

ENGLISH SUMMARY

The publication *Historia poliittisena argumenttina* (History As a Political Argument) is about the different interpretations which arose concerning the Hungarian recent past and the events of 1956 and their impacts on current politics, especially 1988–1989. Primarily the book focuses on Hungarian history until the first multiparty elections held in 1990. The discussions which have originated during the last few years are briefly found in the epilogue. The publication is based on a licentiate thesis in political science accepted in the University of Jyväskylä, May 1995.

The purpose of this book is to study the relationship between history and symbolic, discursive power. Do the interpretations of the past legitimize political views and, if they do, how and to whom? How does the present context and experiences such as politics and the political situation impact the interpretation of the past, and through what kind of political narratives?

According to popular view, "1956" was taboo during the Kádár era and that tabooism has often been self-evident in Hungary. Thus, the book focuses on how and to whom "1956" became taboo. On the basis of the Hungarian example, current political dimensions of history and time are examined.

First, the historical experience in relation to history is analysed using Koselleck's theory that history writing goes through three phases (*Aufschreiben*, *Fortschreiben* and *Umschreiben*) and the same division is used here. History writing is understood (cf. Hayden White) as a literary artifact which contains interpretation and meta-history. The decision of whose experiences and interpretations are written into history is itself a political question.

In addition to historians, there are other actors in the discussion about using the past and constructing new political horizons for the future. It can be said that "all" that was said about 1956 during the Kádár regime also had political and symbolic dimensions. Thus, in addition to historical texts, this thesis both examines concrete symbols such as the coats of arms and national days which, on the one hand try to help one to remember, and on the other hand, to forget. Therefore, different mechanisms how the past became a part

of the present history culture (*Geschichtskultur*) are analysed. Two concepts are suggested to focus on the means which keep the past alive in the present: history as a political argument and politics of the past.

First, the concept of revolution is analysed in both the European and Hungarian context. Dictionaries compiled by linguists and political scientists have been analysed in conceptual history. Additionally, the actual empirical section of the book is distinguished by three main time periods: 1956, Kádár era and the time before the first free elections. At first, the autumn of 1956 is researched from the contemporary point of view. Each day of the conflict is researched separately. Particularly, the rhetoric of the speeches made by the leading politicians is analysed. The resource material used included excerpts from leaflets, Hungarian radio programs and newspapers which originated during the uprising and appeared again during the Hungarian system change in 1989–1991.

The second section of the research emphasizes the interpretation of the 1956 events as a counterrevolution during the Kádár regime. Five books which dealt with the recent past were chosen from a bibliography, first distributed as *samizdat* in 1986 (*1956 a forradalom kronológiája és bibliográfiája*). Additionally, the so-called "White Books", the first account of the events written already in 1957 by Hungarian officials, were reread again. All material is analysed using textual methods and by summarizing the construction of the chronological narrative. A general account about the movies, literature and two textbooks used in the Hungarian schools is also included.

The political culture during the Kádár era is seen in the context of the memory of "1956" and the impacts it made. Viewpoints of the commemorations by the ruling Socialist Workers' Party and the political nonconformists were chosen. Primary sources contain, for example, the map of Budapest and the party newspaper *Népszabadság* from the most important anniversaries from 1957–1988.

The third section of the book focuses on "1956" in (post-Kádárism) as it was reported in three main Hungarian newspapers: *Magyar Hírlap*, *Magyar Nemzet* and *Népszabadság*. Initially, new opposition organizations, their relation to "1956" and their demands

concerning the past are examined. Secondly, the analysis of the report finished by the history committee formed to prepare a new program for the ruling party is presented. The new interpretation of the events of 1956 as an uprising instead of a former counter-revolution officially emerged for the first time.

The results of the former history committee were suddenly published by the Communist reformer Imre Pozsgay at the end of January 1989. The next chapter of the book contains notable discussion which followed Pozsgay's sudden declaration. The possibility that Pozsgay's declaration became the "last nail in the coffin" of the communist unity is stressed, and, finally, the contingent situation which led to the acceptance of a multi-party system two weeks later is discussed. In addition to opposition, some party members preferred plurality and, thus, the party came to a watershed: the reforms had to be cancelled or even more radical steps to the plurality had to be taken. The minutes of the decisive session of the Central Committee, published already in 1993 and 1994, are used as new source material.

The last three chapters focus on the time after February, 1989. First, the political dimensions of the reburial of Imre Nagy, former Prime Minister, are emphasized. Secondly, the changing national symbols and days are discussed. Finally, the past as a part of the election campaign of March and April 1990, is examined. Changing national symbols and the past itself became important factors in the new contingent situation; literally, the past was brought into present, where it has built identities for the future. On the one hand, people tried to distinguish between the past and the present and, on the other hand, the "right" symbols were argued to belong to "us". However, the changing of the symbols did not formally mean a change in the power relationships, since most old symbols were abolished during the old regime in protection of the Communist reformers.

As a conclusion, the 1956 experience and its naming and the political past are dealt with in the light of the Hungarian example. Naming an event (trying to define something) is seen as a mean of using symbolic power in the context of rhetoric. Until 1989, "1956" belonged to the history of winners and rejected the names used about it in the Hungarian public. History writing is connected to the

experiences of the winners and, at the same time, legitimized the current positions in power. On the contrary, by opposing the interpretation of winners as a political argument, the moral basis of nonconformist groups is legitimized. Long history as a part of culture is already a political argument in the present. In 1989, an attempt to resurrect the best part of the "1956" political experience was made by political actions. Revision of history and the changes in the present emerge hand in hand and, thus, the nearest past becomes an important factor in the construction of the Hungarian future in the 1990s.