the streets are virtually deserted and the screen seems to darken, as if storm clouds were gathering. The credits and music end simultaneously, cut off by a black screen and the voice of a radio announcer reading a government communique ordering the rebels to lay down their arms. As the announcement is made, a shot of a soldier comes into view. His face is expressionless and his head is cocked to the side, indicating his grave attention to the announcer's words. The camera begins to move, and the faces of other soldiers clustered around the radio are revealed. When the announcement ends, the music softly resumes as Lt. Csendes issues orders to the soldiers. Thus, as in *At Midnight*, the overture becomes diegetic here, emanating from the radio. The music ceases when this brief scene is over and is not heard again until the end of the film.

The Egmont Overture is used at the conclusion of *Yesterday* to bring closure to an otherwise ambiguous ending. The penultimate scene shows the Csendeses and their comrades at the cooperative farm sitting around in the evening, smoking and listening to the radio. The camera explores their faces as the announcer states that the Cardinal Prince Primate, released from prison by the revolutionaries, arrived at his palace in Buda where he blessed the people who had gathered and spoke briefly. He vowed to continue the work he had to stop eight years ago and promised to make a public appeal two days later. In the final scene, it is the Csendeses' turn to stand guard. Pacing in front of the iron gate with its communist star, they hear a vehicle approaching in the distance. In a medium long shot, they are shown glancing at each other in acknowledge-

ment of the ominous sound, moving together to stand side by side and aiming their rifles into the night. Just when it sounds as if the vehicle has reached the gate, the frame freezes,[33] the lens zooms in to a medium close up of the two figures, and the Egmont Overture's victorious finale is heard. The last several bars accompany the words, "The End."

The reference to Mindszenty dates the film's conclusion to Thursday, November 1, three days before the second, decisive intervention of the Soviet Union. The return of the "revanchist" primate and the spectre of a truck filled with insurgents suggest that the true revolutionaries — those who would build a socialist state — still face obstacles and perils. However, the majestic ending of the Egmont Overture assures the viewer that now they are ready, certain of the rightness of their cause.

In 1949, Hungary adopted a national emblem that featured a red star radiating its bright light on a hammer and wheat sheaves, symbolic of the proletariat and the peasantry. One of the demands of university students in 1956 was the abolishment of this emblem. As the demonstrations heated up on October 23, the communist insignia was cut out of the centre of the Hungarian flag, and the flag with a hole in it quickly achieved iconic status.[34] In *Yesterday*, this symbol often appears in shots of the insurgents, and the context always casts them in a negative light. The viewer first sees the flag with a hole in it from the point of view of army officers as they watch the unruly crowd converging on the square. Similar to the familiar keyhole shot, a shot of Lt. Csendes looking through binoculars at the crowd is followed by a subjective shot in which his field of vision is framed by the horizontal figure eight of the binoculars. He scans the teeming crowd, pausing on a Holy Trinity statue. Reminiscent of still photographs of students at Bem Square in 1956, a large group is scaling the monument, waving flags. Csendes passes the binoculars to a comrade, and in a similar eye-line match, the viewer looks through the binoculars with the second officer. As a demonstrator in front of the statue waves his flag, a gaping hole in its centre becomes clearly visible. This shot is repeated a third time several minutes later from the point of view of Lt. Col. Szabó. His view of the crowd reveals numerous Hungarian flags, some intact and some with the emblem removed. This type of shot physically aligns viewers with the authorities as they attempt to maintain order and protect public property from the lawless mob.

A second important use of this symbol occurs in the confrontation between the army platoon and the crowd. Led by Lt. Csendes, the goose-stepping, uniformed soldiers are disciplined and orderly, a sharp contrast

to the frenzied mob. The leader of the mob is a beefy, middle-aged man dressed in a trench coat with a tricolour armband, beret, and leather riding boots. He has just arrived from Budapest, and we learn later in the film that he is Major Kálmán Weller (László Ungvári), the former village squire's brother-in-law, and that he left the country in 1944. As the two sides square off, Weller breaks through to the front of the crowd, demanding weapons and brandishing a defaced Hungarian flag as if it were a bayonet. Csendes slowly leads the platoon forward, and when the two sides are just feet apart, Weller turns to the crowd, raises the flag, and shouts, "Forward, Hungarians!" But when the soldiers continue to advance, he slowly lowers the flag and begins to retreat. The camera then cuts to a shot of his boots. He slowly steps back, out of the frame, and the flag, which has now reached the ground, comes into view. Already desecrated when its emblem was cut out, the Hungarian flag is now dragged along the muddy pavement as the cowardly Weller retreats.

Finally, the act of mutilation itself is shown in the most striking presentation of this symbol. A scene opens with a close up shot of a flag, the communist insignia filling most of the screen. Though the flag is still intact, an unseen figure is poised behind it and has just begun to cut out the emblem. As the fabric begins to fall away, the grinning face of the man who is doing the cutting is revealed. The size of the hole increases to reveal a young woman standing next to him, watching in admiration, and other people milling about in the background. The cutter triumphantly completes the job, the flag drops away, and the camera begins to pan to the right, revealing other people cutting the holes out of flags. The camera finally stops on the other main action of the scene, the distribution of weapons. Weller stands next to the back of a truck, smoking contentedly, while one of his sidekicks hands out weapons to a steady stream of men and woman, most of them dressed in civilian clothes, but others wearing army uniforms. The entire scene is captured in one shot, and the only discernible dialogue in the background chatter is the perfunctory comments of the man handing out the guns. The camera focuses on the action — the defacing of the flag and the illegal distribution of weapons. This establishes a relationship of equivalence between the two acts and makes the most important symbol of 1956, the flag with a hole in it, the signifier of a reckless, treasonous affair.

The rejection of the communist insignia in 1956 was accompanied by the widespread adoption of the 1848 Kossuth coat of arms, the most powerful symbol of the desire for national independence. It appeared

spontaneously, handpainted on army helmets, sewn onto flags, and printed on the mastheads of newspapers.[35] The Kossuth coat of arms shows up several times in *Yesterday*: on a sign identifying the Revolutionary Committee headquarters in Varjas, on the wall inside that same building, and on a tank. Other material objects that are now associated with 1956 were presented in filmic form here. They include weapons — automatic rifles, shotguns, pistols, machine guns — and vehicles — tanks, white sedans bearing a Red Cross flag, trucks with canvas-covered backs, cattle trucks filled with rebels waving flags and tossing out fliers.

The main theme of *Yesterday* is the moral confusion and chaos caused by the uprising. As Lt. Col. Szabó remarks at one point, "Everything has been turned upside down." The confusion is personified by the two soldiers who leave their post, Lt. Csendes and Szusza Kis. Young and inexperienced, Csendes is a loyal officer of the People's Army who loses sight of his principles in response to the government's equivocal response to anarchy. Szusza Kis is a simple, naive recruit who pins his hopes on the rebels as a means of reclaiming his father's land. However, by the end of the film, both of the men see the folly of their ways. Csendes's moment of truth comes when he learns that his father has been captured, and Szusza Kis's when he is told that he will not regain the land. He then denounces the rebels when he goes to warn Old Csendes that they are coming to get him: "This wasn't what I dreamed of, Uncle Imre." Then, as he lay dying in Lt. Csendes's arms, he tells Csendes that he was betrayed: "Imre, they've murdered me. They cheated me. You were right. We should have fired at them."

Lt. Col. Szabó personifies the mature, wise, responsible communist. (His communist credentials are established when he hotly tells Csendes that *he* has no father to turn to: *His* father was executed in the post-1919 reprisals.) He indirectly acknowledges the excesses of the Stalinist years, but argues that a few mistakes do not justify abandoning the socialist project. In the midst of an argument, Csendes says to him, "Let's be honest. It [read Stalinism] was pretty bad." Szabó's affirmative response is veiled in an analogy: "What do you want?! There's a hole in the roof, so we set the house on fire?" His faith is occasionally shaken. At one point he states that those who seek justice with bullets will be answered by bullets from him. However, as a high-ranking officer, Szabó is bound to follow the commands of his superiors. The government has been highjacked by an illegitimate authority, and as a result, he is unable to restore order.

Imre Nagy is the unnamed villain, the illegitimate authority who has highjacked the government and brought about all this turmoil. The references to Nagy and his government are indirect and subtle. Major Fekete (Sándor Pécsi), a hardliner, insists that the soldiers must be ordered to fire into the crowd. Csendes replies, "Are you crazy? The Prime Minister is a communist." In response, Fekete states, "They betrayed us." Then, when the cease-fire is declared, Csendes complains to Szabó, "What are they doing to us? They make agreements, and we have to fight? ... When will they come clean? If they were in the right, they wouldn't dance around. If they aren't right, what do they want?" Old Csendes summarizes the lesson to be learned from *Yesterday* regarding Nagy's decisions and actions. When his son rescues him and unties his hands, he exclaims, "It's a wretched thing to have one's hands tied."

On the surface, Dobozy resisted oversimplifying the positions adopted in 1956. The complexity of points of view was articulated by Szabó in a scene where he rejects Csendes's charge that he's opposing the whole country. He states, "There is no 'whole country' now, or half, or quarter. There are just people, different kinds of people. Some like this, some like that." Various positions are represented through the many characters, as if the film-makers wanted to offer all viewers someone with whom they could identify.[36] The officers' opinions range from that of the uncompromising Fekete to the anguished Csendes. The peasants are similarly diverse in character. They range from Old Csendes, the personification of strength and responsibility, to the pitiful swineherd Pandur (János Görbe), who seeks work from the squire so that he can put bread on the table.

In contrast, however, the insurgents are uniformly unsympathetic. In reality, those who advocated regime change in 1956 were divided into a number of factions: reform communist politicians; students, writers, and other intellectuals; factory workers seeking workplace democracy; exiled reactionaries who favoured a return to the feudalistic social structure of the pre-war years. In *Yesterday*, this diversity is reduced to the homogeneity of an ugly crowd or to its most reactionary elements — the squire who remained in Hungary after his land was confiscated only because he was too cowardly to leave, according to his embittered wife, and his pompous brother-in-law, a former officer in Horthy's army who did leave the country. The news bulletin about Cardinal Mindszenty at the end of the film is a further allusion to the "forces of reaction." Mindszenty was imprisoned in 1948 for his opposition to the nationalization of church

property and the secularization of education. As the leading figure of the conservative right wing in 1956, he opposed the reform communist Imre Nagy and his followers as the "heirs of the fallen regime."[37]

Romsics writes that by 1958 — the year *Yesterday* was made — "the task of restoring the political system to its pre-[1956] state was completed." However, he adds, "the process of consolidation was far from complete."[38] Among the defiant social groups that remained to be dealt with were the Catholic clergy and the peasantry. In 1958, in an effort to break the resistance of Catholic priests and bishops, the Communist Party instituted a policy of tolerance for religious expression but uncompromising intolerance for political opposition by the Church. Tensions between Church and state were thus eased only in 1959.[39]

As for the peasants, they had abandoned the collective farms in droves during the uprising. By the end of 1956, Romsics reports, "barely 6% of Hungary's peasants were members of a cooperative."[40] Fully aware of the peasants' resistance to forced collectivization, the government at first pursued a policy of "friendly persuasion." However, it was largely unsuccessful, so that there was only a slight increase in cooperative membership by the time *Yesterday* was released.[41]

Yesterday discursively reinforced the party's condemnation of the recalcitrant Catholic hierarchy through the reference to the Cardinal Prince Primate. The appropriate reaction to his return, implied in the film, was undisguised in the crass propaganda of the White Books: "Mindszenty's reappearance was a signal that we had to launch a counter-attack against the bourgeois reactionaries in order to defend the people's democracy."[42] In the case of the peasantry, the film's rhetoric is even more strident. The scenes of looting demonstrate that the peasants — hardly more advanced than the livestock they tend — needed the heavy hand of authority to tame their inherent selfishness and greed. When Weller first arrives in the village, he tells his brother-in-law that he and his men have taken command of the county seat and have now come to establish control in the countryside. Mácsay warns him that the rural areas will be more difficult to subdue because the farms are scattered over vast distances. One of the other insurgents adds, "And these are stubborn people, terribly stubborn people."

Still, given the poisonous public discourse surrounding the uprising in 1958, *Yesterday* is more restrained than one might expect. At first, the crowd greets the soldiers with chants of solidarity: "Long live the Hungarian soldiers!", "Arms to the people!", "Whoever is Hungarian is

with us!" As the tension intensifies, the crowd does begin to taunt the soldiers, addressing them as "henchmen," "traitors," and "bloodsuckers." In turn, the inflexible Fekete refers to them as "scum," though not to their faces. While the insurgents occasionally refer to the events as a "revolution" or "fraternal war," the term "counter-revolution" is never heard. The only hint in that direction is when Lt. Col. Szabó states that what is happening "is no longer a peaceful demonstration." Interestingly, at one point, the characters themselves reflect on the language used to name the events and its agents. Lt. Csendes poses a rhetorical question: "If they're freedom fighters, are we the enemy?" Perhaps that question is meant to imply a follow-up: "If, on the other hand, we're the heroes, then aren't they the villains?" But that question remains unstated.

Film and collective memory

If the film-makers were circumspect in how they named the uprising and its instigators, reviewers of the film were not. In a review in *Filmvilág*, Lajos Mesterházi writes that the lesson to be drawn from the film is that "a predominantly well-intended mass was led astray and followed an armed, counter-revolutionary minority that knew exactly what it was doing." Through cultural expressions such as this film, "society can examine its conscience and finally be cleansed of the scum and filth of the counter-revolution."[43] Similarly, *Népszabadság* reminds readers that the ceasefire agreement that hamstrung the army was the result of "Imre Nagy's compromise with the bloodthirsty rabble."[44] Lest *Yesterday*'s viewers have any doubt, reviewer after reviewer explained the meaning of the film, imploring them to recognize themselves in the characters and to take stock of their own responsibility for the treasonous events: "Our 'yesterday' stands before all of us. This yesterday raises a question and expects an answer: Remember where you stood, on which side! Where the October storm swept you! Why did you stand on the other side, or only on the sidewalk, or maybe behind the windows?"[45]

Thus, we see the interaction of film with other media in shaping public perceptions and attitudes toward 1956. As Harold Adams Innis would put it, the bias of film as a medium of story telling is such that its creators must exercise *some* subtlety in their depiction of historical events if the audience is to suspend disbelief and temporarily adopt the film's premises. However, it then stands as a text for reinterpretation and

commentary in media that are not constrained by this consideration, where the conventions at play set the reader up for vitriolic hyperbole. One thing is for sure: As of 1959, the Kádár regime did not yet feel secure enough to launch its program of forced forgetting. The mind managers were still busy at work, shaping public perceptions of 1956.

The year after *Yesterday* appeared, its sequel, *Day is Breaking* (Virrad), was produced by the same group of film-makers. It depicts the fate of Lt. Col. Szabó and Lt. Csendes in the early days of November. And at the end of 1960, *A Town without Aspect* (Az arcnélküli város), Tamás Fejér's drama about a mine strike in November 1956, appeared. In the world of film, 1956 then goes silent until the Golden Age of Hungarian film-making, when such respected films as Zoltán Fábri's *Twenty Hours* (1965), István Szabó's *Father* (1966), and Károly Makk's *Love* (1970) appeared. Exploration of these works is likely to reveal very different presentations of Hungary's 1956 revolution.

NOTES

[1] Interview with Mikós Sulyok, printed in Sándor Szilágyi, ed., *A hétfői szabadegyetem és a III/III: Interjúk, dokumentumok* [The free university of Monday and the III/III: Interviews, documents] (Budapest: Újmandátum, 1999), 102.

[2] Gábor Gyáni, *Emlékezés, Emlékezet és a Történelem Elbeszélése* [Remembering, memories and the telling of history] (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2000), 46.

[3] István Rév, "Parallel Autopsies," *Representations* 49, p. 26

[4] Gábor Gyáni, "1956 elfelejtésének régi-új mítosza" [The old and new myths about the forgetting of 1956], *Élet és Irodalom*, 9 Feb. 2001, p. 8.

[5] János M. Rainer, *Nagy Imre: Politikai életrajz 1953-58* [Imre Nagy: A political biography, 1953-58] (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1999), vol. II., 445.

[6] János M. Rainer, "Regime Change and the Tradition of 1956," in *The Roundtable Talks of 1989*, ed. András Bozóki (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 211-22. Accessed online through the 1956 Institute's website, http://www.rev.hu/html/en/studies/transition/roundtable_rainer.htm

[7] E. g., György Révész, *Éjfélkor* [At Midnight] 1957; and Márton Keleti, *Tegnap* [Yesterday], 1959.

[8] Seminal works in the expanding literature on the formation of collective historical memory and national identity include Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the*

Origin and Spread of Nationalism, revised ed. (London: Verso, 1991); Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. and ed. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Pierre Nora, ed., *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past,* vol. 2, *Traditions*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); and Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory,* vol. 1, *Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994).

[9] For a viewing public accustomed to "reading between the lines," the allusions were unmistakable. Referring to his 1978 film, *80 Hussars* (80 Huszár), Sándor Sára noted that the most forbidden of themes, the intervention of the Soviet Union, was broached when the huszars gallop into a Polish village, sounding for all the world like the rumble of Russian tanks. And everybody knew that the candles in the windows signified 1956. Judit Pintér, "Képek Sodrásában: Sára Sándorral Pintér Judit Beszélget" [In the torrent of images: Judit Pintér talks with Sándor Sára], *Metropolis*. See http://emc.elte.hu/~metropolis/0001/3pinter.htm

[10] Péter György, *Néma hagyomány: Kollektív Felejtés és a Kései Múltértelmezés, 1956 1989-ben*: A Régmúlttól az Örökségig [Silent legacy: Collective forgetting and the belated analysis of the past; 1956 in 1989: from distant past to national treasure (Budapest: Magvető, 2000), 84-85, 102-10.

[11] John Cunningham, *Hungarian Cinema: From Coffee House to Multiplex* (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), 91.

[12] *Ibid.*, 221.

[13] Francois Bondy, "Epilogue" in Melvin J. Lasky, ed., *The Hungarian Revolution: The Story of the October Uprising as Recorded in Documents, Dispatches, Eye-Witness Accounts, and World-wide Reactions* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger 1957), 289-318 (295).

[14] György Litván, *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956: Reform, Revolt and Repression, 1953-1963* (New York: Longman, 1996), 116; Ignác Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century* (Budapest: Corvina, 1999), a translation, by Tim Wilkinson, of the author's *Magyarország története a XX. században* [The History of Hungary in the 20th Century] (Budapest: Osiris, 1999), 319. This work is cited hereafter as *Hungary.*

[15] Central Committee of the Communist Party of Hungary, Cold War History Research Center, mss n.d. http://www.coldwar.hu/html/en/_4_89_t.htlm

[16] István Riba, "The Waves of the Exodus," in Zsófia Zachár, ed. *Encounters: A Hungarian Quarterly Reader* (Budapest: The Hungarian Quarterly Society, Balassi Kiadó, 1999), 254-55.

[17] Romsics, *Hungary,* 320.

[18] Editorials and articles detailing this development appear in the first edition of the workers' council's newspaper, *Szabad Magyar Rádió*, reproduced in

Lajos Izsák and József Szabó, eds., *1956 a Sajtó Tükrében* [1956 in the mirror of the media] (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1989), 191-94.

[19] The curfew imposed on Budapest lasted until April 13, 1957 (Romsics, *Hungary*, 322).

[20] Pál Schmidt, "Szimbólumok Között" [Amidst the symbolisms] <http://kozelet.uw.hu/schmidtpal/szimbolumokko.htm>

[21] Over the course of its thousand-year history, Hungary has gained and lost access to the Adriatic Sea several times.

[22] In his memoirs, Sándor Márai describes the "musicalized history" (zenésitett történelem) played on the radio when Hitler annexed Austria: Jabbering in the same voice used to report sporting events, the announcer tells listeners that a country has ceased to exist and a city has perished, his news bulletins punctuated by swaying waltzes and snappy marches. Sándor Márai, *Föld, Föld!...* [Land, Land!...] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, Helikon Kiadó, 1991), 144.

[23] György Litván, "Mítoszok és Legendák 1956-ról" [Myths and legends about 1956], in Kőrösi Zsuzsanna, Éva Standeisky, and János M. Rainer, eds., *Évkönyv,* VIII (Budapest: 1956 Institute, 2000), 205-18 (208).

[24] Information from Erzsébet Báthory. Personal interview, 9 Feb. 2001.

[25] "Éjfélkor," *Kisalföld,* 11 January 1958. Press clippings for *Éjfélkor*, Magyar Filmintézet.

[26] Péter Pál Tóth, "Éjfélkor," *Film, Szinház, Muzsika*, 12 September 1981, Press clippings for *Éjfélkor*, Magyar Filmintézet.

[27] "A Generation of Survivors: A Conversation with Iván Boldizsár," *New Hungarian Quarterly* 20 (1979): 120-33 (132).

[28] Romsics, *Hungary*, 315.

[29] János M. Rainer, "The Reprisals," in Zsófia Zachár, ed., *Encounters: A Hungarian Quarterly Reader* (Budapest: The Hungarian Quarterly Society, Balassi Kiadó, 1999), 249-59 (250).

[30] Information from Erzsébet Báthory. Personal interview, 9 Feb. 2001. György, *Néma hagyomány,* 84.

[31] Rainer writes that "in the period of mass retaliation between late 1956 and 1959, at least 35,000 people were charged with political 'crimes'." Some 26,000 people were prosecuted, with 22,000 convictions. By the time the last death sentence was carried out in 1961, 229 people had been executed. Rainer, "The Reprisals," 255-56.

[32] Magyar Népköztársaság, *Nagy Imre és bűntársai ellenforradalmi összeesküvése* (Budapest: Minisztertanács Tájékoztatási Hivatala, 1958), 3.

[33] Many years ago, the film theorist Rudolph Arnheim described the effect of inserting a still photograph into a moving picture: "A smiling, naturally moving person is suddenly petrified as if touched by a magic wand" (Arnheim, *Film as Art* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957], 118). When the

image of the *Csendeses* is frozen, the figures resemble statues, communist versions of Lajos Győrfi's *Pesti Srác* outside the Corvin Theater.

[34] So central is this symbol in the mythology surrounding 1956 that its genesis is debated. According to some accounts, the flag with a hole in it first appeared around 2 p.m. on October 23, hanging from the balcony of a clothing store in Budapest's Kálvin Square. Other people claim that the flag first showed up among the masses marching toward Bem Square. Or, they were first seen between 3 and 4 p.m. hanging from the windows of the Army officers' school at Bem Square, in accordance with the demands of the crowds. Lajos Horváth, "Címerek és jelképek harca 1956-ban," [The battle of emblems and effigies in 1956], *Hitel* (October, 1996): 28-37 (29). Géza Boros devotes a whole chapter to this theme. See his *Emlékművek '56-nak* [Memorials to '56] (Budapest: 1956 Institute, 1997).

[35] Horváth, "Címerek," 33-34.

[36] Lajos Mesterházi,"Tegnap," *Filmvilág*, 15 February 1959. Transcribed press clippings for *Tegnap*, Magyar Filmintézet, 11-15 (14).

[37] György Litván, *Az 1956-os Magyar Forradalom Hagyománya és Irodalma* [The legacy and literature of the 1956 Hungarian revolution] (Előadások a Történettudományi Intézetben, Number 19). (Budapest: A Történettudományi Intézet, 1992), 10; Tibor Méray, *Thirteen Days that Shook the Kremlin* (New York: Praeger, 1959), 231.

[38] Romsics, *Hungary*, 326-27.

[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 327-28. An agreement was reached on the level of state support for the Church, the Vatican was permitted to appoint new bishops, and schools were allowed to offer religious instruction after hours. From his exile in the U.S. embassy, Mindszenty criticized the clergy's capitulation, but the Vatican accepted the arrangement (Romsics, *Hungary*, 328).

[40] *Ibid.*, 330.

[41] Over the next two or three years, the process of collectivization was hastened through a variety of economic incentives. By the end of 1961, 75% of Hungary's farmers had joined a cooperative and another 19% worked on a state farm (Romsics, *Hungary*, 331).

[42] Magyar Népköztársaság, *Ellenforradalmi erők a magyar októberi eseményekben* [The forces of counter-revolution in the events of October], vol. 1 (Budapest: Minisztertanács Tájékoztatási Hivatala, 1958), 62.

[43] Mesterházi, *Tegnap*, 14.

[44] Péter Rényi, "Tegnap — Dobozy Imre és Keleti Márton új filmje" [Yesterday — the new film of Imre Dobozy and Márton Keleti], *Népszabadság*, 1 Feb. 1959. Transcribed press clippings for *Tegnap*, Magyar Filmintézet, 1-4 (1).

[45] Magda K. Nagy, "Tegnap" [Yesterday], *Kortárs*, March 1959. Transcribed press clippings for *Tegnap*, Magyar Filmintézet, 17-21 (18).

Appendix A

Films included in Tibor Sándor's *Forradalom 1956*

1.	Éjfélkor	1957	György Révész
2.	Tegnap	1959	Márton Keleti
3.	Virrad	1960	Márton Keleti
4.	Az arcnélküli város	1960	Tamás Fejér
5.	Húsz óra	1965	Zoltán Fábri
6.	Tizezer nap	1965	Ferenc Kósa
7.	Apa	1966	István Szabó
8.	Szerelem	1970	Károly Makk
9.	A közös bűn	1977	Imre Mihályfi
10.	Szerencsés Dániel	1982	Pál Sándor
11.	Szamárköhögés	1986	Péter Gárdos
12.	A másik ember	1987	Ferenc Kósa
13.	Napló apámnak, anyámnak	1990	Márta Mészáros
14.	A halálra ítélt	1989	János Zsombolyai
15.	Magyar rekviem	1990	Károly Makk

Appendix B

Feature Films listed in the 1956 Institute's Filmography (in Hegedűs, Beck, and Germuska 1996), 1957-89

1.	Éjfélkor	1957	György Révész
2.	Tegnap	1959	Márton Keleti
3.	Az arcnélküli város	1960	Tamás Fejér
4.	Virrad	1960	Márton Keleti
5.	Párbeszéd	1963	János Herskó
6.	Húsz óra	1965	Zoltán Fábri
7.	Apa	1966	István Szabó
8.	Szegénylegények	1966	Miklós Jancsó
9.	Keresztelő	1967	István Gaál
10.	Tizezer nap	1967	Ferenc Kósa
11.	A tanú	1969	Péter Bacsó
12.	Szerelem	1970	Károly Makk
13.	Szerelmesfilm	1970	István Szabó
14.	Kopjások	1975	György Palásthy
15.	Két történet a félmúltból	1979	Károly Makk
16.	Kettévált mennyezet	1981	Pál Gábor
17.	Egymásra nézve	1982	Károly Makk
18.	Megáll az idő	1982	Péter Gothár
19.	Szerencsés Dániel	1982	Pál Sándor
20.	Napló gyermekeimnek	1983	Márta Mészáros
21.	Szamárköhögés	1986	Péter Gárdos
22.	Lélegzetvisszafojtva	1985	Attila Janisch
23.	Hajnali háztetők	1986	János Domolky
24.	A másik ember I-II	1987	Ferenc Kósa
25.	Kiáltás és kiáltás	1987	Zsolt Kézdi-Kovács
26.	Napló szerelmeimnek	1987	Márta Mészáros
27.	A dokumentátor	1989	István Dárday
28.	Eldorádó	1989	Géza Beremény i

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"[G]reat stone on our knees": Reflections of the Hungarian Revolution in World Literature

János Kenyeres

The relationship between literature and the 1956 Revolution is a rather complicated issue, as the events that led to the revolution were in very important — and well-known — ways shaped and influenced by Hungarian writers. A number of these authors did not merely reflect on the course of events, they took an active part in the making of history. The roles they played in the days leading to and during the Revolution have been analysed in a number of books and shorter studies. From a strictly literary point of view, however, these two aspects of their actions might best be divided: their historical roles should be separated from their literary responses.

As opposed to the fairly large number of studies exploring the relationship between the events of 1956 and their Hungarian literature, the comprehensive collection and analysis of reflections on the Revolution in world literature has not been undertaken. Regarding responses to the Revolution outside Hungary attention has been primarily paid to historical and political works rather than works of literature, whereas ideally political statements and declarations should be distinguished from reactions embodied in literature. I stress *ideally*, because in many cases it is extremely difficult to define the true nature of a particular text; whether it is merely a political writing or belongs to a category which is traditionally regarded as literature. As Northrop Frye has pointed out, Edward Gibbon's famous historical work, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, has shifted "its center of gravity from history to myth and literature."[1] This observation is generally true to any text whose style and main compositional features qualify it to be read as literature. In addition, these writings do not necessarily have to "date" as history, like Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* has done over time, or "date" as whatever other discipline they were

primarily intended for. Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address", however brief, is clearly a work that can be read and interpreted as simultaneously belonging to literature, philosophy and political theory.

The same holds true to Albert Camus's "The Blood of the Hungarians," his famous declaration made on the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Camus's writing, written in 1957, is so sophisticated in its rhetoric, so highly eloquent, abounding in metaphors and other figures of speech, that it can be readily classified as a work literature. Although it was intended to address political issues in a particular historical situation, it simultaneously expresses a general truth about the guilt of those who remain inactive while seeing the suffering of others. Camus's text, like literature in many other cases, includes philosophical implications, testifying to the strength and example shown by the oppressed, demonstrating the true significance of freedom, which those who do not possess it, the Hungarians, have demonstrated to the free world, which is capable only of being saturated with "impotent sorrow".[2]

I would like to continue by taking account of some significant literary works dealing with the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and analyse, however briefly, some important responses to the Revolution in world literature.

As suggested earlier, the collection of world literature about the 1956 Hungarian revolution is far from complete. The single most important and comprehensive source on this topic is the poetry anthology called *Gloria Victis*, collected and edited by Tibor Tollas, published in 1966 in Munich. Tollas, who was born in Nagybarca in 1920, graduated from the Ludovika Akadémia, and participated in the Second World War as a young officer. He was arrested in 1947 and was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

When discussing *Gloria Victis*, mention must be made of the *Füveskert* anthology, collected by the convicts of the Prison of Vác. A literary circle, formed by the prisoners, was already starting to take shape in the summer of 1953, and in the spring of 1954, some convicts, showing great interest in and commitment to literature, secretly put down in writing poems they knew by heart. The name *Füveskert* (Herb Garden) may have been selected for the anthology because the prisoners met for their literary meetings on the grassy spot of land outside the prison chapel,[3] but more importantly it was an allusion to the ancient symbol of life and healing.[4] The *Füveskert* circle at first mainly dedicated itself to the translation of classical world poetry into Hungarian. The hand-written

manuscript, written and copied by the prisoners, including György Szathmáry, Tibor Tollas, Bálint Tóth, as well as László Alföldi, Géza Béri and Attila Gérecz, was expanded in the course of the years to include the prisoners' own poetry. Out of the twelve volumes of the *Füveskert* anthology, only the first three manuscripts were preserved, taken out of Hungary to the west in 1956. The anthology was, however, further expanded over the years to include Hungarian émigré poetry. It saw ten editions in seven countries in the 1950s and 60s, in Hungarian, German, Russian, Italian, Spanish, Norwegian, Danish and English versions.

Tollas, who was released from prison in July 1956, took an active part in the Revolution as member of the *Nemzetőrség* (the National Guard), and left for Germany after the Soviet invasion. After he escaped from Hungary he settled in Germany where he continued to dedicate himself to literature and the Hungarian cause. Together with other émigré members of the *Füveskert*-group, he established the literary journal *Nemzetőr* (Guardian of the Nation), working as its editor for four decades. *Gloria Victis: Az 1956-os magyar szabadságharc költői visszhangja a nagyvilágban* (The Response of Poets throughout the World to the Hungarian Fight for Freedom of 1956) was published five times over the decades, the last edition appearing in 2003 in Hungary. The anthology became available on the Internet in 2006.

Gloria Victis, dedicated to 1956, contains poems from five continents and 43 different countries/nations, and is the largest existing collection of its kind, presenting the original works together with their Hungarian translation. The list of the countries/nations whose poetry on 1956 is included in this volume reflects the colossal work that was put into the anthology: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Austria, United Kingdom, Holland, Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, United States, Canada, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Honduras, El Salvador, Martinique, Australia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, China, Turkey, Algeria, Nigeria, Kenya, and from behind the iron curtain: Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Bohemia, Slovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Russia, and there is one poem by a Cossack poet.

Although the most extensive collection to the present, *Gloria Victis* was not the first poetry anthology on the 1956 Revolution. It was preceded by the publication of a number of poetry collections in the world, including *Til Ungarn* (1957) in Norway, *Mot váldet* (1956) in Sweden, *Saå brændte steppen* (1957) in Denmark, *Hommage des poètes français aux poètes hongrois* (1957) in France, *Canto di Liberta* (1957),

La saga degli Ungheri (1957) and *Canto d'ira e d'amore per L'Ungheria* (1959) in Italy, *Sangre de Hungría* (1957) in Spain, a special issue of Nea Estia (1957, II) in Greece and *Liras en las catacumbas* (1959) in Argentina. The anthology *From the Hungarian Revolution*, published in 1966 in the United States, for the most part contains translations of the Hungarian *Füveskert* poetry associated with the 1956 revolution, and its section containing American poems on 1956 by and large corresponds to the American section of *Gloria Victis*. Mention must also be made of two Polish anthologies *Polscy poeci o węgierskim paydźierniku* (Polish poets on the Hungarian October), edited by György Gömöri, published in 1986 and 1996 in England, and *Polskim piórem o węgierskim paydźierniku* (Polish writers on the Hungarian October) (1996) edited by István D. Molnár. Gömöri not only collected the most significant Polish poems on 1956, in his subsequent essays he also provided valuable commentary on the birth of some of them, giving critical assessment as well. As a result of Gömöri's work, Polish poetry on 1956 is better documented than the poetry of other nations on the same topic. We learn from Gömöri, for example, that two Polish poets, Adam Wazik and Wiktor Woroszilsky, did not only write poems about the revolution but were eyewitnesses to the events.[5]

The latest edition of poetry specifically concerned with the Hungarian Revolution to date was published by Vince Sulyok in 2006, entitled *Egy ősz örök emléke* (The eternal memory of an autumn), containing his own poetry and translations of Scandinavian and Central-Eastern European poets, all of them previously published in *Gloria Victis*.

Although the proper evaluation of all the poems in *Gloria Victis* requires not only a book-length study but also good knowledge of virtually all European languages, as well as Vietnamese, Malaysian, Siamese and Chinese, it is evident that the Hungarian Revolution has prompted the creation of literary works representing considerable differences in poetic talent. Therefore, while some poems are aesthetically less valuable than emotionally supportive, others show great poetic gift. The former works lack exactly those qualities which would make them good literature, while, no doubt, they are full of sincere and sympathetic feelings towards the anguish and torment of the Hungarian nation. While it would be wrong to exclude such works from future analysis, it would be equally wrong to ignore their artistic deficiency. I discuss below some important and interesting poems originally written in English.

The motive of guilt felt by the bystanders appears in several of these poems, most strongly in E. E. Cummings' [or, as he always wrote it: e. e. cummings] "[T]hanksgiving 1956," which ridicules the official reaction of the USA to the Hungarian cause, as demonstrated by the following excerpt:

> "be quiet little Hungary
> and do as you are bid
> a good kind bear is angary
> we fear for the quo pro quid"
>
> uncle sam shrugs his pretty
> pink sholders you know how
> and he twitches a liberal titty
> and lisps "I'm busy right now"
>
> so rah-rah-rah democracy
> let's all be as thankful as hell
> and bury the statue of liberty
> (because it begins to smell)

John Knoepfle's "The Hungarian Revolution" concludes on a more serious note, also demonstrating the speaker's guilt and pangs of conscience, depicting the rest of the world, the onlookers, in the form of the statute of an ancient tyrant:

> We were watching,
> great stone hands on our knees.

The same sentiment of guilt and shame mingled with the ironic act of forgetting is echoed in Paris Leary's poem, "Budapest":

> Never relent in your task
> of forgetting it – when suddenly
> in the supermarket a child cries,
> do not be tempted to remember
> the cries of children against the tanks;
> do not look up. You can do
> nothing, it means nothing, nothing.

David Ray's poem "Tickertape: Ten Years After" reflects the speaker's personal memories of hearing news about the Hungarian revolution. The poem works on a chain of associations, the same rain, pouring down like tickertape just like ten years before, the memory of the room, being behind locked doors, connected to the world by television and to an "unloving" other "wrist to wrist, eye to eye, love-locked rocking thigh to thigh", and then hearing of the messages from Hungary to the UN which only "the janitor read with all his heart". The poem concludes with these lines:

Hungarians:
now you have
found out what
it is to
hear promises
from the high
towers of
America
where I sit
and watch the
rain as it
falls like
tickertape

The Canadian Watson Kirkconnells's "Gloria Victis" describes the Revolution in terms of a mythical battle between the forces of evil and men and women craving freedom, but the shameful inactivity of the western world is also brought to light:

The West was silent; and the Brontosaurus,
Bellowing down the streets of those dark days,
Trampled to blood and death the youthful chorus
That sang but now in Liberty's high praise.

1956 did not only inspire the creation of original works in response to the revolution, reflecting its implications on the human condition; it also contributed to growing attention to Hungarian literature in the world. As Balázs Lengyel has noted, the émigré László Gara managed to convince forty-eight French poets, most of them outstanding ones, to translate Hungarian poetry, which was a very alien form of poetry for

most of them. As the anecdote goes, Guillevic, while he was conscientiously translating Hungarian poets, remarked several times: "Why should I read T.S. Eliot's poetry? French literature is rich enough for me." Jean Rousselot complained about the strange names he had to learn, like that of Árpád Tóth, but then went on to translate even *The Tragedy of Man.* The anthology published as a result of Gara's unrelented efforts was entitled *Anthologie de la Poesie hongroise*, which, as Balázs Lengyel notes, contained "1956, the heroism of the youth, the blood of the martyrs, the forced exile of the so called dissidents, and the shock of decent people in Europe."[6] As part of this new interest in Hungarian literature, a number of Hungarian poetry and short story anthologies were published in foreign languages in the years following the revolution, one of the first prose anthologies being *Flashes in the Night*, published in 1958. It was, no doubt, this new atmosphere, this novelty of reading Hungarian literature that prompted Ted Hughes to translate János Pilinszky, of whom he wrote the following lines in a letter to the Hungarian Lajos Koncz:

> The real excellences of Pilinszky — the peculiar qualities and tensions of his language, and his technical form — of which I have acquired a very strong impression, even though I know no Hungarian, are beyond me, naturally, and obviously cannot be approximated. What I concentrated on was his overall tone, as I understand it, and the vision which the poems transmit so clearly and strongly, and which seem to me unique. I am aware, even in the shorter poems, that Janos Pilinszky has touched an unusual sort of greatness — one which seems to touch me very closely.[7]

Moving from poetry to drama, mention must be made of Robert Ardrey's *Shadow of Heroes, a play in five acts from the Hungarian Passion,* which was first produced at the Piccadilly Theatre, London, on 7 October 1958 and broadcast on BBC's Sunday Night Theatre television program on 19 July, 1959. An adaptation of Ardrey's play was made by Australian Television in 1961.

The main character of the drama is Julia Rajk, who is going through many hardships after her husband is arrested and then executed. The play presents historical characters, including Rákosi, Kádár and László Rajk. The plot starts in the winter of 1944, and the final act is set during the 1956 Revolution. We hear Imre Nagy' famous radio speech

saying "Our troops are in combat" and then Kádár's announcement calling on the Hungarian people to "put down the counter-revolutionary bandits". The last scene depicts the arrest of Imre Nagy and Julia Rajk outside the Yugoslav Embassy, as they are herded onto a bus. Throughout the play, the audience is assisted by the Author's rather lengthy historical commentaries on the events. *Shadow of Heroes* is definitely not true to history in all detail, it is primarily a work of literature, that is the work of the imagination, and as such it is quite an interesting piece. Its language is sophisticated, the dialogues are certainly capable of arousing tension, and as a drama the play is quite successful. The dramatic composition is enhanced by the unfinished story — in the concluding scene we have no certain news about the whereabouts of the ex-refugees of the Yugoslav Embassy, and this is explicitly brought to the knowledge of the audience by the otherwise omnipotent Author.

There are several historical novels that discuss the Hungarian Revolution. These include *The Bridge at Andau* (1957) by James Mitchener, *The Best Shall Die* (1961) by the Eric Roman, or *Ein Ungarischer Herbst* (1995) by Ivan Ivanji, or novels which were published in English translation, such as *Teaspoonful of freedom* by Kata Értavy Baráth, or *A time for everything* by Thomas Kabdebo. I would like to say a few words about two such historical novels.

The first, chronologically, is Vincent Brome's *The Revolution*, which was published in 1969 in England. Brome was an English writer, known for the diversity of his writings, including novels, dramas and biographies of such famous people as H. G. Wells, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. The hero and narrator of his novel, *The Revolution*, is Gavin Cartwright, an American foreign correspondent with some fading communist sympathies, keeping a notebook — the novel itself — during his stay in Hungary, sending reports and telephoning New York. The plot starts on 5 October 1956, the evening before the rehabilitation and reburial of László Rajk and covers a period until the end of November, the kidnapping of Imre Nagy and his companions. The real hero of this novel, however, is the narrator, who is evidently not identical with the writer, and who witnesses, records and also participates in the heat of the actions around him. In his private life he is struggling with an unsuccessful marriage, with a wife away in the US, but, in the midst of the revolution there is a romantic love affair evolving with a young Hungarian woman, Agi. Cartwright, an ex-communist who has become disappointed in Marxism, but has not altogether abandoned his communist ideals, is

somewhat sceptical about the power that will finally emerge from the chaos of the revolt and the turmoil of the street fights, which are described with some overheated exaggeration:

> Madness breaking out over the whole city from eleven years of repression... frustration... fear of the Secret Police. Freedom was suddenly a fire...the more splendid, the greater the freedom... throw anything — even oneself — into the blaze... to make it all-consuming. They had to drag one student back forcibly because — hypnotized by the fire and the chanting voices, drunk on Bull's Blood or the uprush of intoxicating liberation — he wanted to immolate himself among the flames. I do not deceive myself. These were not all high-minded freedom fighters. Some were riffraff ready to join any riot, some merely exploiting the hot blood of extreme youth, some sheer thugs; but the mass were ordinary people, carried away by emotions too mixed to analyse, their blood invaded by something bigger than they understood.[8]

Later on, however, Cartwright finds himself "deeply moved by the spectacle of spontaneous uprising of thousands of ordinary citizens, pitifully armed, with no co-ordination and no preparation, challenging the massed array of tanks, and the ugly tyranny for which Gerő stands, with the huge shadow of the Russian army waiting in the background."[9]

The vivid descriptions of the fights and actions are constantly put in context by the events happening in the political sphere, while, on the personal level, the love affair with Agi is progressing towards consummation. Cartwright, Agi and Agi's mysterious uncle, who later turns out to be her lover, are arrested by ÁVO at the Radio Station, finding themselves in a damp prison cell, which offers the romantic opportunity for Cartwright to kiss the girl's forehead. This happens at the very outset of the story, but towards the end of the novel we find ourselves in erotic bedroom scenes that in a movie would be certainly rated "adult", scenes with the added ingredient of psychological and self-reflective observations, the peak of which is the narrator's self-absorbing thoughts about his likely negro decent. The ex-communist Cartwright feels a growing passion for the revolution and after 4 November he actively participates in the fighting against the Russians. He is exposed by Russian intelligence and placed under house arrest, with the notebook breaking off abruptly. Brome's novel is a complex narrative, with the Hungarian revolution

constantly looming in its background. As a final note on this work I must say that the book would certainly deserve more critical attention than it has received.

Under the Frog by Tibor Fischer, first published in 1992 in England, depicts the Revolution from a different perspective, the perspective of Hungarians. Fischer is an English writer, born in 1959 in Stockport, near Manchester, to Hungarian parents. He is the author of several novels, including *The Thought Gang* (1994), *The Collector Collector* (1997) and *Voyage to the End of the Room* (2003), and the collection of his short stories were published under the title *Don't Read This Book If You're Stupid* (2000). *Under the Frog* was Fischer's first novel which brought him immediate fame and success; the book received the *Betty Trask Award* and was shortlisted for the *Booker Prize for Fiction.*

Under the Frog was inspired by the biography of the author's father, who left Hungary in 1956. The hero of the novel is Gyuri Fischer, a basketball-player. The plot is set against the backdrop of Hungarian history from December 1944 to some time in November 1956, but it is for the major part presented in a non-linear narrative. Despite the very dismal historical period in which the story is set, the novel is full of humorous scenes, so what eventually emerges in the book is what is called "black humour", humour based on the grotesque, absurd and morbid, which helps one survive under the circumstances of terror and constant threat, and which evolves into a life interpretation. The characters, who are players in a basketball team, are preoccupied with finding amusement in life in spite of their hostile and oppressive environment, making pranks, avoiding work and womanizing. The following passage describing the hero as he learns about Stalin's death graphically illustrates the style and political stance of the novel:

> When he heard the news of Stalin's death, from the radio, Gyuri was shampooing his hair. Apart from experiencing an intense well-being, his first thought was whether the whole system would collapse in time for him not to have to take the exam in Marxism-Leninism he was due to sit the following week. Could he count on the downfall of Communism or was he actually going to have to read some Marx?[10]

In the final analysis, the novel is about how to retain one's integrity in a cruel and harsh world. In the last chapter, the Revolution is described with much realism, depicting the mixed feelings of hope, fear,

courage and despair, as the main character participates in the flow of events. The humour present throughout the novel gradually gives way to a tragic tone as we learn that the Revolution is crushed and Gyuri's Polish girlfriend, Jadwiga, dies:

> Half the building behind them disappeared. It took Gyuri a while to convince himself he was still alive and that all the components of his body were in the right places and still working. Jadwiga was next to him, covered in dust and debris. When he saw her wound two thoughts raced through him, the axiom that stomach wounds were always fatal, and the other that his sanity couldn't cope with this. Holding her as if that would help, he tried to keep the horror from his face, the knowledge that he was about to see the last thing anyone wanted to see, the death of the one he loved.[11]

Gyuri loses the beloved one and the country is also lost. He must leave for Austria.

A remarkable feature of the novel is that although it was written in English, it manages to depict and present Hungarian life from the perspective of Hungarian characters, facets of life which are otherwise extremely bound up with the Hungarian language. Fischer's linguistic mastery inheres in using an extremely sophisticated and witty English register intended for English-speaking readers and still giving the impression of a genuinely Hungarian text. Although one would believe that translating the novel into Hungarian must be an easy task, as Ágnes Györke has noted, there are some untranslatable nuances, including those Hungarian words in the English original, like *kocsma*, which carry a foreign taste in English, but which are inevitably lost in translation.[12]

Finally, as my topic is the Hungarian Revolution as reflected in world literature, I'd like to say a few words about the relationship between history and literature. I must point out that although there is no doubt that this relationship exists, literary works reflecting a specific historical period should not be primarily judged from the perspective of history; they do not and do not have to correspond to historical truth. The writer is primarily responsible for the internal consistency of the work as a literary text and not as a text subordinated to a truth outside it. Who would hold Shakespeare accountable for deviations from history, as we know it, in his historical plays? Taking Richard III as an example, it is probably very difficult for historians to accept that the king called for a

horse in the Battle of Bosworth Field and offered his country for it, as there are no other reliable sources that indicate the occurrence of this incident. This motive in Shakespeare, however, perfectly brings home the despair and exasperation of the king to the audience. This motive of "a horse for a country", in addition, is not unique in literature, it also appears in legends about the Hungarian conquest, where too, it serves a literary purpose rather than a truth that actually happened. Therefore, in literature, a particular story element is incorporated in the work for literary rather than historical reasons. Shakespeare's history plays, just like historical plays and historical works of literature in general, demonstrate that what these works are essentially concerned with is producing an effect, whether tragic or comic or whatever else in nature. Literature does not have to comply with the requirement of "only the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth;" it does contain imaginative elements which historiography as such cannot readily accept. Even documentary works in literature are written and constructed in a way to be first and foremost literature, most often following an internal shape which serves purely artistic purposes. This does not mean, however, that a historical work in literature can go as far as to falsify the true significance of historical events or the role of individuals who have contributed to the development of these events. On the contrary, a historical work in literature can successfully fulfil its purpose only if it is true to the events in a general, broad and all-encompassing sense. In other words, literature does not have to describe what has happened but what might happen, the universal, an idea Aristotle discussed in relation to tragedy. To leap forward to the 20th century, let me invoke Northrop Frye's graphic distinction between "Weltgeschichte", history, as we know it, and "Heilsgeschichte", sacred history, a term often used to describe the Bible historicity. Frye says that

> *Weltgeschichte* uses the criteria of ordinary history, and attempts to answer the question, What should I have seen if I had been there? *Heilsgeschichte*, as we have it for instance in the Gospels, may say to us rather: 'This may not be what you would have seen if you had been there, but what you would have seen would have missed the whole point of what was really going on.'[13]

I must add, however, that as far as the 1956 Revolution is concerned, the relative proximity of the events and the presence of eye witnesses, and also the vision of the revolution in the collective memory

of those who were born after the revolution, do not allow such a hermetic, merely literary approach. The dispute arising in the wake of the release of Márta Mészáros's film on Imre Nagy, entitled *The Unburied Man*, clearly indicates that deviations from history and the memory of a whole generation for artistic purposes is an issue of debate even almost 50 years later.

With the lapse of time, however, no doubt, 1956 in the arts and literature will be assessed on the grounds of general aesthetic and/or ethical values inherent in the works rather than their historical accuracy. This does not at all mean that the memory or true significance of 1956 will ever fade. To explain this, I'd like to quote the American poet, John Logan, who, when asked to explain why he refused to write a poem about the 1956 Hungarian revolution, wrote: "All my poems are about the Hungarian Revolution." As David Ray remarks, "the Hungarian Revolution has become a metaphor for the American poet's own experience of disenchantment and exile, an experience he suffers much less dramatically, much more inwardly."[14] The significance of the Revolution in that way indeed exceeds its specific historical relevance; it has become one of those symbols of literature which lay the foundation for art and literature in our whole culture. No wonder why E. E. Cummings evoked in his above mentioned poem, "Thanksgiving 1956", the names of "Thermopylae" and "Marathon", ancient symbols of human courage and heroism, in connection with the Revolution. Like John Logan, Czeslaw Milosz, too, was unwilling to write a specific poem on 1956, but offered an old poem of his, "Antigone," to the Polish anthology *Polscy poeci o węgierskim paydźierniku*. These examples all indicate that the revolution in poetic imagination indeed became part of a much larger cultural heritage as a symbol of heroism. But it is not only for this that the world remembers the Revolution. It also remembers it because its own impassivity, its own pangs of conscience and guilt, primarily present in poetry, for being a cathartic experience, as witnessed in drama, and also for the actions the individual or a whole nation can take in and against a tyrannical world order, as mostly depicted in novels.

NOTES

[1] Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 92.

[2] Reprinted in *Gloria Victis: Az 1956-os magyar szabadságharc költői visszhangja a nagyvilágban*, ed. Tibor Tollas (Lakitelek: Analógia, 2003), 12.

[3] See G. Komoróczy Emőke, *Arccal a földön a huszadik század: az avantgárd metamorfózisai* (Budapest: Hét Krajcár Kiadó, 1996), 88.

[4] See Tibor Tollas, "The Herb Garden of Vác Prison and the Mines," in *From the Hungarian Rrevolution: A Collection of Poems*, ed. David Ray (Ithaca: Cornell, 1966), 15.

[5] György Gömöri, "Lengyel írók és költők a magyar forradalomról," *Kortárs* (4/1997): 48-49.

[6] Balázs Lengyel, "Francia ablak," *Kortárs* (4/1997): 57.

[7] Qtd. in Lajos Koncz, "Ted Hughes and János Pilinszky," *Hungarian Quarterly* 44/171 (Autumn 2003): 99.

[8] Vincent Brome, *The Revolution* (London: Cassell, 1996), 19.

[9] *Ibid.*, 60.

[10] Tibor Fischer, *Under the Frog* (Penguin: London, 1993), 148.

[11] *Ibid.*, 240-41.

[12] Ágnes Györke, "Ex libris," *Élet és irodalom*, 50, 21 (21/4/2006): 48.

[13] Frye, *The Great Code*, 48.

[14] David Ray, "Preface" *From the Hungarian Revolution*, ix.

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Review Article

Was Hungary Beyond Saving in 1956?

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Charles Gati. *Failed Illusions: Moscow, Washington, Budapest and the 1956 Hungarian Revolt.* Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 2006. ISBN 0804756066. 280 pages.

Csaba Békés and D. Gusztáv Kecskés, eds. *A forradalom és a magyar kérdés az ENSZ-ben, 1956-1963. Tanulmányok és kronológia* [The Revolution and the Question of Hungary in the U.N., 1956-1963. Studies, documents and a chronology]. Budapest: Magyar ENSZ Társaság, 2006. 239 pages.

András Nagy. *A Bang-Jensen ügy. '56 nyugati ellENSZélben* [The Case of Bang-Jensen. '56 in Western Headwind]. Budapest: Magvető, 2005. 399 pages.

Even before the 50th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 there was a huge literature on it; as a result of the regime-change in those countries that were involved in its events, a substantial part of the confidential files relating to it have become accessible to researchers. It was expected that 2006 will see many new publications, but while they revealed important details, like the many local revolutions in the countryside,[1] or the impact and repercussions in the neighbouring states,[2] the general picture was not substantially modified. Probably the most successful and most widely read new publication was by an erstwhile young Budapest journalist witness, who, under the name of Charles Gati, became

an acclaimed historian and political scientist in the United States.[3] Drawing on the findings of old and new scholarly works, Gati has painstakingly searched through archives in Hungary, Russia and the USA, has interviewed participants and eye-witnesses who were accessible to him, and produced a concise, readable synthesis, which also appeared in Hungarian, Polish, Russian and Slovak. Its only shortcoming is that it takes no account of events outside the Hungarian capital.

Gati gives a very sensible answer to the question who started the Revolution. It was disenchanted Marxists and Communists, the participants in the Petőfi Circle, who prompted the broad climate of opinion in favour of change. Given that it was taking place within the framework of a totalitarian dictatorship, the initiative could not have come in any other way except from inside, from within the orbit of the Party's intellectuals. It is not a new finding, but the general public may not be aware of the process that led Imre Nagy, who in the days immediately after 23 October was still "a prisoner... of his own Communist past" (p. 150) and who spoke of a counter-revolution (though he was opposed to the intervention of Soviet troops), to declare a week later, on 30 October, the restoration of multi-party democracy. His close supporters and subsequent fellow martyrs had a big part in this, and the thumbnail sketches of these figures that the book offers are one of its major strengths. Even more important is what Gati relates about the number of insurgents, their background and their thinking, based on the most recent publications (especially by László Eörsi and László Gyurkó). Their strength (around fifteen thousand armed combatants) does not seem much; however, in effect they had the whole country behind them. Within a couple of days the state and party apparatus throughout the country collapsed without offering any resistance, so on that point I cannot agree with Gati's comments about people being on both sides of the barricade. There were no two sides, as it was a tiny minority of party functionaries and the ÁVÓ security police, totalling no more than a few thousand or at most tens of thousands, who — primarily on account of past deeds and crimes that they had committed — were ranged against the whole country, the entire Hungarian nation (including those cut off by frontiers). That was the voice of the people as relayed to parliament by their delegations, and it is likely to have played at least as big a part in persuading Nagy to make his about face at the end of October as did his friends and immediate associates, including Miklós Gimes, József Szilágyi, Tamás Aczél, Ferenc Donáth, Géza Losonczy, Miklós Vásárhelyi and Szilárd Újhelyi.

At the launch of the book's Hungarian edition, János M. Rainer, one of the pre-eminent experts on 1956, described it as a lively and provocative essay which constitutes the first serious revision among the accounts of Revolution that have appeared to date. Gati's key thesis: if Imre Nagy had been a stronger leader during the days of the Revolution, and if the revolutionaries had been capable of moderating their demands, and if America, instead of mere rhetoric, had shown a more vigorous and more imaginative response to events, then there would have been a realistic chance of the USSR holding back on its intervention. Had that been the case Hungary would have acquired a more moderate Communist regime, somewhere between the administrations of a Gomułka and a Tito. In short: was the most dramatic event of the Cold War doomed to failure?

At the outset it indeed seemed impossible for a small nation to overthrow a tyranny imposed and maintained by the mighty Soviet Union. But when many Soviet tanks were successfully destroyed by the young insurgents in Budapest, and two prominent Soviet leaders, Mikoyan and Suslov, in negotiations with Nagy and Zoltán Tildy, the former Smallholder Party leader, had agreed to the demands of the revolutionaries; moreover, a communiqué issued by the Soviet government on 30 October promised to place relations with "the other socialist states" on completely new footing of equality and state sovereignty, and stated that it was prepared to discuss the matter of its military presence in Hungary, a miraculous victory seemed imminent.

We already knew that one day later, during the night dawning on 31 October, the Soviet leadership, with Khrushchev to the fore, changed its mind and decided to occupy Hungary and install a puppet government. That decision was unquestionably swayed by the Suez Crisis that blew up on 29 October with the military action taken by Great Britain, France and Israel against Egypt, but the decisive factor must have been a fear that the collapse of the Communist regime in Hungary, quite apart from the enormous loss of face that it would entail, might set off a chain reaction of protests against the equally loathed Communist governments in other satellite states. The Hungarian government was already informed the following day that new Soviet army units were crossing the country's frontier. Nagy had no illusions: the disappearance of Kádár and Münnich, two less compromised prominent Communists, could only be taken as a bad omen. His declaration of Hungarian neutrality later that day and then, after the sighting of the military ring around Budapest and the last straw of Soviet ambassador Andropov's lies, the announcement on 3 November

of the country's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact were last-ditch attempts to avert the threat of attack. The fact that Khrushchev received unanimous backing in a series of lightning visits that he paid to the Polish comrades at Brest, to the Romanians, Czechs and Bulgarians in Bucharest, and to Tito on the island of Brioni — indeed, was urged by them to intervene militarily against Hungary — has been known for some time. Gati also cites as a final crucial factor the continued in-fighting for power within the Soviet leadership, and the opportunity offered to Khrushchev to counter any accusations of being too soft. He also suggests that if the insurgents in Budapest had not entertained "illusions about their courageous insurgency forcing the Soviet Union to retreat"; if Hungary had not rejected the one-party system; and if Imre Nagy had been more in charge of the situation and been able to check outrages such as the siege on the Party headquarters in Republic Square and the ensuing lynchings, then perhaps the Soviet Union would not have launched its aggression on 4 November and "the revolt might well have succeeded" (p. 220).

The Revolution swept the Communist regime aside, and all Prime Minister Nagy did up until 30 October was to acknowledge and legitimize that fact. The idea that the whole revolution might have been able to restrain itself, that there was no necessity for it to run to demands for multiparty democracy and complete independence from the Soviet Union — it is simply unrealistic. Even if he had been more forceful and resolute, Nagy would have been unable to contain public sentiment. Even supposing that he did succeed in braking the momentum and halting the process, it is highly unlikely that this would have mollified Moscow. After all, it was precisely through drawing the lessons of 1956 that the Czechs in 1968 were in the position that Gati posits of Hungary 1956: a programme of democratic socialism with a human face that did not defy Moscow — but to no avail. When the Solidarity movement in Poland carried through a "self-limiting revolution" in 1980-81 by only battling for the social demands of employees, leaving the political élite in place and not even trying to break free from the "geopolitical cage," a Soviet leadership that was a good deal more enlightened than it had been in 1956 was unwilling to allow even that. Given these subsequent examples, I would hazard a guess that insofar as Imre Nagy would have wanted a "Big Compromise" amounting to a milder form of Communism like that advocated by Gomułka and, later on, by Khrushchev himself, that truly would have spared a few hundred lives, but the one-party system and the ultimately ruinous economic policy would have been left intact.

For an alternative that was not realised in 1956 but stood a realistic chance one has to look not to Budapest or Moscow but to Washington. Gati's analysis of Washington's policy is the most valuable part of his book, and I have to confess that his conclusions have led me to modify my own earlier understanding.[4] Like most contemporaries and later commentators, I too was of the opinion that the United States could not be accused of abandoning the Hungarian Revolution, because military intervention on its part could easily have led to world war or a nuclear catastrophe. Gati's researches in the archives support Bennet Kovrig's earlier claim[5] that any talk of "liberation" was nothing more than empty propaganda sloganising, and the U.S. government had no specific plans what to do if a spontaneous revolt broke out in a Communist country. Based on classified U.S. records Gati shows that Washington had very little knowledge and even less understanding of the internal conditions of Hungary prior to the outbreak of the uprising. America failed to appreciate Imre Nagy's importance even after the turning-point at the end of October.

The gravest fault of all was the failure of America's leaders to turn to the Kremlin, while the Revolution was in progress, with a meaningful proposal that was worthy of consideration. Eisenhower was concerned that the Soviet Union would respond aggressively if it perceived that the tacitly accepted post-1947 division of Europe was under threat; after 23 October his main goal was to reassure the Soviet leadership that the United States was not going to endanger Soviet interests in Eastern Europe and was not seeking to overthrow the Communist regimes there. On October 27th, having cleared it first with the president, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in a speech in Dallas, Texas, reassured Moscow: "The United States has no ulterior motive in desiring the independence of the satellite countries... We do not look upon these nations as potential military allies."[6] Had the Soviet Union been well-intentioned and anxious for peace and co-operation, the speech might have provided a good argument for not intervening militarily; however, what Moscow's hard-liners read into it was that it was offering a *carte blanche* to go ahead, as they would not have to reckon with an American intervention. Meanwhile the Hungarian staff of Radio Free Europe (RFE) in Munich were unaware that the confrontational stance that they had been broadcasting with the blessing of their paymasters now had no political backing and that America had not the faintest idea how the promised "liberation" was to be achieved. Left to their own devices, guided by their own emotions, the

Hungarian editors enthusiastically watched the downfall of communism in Hungary. Gati does not mention, however, that the US National Security Council's directive NSC 174 stated that its goal was to destabilise the Soviet empire, but not to foment revolt and not to commit the American government to providing aid. It seems that this had never been brought to the attention of either the RFE's staff or its listeners. Gati might also have mentioned that the Democratic Party opposition demonstrated more sensitivity to Hungarian expectations. Adlai Stevenson, who was then running as the Democrats' presidential candidate, urged the United Nations to step in on the side of the Hungarian Revolution. A leading article in the *New York Times* for October 27th suggested that there could not be a more clear-cut case for foreign intervention under the aegis of the UN. Obviously Stevenson's statement had much to do with electioneering.

It is true that the Suez conflict did divert attention away from Hungary, and it certainly undermined the solidarity of the Western powers, but that was not the real reason for their passivity towards Hungary. There were experts within the National Security Council and the CIA (Frank Wisner for one) who considered, and even went so far as to recommend, that military aid be given, but the logistic difficulties of doing so, Austria's neutrality, and the line adopted by Hungary's other neighbours all provided convenient excuses for doing nothing.

Gati does not deal at any length with events at the UN. Not only America's record there was deplorable, but that of the whole institution, for which primary responsibility lies with the Secretary-General, the Swedish Dag Hammarskjöld, and other high-ranking officials of the Organization. This has been shown in a meticulously researched (1657 footnotes!) and highly convincing work by András Nagy, a non-professional historian, who probed into the mysterious death of Povl Bang-Jensen, a Danish diplomat at the UN, who refused to reveal the names of the Hungarians who testified before the Special Committee on Hungary. For his disobedience he was discharged, and his suspicion of Soviet influences, especially in the aftermath of the Revolution, in curtailing the activities of the Committee, led to his dismissal, explained by his alleged mental disorder. The Dane was unable to convince Allen Dulles that the work of the Special Committee was deliberately sabotaged by several people upon orders coming from Moscow, but the charges eventually led to his death. While András Nagy's monograph is a moving testimony to the impact of and inspiration by the tragedy in Hungary, it is also a convincing indictment against Hammarskjöld, suggesting that he

was ready to pass on the names of the witnesses and exposing their families to terrible repercussion, in exchange for Soviet support for extending his assignment. The author shows that the UN was deeply penetrated by Soviet agents, without that the condemnation of the Soviet Union and his Hungarian puppets could have been far more powerful and effective, probably alleviating the reprisals in Hungary.

Admittedly the UN and its member states could not have given history a different course following the second Soviet intervention, but in the days immediately preceding a different conduct by the U.S. and its major allies may have. That is another of the many alarming findings by Nagy, and is supported most convincingly by the collection edited by Békés and Kecskés. They have published definitive works on the diplomatic background of 1956;[7] here the introductory essay by Békés gives a concise summary of how and why first the British and the French (already planning for the invasion of Egypt), later the U.S. delayed any discussion by the Security Council of the first Soviet intervention. It is easy to find fault with the old colonial powers over their failure, once the Hungarian revolt had broken out, to delay their long-planned action in Suez, which completely overshadowed the events in Hungary. But I can only agree with Békés that the Soviets would have intervened even if the Suez crisis had not taken place, and the passivity of the West was caused not by events in the Middle East but was due to fear of overthrowing the delicate status quo and scuttling detente.

In the crucial days October 30 to November 3, when the real difference was not between the West and the Soviet Union, but between the U.S. and its allies, no response of any kind was given to the Hungarian declaration of neutrality. Even the incoming news of Soviet troop movements failed to prompt action. Once the news of the Soviet attack on Budapest and Nagy's dramatic appeal reached New York, the Security Council began an extraordinary session. Henry Cabot Lodge, the U.S. delegate to the United Nations, stated: "If ever there was a time when the action of the United Nations could literally be a matter of life and death for a whole nation, this is the time." Then he addressed some words to the Hungarian nation: "By your heroic sacrifice you have given the United Nations a brief moment in which to mobilise the conscience of the world on your behalf. We are seizing that moment, and we will not fail you."[8] Alas it was mere propaganda, trying to show the world (and especially the "third world") the real face of Soviet imperialism. Although an emergency session of the General Assembly passed a U.S.

motion on 5 November that Soviet troops be withdrawn and a commission be sent, this did not alter the brute facts: Hungary was crushed and remained a Soviet satellite for another 33 years.

One can accept that fear of a third, this time nuclear world war, more than the physical impossibility of providing military help to the Hungarians, acquits the U.S. from the charge of having let Hungary down. But in a volume that was published to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Hungarian revolution, the distinguished British historian Hugh Seton-Watson (son of R.W. Seton-Watson, the Scotus Viator who was so critical of the Hungarians before and after the First World War) expressed his doubts:

> We must ask ourselves the question: Could nothing have been done? I have spent many hours in the last twenty years discussing this with British and American diplomats, journalists and even a few politicians; and all have insisted that nothing could have been done. And yet I confess that I am not convinced. Of course, American military invasion of Hungary was not possible, still less a nuclear ultimatum to Moscow. Of course, formal diplomatic notes could achieve nothing. But was it really impossible for the United States government, using all the private and public channels of communication available to it and all the means of pressure at its disposal, to have convinced the Soviet government that the consequences of invasion would have been very much more unpleasant for it than the consequences of letting the Nagy government, *which was in control of Hungary*, stay in power until a settlement, acceptable to all parties concerned, including the Great Powers, could be worked out? The truth is that the United States government did not even try. Dulles revealed himself an empty demagogue. Nobody tried because everyone was obsessed with the presidential election and the Suez Canal.[9]

However justified it may be, condemnation of the Western democracies today over 1956 is pointless, except for a political message that is topical right now. In 1956 the governments of the day judged short-term interests to be more important than riskier policies with a broader perspective. America did not attempt to roll back the Soviet regime because it overestimated the Soviet Union's strength and underestimated the geostrategic importance of Central and Eastern Europe. Gati's arguments, in many respects convincing, were preceded almost forty years ago by Robert

Murphy, the highly experienced diplomat who was Foster Dulles' Under-Secretary in 1956: "Perhaps history will demonstrate that the free world could have intervened to give Hungarians the liberty they sought, but none of us in the State Department had the skill or the imagination to devise a way."[10] Solving political crises calls for both expertise and imagination.

NOTES

[1] An excellent example is László Vaczkó, *Lángbaborult idő. Somló-vidék, 1956* [Times aflame. Somló-country in 1956] (Devecser: Önkormányzat, 2006).

[2] Ádám Szesztay (ed.), *Együtt. Az 1956-os forradalom és a határon túli magyarok* [Together. The Revolution of 1956 and the Hungarians Beyond the Borders] (Budapest: Lucidus, 1956).

[3] I wrote a considerably longer review of this book: „Elkerülhető volt-e az 56-os forradalom leverése? Gati: Vesztett illúziók. [Was the suppression of the 1956 revolution inevitable? Review of Gati's Failed Illusions], *Magyar Szemle,* 2006 October, 148-159., which appeared in English "Was Failure the Only Option? (Charles Gati: Failed Illusions)," *The Hungarian Quarterly,* 48 (Spring 2007), 100-108.

[4] Géza Jeszenszky, "Did the United States Let Hungary Down in 1956?," in *The 1950s. Proceedings of the 2003 Biennial Conference of the Hungarian Association of American Studies*, ed. Enikő Bollobás and Szilvia Nagy (Budapest: Eötvös Loránd University, 2005), pp. 39-44.

[5] Bennet Kovrig, *The Myth of Liberation. East-Central Europe in U.S. Diplomacy and Politics since 1941* (Baltimore, 1973); *idem*: *Of Walls and Bridges. The United States and Eastern Europe* (New York & London: New York University Press, 1991).

[6] Quoted by Kovrig, *The Myth...*, p. 182.

[7] Csaba Békés, *Az 1956-os forradalom a világpolitikában* [The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and World Politics] (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1996); also by the same author: *Az 1956-os magyar forradalom a világpolitikában* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2006); and *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents.* Compiled, edited, and introduced by Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne, János Rainer.

[8] Quoted by Kovrig, *The Myth...*,, p. 203.

[9] See Hugh Seton-Watson's introduction in *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 in Retrospect*, ed. Béla K. Király and Paul Jónás (Boulder, Colo.: East European Monographs, 1978), pp. 5-6.

[10] Robert Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), p. 432.

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