

# HISTORY MAKERS TESTIFY, "TANÚK – KORUKRÓL" 1977–1997

The Oral History Program of the Hungarian Alumni Association  
at Rutgers University

KÁROLY NAGY

Middlesex County College, Edison, NJ,  
U.S.A.

## I.

The Hungarian Alumni Association, Magyar Öregdiák Szövetség – Bessenyei György Kör was founded in 1960 by Hungarian students at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey (USA), most of whom left their country after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution in which many of them participated and which was crushed by Soviet military intervention.

Some 260 outstanding Hungarian writers, scientists and artists have participated in the association's lecture, conference and exhibit series in the past thirty-seven years.

The association also initiated an educational program. The *Hungarian Saturday Classes* have offered instruction in the basics of Hungarian language and culture for twenty-six years.

In 1977 the association launched an oral history project. The objectives of the *Tanúk – korukról* [Witnesses about their Epoch] "History Makers Testify" program were to enable some of those who actively participated or played leading roles in changing or influencing Hungarian (and in some cases the world's) history to talk about their actions in an open forum – almost like testifying in a court – and, thereby, to preserve their experiences for posterity. In the past twenty years twenty-three such key witnesses have "testified" during thirty-two lectures by Hungarian Alumni Association invitation: Lajos Boros, Miklós Duray, Péter Gosztonyi, János Horváth, Mihály Hógye, Pál Jónás, Béla Király, Sándor Kiss, Sándor Kopácsi, Andor Kovács, Imre Kovács, Elek Nagy, Zoltán Nyeste, László Papp, Gergely Pongrácz, Sándor Püski, Sándor Rácz, Pál Somody, István Szent-Miklós, Sándor Taraszovics, Miklós Vásárhelyi, Gyula Várallyay and Eugene Wigner.

Eight of these lectures were published by the association in book form.<sup>1</sup> Three of these books were republished in four facsimile reprint editions by underground, "samizdat" publishers during the last seven years of the communist dic-

tatorship in Hungary. These eight books are now frequently cited and used as source material by historians in and beyond Hungary.

## II.

Mert olyanokat éltünk meg,  
amire ma sincs ige –

We have lived through such things  
for which there is still no word...

wrote Gyula Illyés (1902–1983), Hungary's poet laureate in one of his most famous poems, the 1955 *Bartók*. These lines from the Illyés poem became the motto of the "History Makers Testify" program.

During the second half of the twentieth century not only the facts of the recent massive atrocities against humanity were hard to uncover but public discourse also exhibited difficulties in finding adequate and fitting words to express some of the unspeakable horrors perpetuated by the heinous dictators, movements and regimes of Fascism, Communism, Nazism, Stalinism, Maoism and their ilk.

And even when the facts were revealed and true words were found, these words of truth were forbidden, suppressed and punished in the countries ruled by dictators. The choice of Illyés' *Bartók*-poem's lines for the oral history program's motif signaled the intent to create a forum where the unspeakable could be articulated, the prohibited words could be freely spoken. A unique opportunity was offered for witnesses and makers of history to publicly share their insights, to provide historically important facts and to reveal, often in the face of officially enforced silence, secrecy or disinformation propaganda, some evidence which only they knew.

The Illyés motto was printed on the front page of all the announcements inviting the public to the lectures of the history makers usually to one of Rutgers University's 100–200 audience capacity lecture halls.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent pages of these announcements contained short autobiographies, specifically requested from the invited lecturers for these and subsequent publications.

*Eugene Wigner* (1902–1995), the 1963 Nobel prize winner and emeritus physics professor of Princeton University, gave an account of his role in the Manhattan Project, which produced the first atomic bombs. His lecture on April 26, 1980 was titled "Az atomkor kezdete" [The Beginning of the Atomic Age].

*Zoltán Nyeste* was invited twice. On October 31, 1980 he offered detailed documentation of one of the Hungarian Communist regime's best kept secrets:

The Recsk political prisoner camp and of the unspeakable abuses and tortures for hundreds of victims. The book version of his lecture, which was published in 1982 by the Hungarian Alumni Association, *Recsk. Emberek az embertelenségben*. [Recsk. Men in the Midst of Inhumanity] – was republished three times in Hungary. Two facsimile versions were distributed by underground "samizdat" publishers (Hitel, 1982; ABC, 1985) and one edition was reprinted by Püski (Budapest) in 1989. Zoltán Nyeste testified once more. On November 2, 1985 his talk was titled: "Útkeresés – adalékok a magyar ifjúsági mozgalmak történetéhez: 1942–1948" [Searching For a Way – Some Data Toward a History of the 1942–1948 Hungarian Youth Movements].

*Miklós Duray* of Pozsony (Bratislava, at the time in Czechoslovakia) was imprisoned twice by the Czechoslovak communist government, once from November 10, 1982 to February 22, 1983 and once again from May 10, 1984 to May 10, 1985 for organizing in 1978 the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of the Hungarian Minority in Czechoslovakia.<sup>3</sup> This committee's name was the title of Miklós Duray's oral history presentation at Rutgers University on February 18, 1989: "A Csehszlovákiai Magyar Kisebbség Jogvédő Bizottsága".

*Mihály Hőgye* (1912–1992) was a consular officer in Berlin between 1942 and 1944. The title of his lecture on November 17, 1984 was: "Utolsó csatlós?" Magyar külpolitika a második világháború végén" [Last Satellite? Hungarian Foreign Policy at the End of the Second World War]. An expanded version of his lecture was published with the same title by Püski (N.Y.) in 1985.

*István Szent-Miklós*y (1909–1995) was a Lieutenant Colonel of the Hungarian Army General Staff. His lecture on May 7, 1983 provided details of Hungary's attempts to break away from the war and from Germany. The name of the clandestine organisation that coordinated these efforts was the title of his lecture: "A Magyar Függetlenségi Mozgalom, 1943–1946" [The Hungarian Independence Movement, 1943–1946]. His book by essentially the same title was published by Praeger (N.Y.) in 1988: *With the Hungarian Independence Movement, 1943–1947 – an Eyewitness Account*.

But the two topics that were deemed especially in need of fact-finding and free public disclosure by the organizers of the oral history lecture series were the Hungarian Populist Movement and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.

### III.

The Hungarian Populist Movement was a reform ethos and program during the late twenties, the thirties and the early forties.<sup>4</sup> István Bibó (1911–1979), one of the most significant modern socio-political thinkers of Central Europe identified with this movement and its search for a "third road" alternative. He wrote in 1978 that the populists "embodied a radical movement that included simultane-

ously demands for complete social liberation and demands for full, institutionalized human rights." The movement's

critical stance, and its ideals... represent and approach which goes beyond the traditional and already sterile conflicts between communism and capitalism still dominating the world. As such some of its perspectives transcend its national and societal boundaries, offering conclusions of general validity.<sup>5</sup>

The pre-World-War II. Conservative regime banned some of the populists' meetings, censored, and later closed down some of their periodicals, confiscated some of the writers' books, jailed some of the authors. The post-war communist dictators also classified the populists as enemies. György Lukács, at the time the chief ideologue of the emerging Stalinist dictatorship, denounced the populist writers between 1945 and 1948 in a series of defamatory and threatening articles and pamphlets.<sup>6</sup>

The Soviet-installed post-1956 Kádár dictatorship also restored the war against the populists.<sup>7</sup> Many books by the most significant populist writers were banned again. Bibó was jailed in 1957 for his role in the Revolution and was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1958; and he was released only during the 1963 partial amnesty. Some other thinkers, writers, books and periodicals were also subjected to strictly prohibitive or curtailing censorship until the late 1980s. Many times they were demonized by the official accusation of "exhibiting nationalistic tendencies." Perhaps the foremost of the Hungarian populist writers, Gyula Illyés died in 1983 with a 1978 collection of his essays *Szellem és erőszak* [Spirit and Violence] still forbidden to leave the publisher's warehouses. Some people have been publishing libelous anti-populist slander, cloaked as history, political science or sociology even in the recent past.<sup>8</sup>

Some of the populist movement's major goals of modernization were best characterized by the 1937 manifesto of the short-lived (1937–1939) "Márciusi Front" [March Front] organization.<sup>9</sup> The twelve-point declaration demanded a general and radically democratic transformation of the country. István Bibó once remarked: "During the days of the March Front's foundation the issue was that the cause of the community, the nation could and should become one and the same with the cause of progress, of freedom, of complete human liberation."<sup>10</sup>

Imre Kovács, the populist sociographic writer, one of the founders of the March Front, and one of the authors and signatories to its manifesto was one of the first history makers who testified in three oral history lectures by the invitation of the Hungarian Alumni Association at Rutgers University on February 17, and April 28, 1978.

*Imre Kovács* (1913–1980) read the twelve points of the Manifesto to a public meeting of about five thousand people in 1937 on the same March 15th day and

from the same steps of the Budapest National Museum from which Sándor Petőfi, the most famous Hungarian poet virtually sparked the Revolution and War of Liberation by reciting his poem *Nemzeti Dal* [National Song] and from which Mór Jókai declared the twelve points titled *Mit kíván a magyar nemzet* [What is the Wish of the Hungarian Nation], demanding independence, freedom and equality in 1848. The full text of Imre Kovács' three lectures was published by the association as *A Márciusi Front*, [The March Front] in 1980. Imre Kovács died in the same year.

The populists' foremost concern was the fate of the peasants, about 3 million of whom have not only lived in abject poverty but were almost completely blocked from any opportunities for socio-economic mobility. In 1930 the three million agrarian proletariat constituted 34% of the country's total population and 67% of the peasant stratum. The populists wanted to diagnose the plight of the rural poor through "village explorer" programs, to publicize the facts, and to mobilize public opinion for necessary reforms. *Ki a faluba!* [To the Villages!] wrote Dániel Fábrián and Attila József in the first publication of the populist, reformist Miklós Bartha Association on May 20, 1930. (Attila József was a member of the Association from 1926 to 1930). They were admonishing all college and older high school students to spend their summer vacations doing research in villages, collecting ethnographic, cultural, social, economic, labor, health, educational and other data. One of the leaders of the Miklós Bartha Association was *Pál Somody* (1900–1993), who on May 7, 1982 gave an interesting lecture about his experiences.

Even when peasant youngsters were admitted to colleges, they and their families were unable to meet the costs of their education. Many of the populist intellectuals started to develop programs to remedy this situation.

*Lajos Boros* was one of these practical organizers, who became a founder and the first director of the first tutorial college for 300 needy and talented peasant and other youngsters in Budapest. His two lectures on February 23, and March 23, 1979 were titled after the names of this college: *Bolyai Kollégium, 1934–1942* and *Györfy István Kollégium, 1942–1945*.<sup>11</sup>

There were some tutorial colleges outside of the capital city, which also became important centers for the reform programs of the populist movement. One such school was in Sárospatak, Sándor Kiss' alma mater. *Sándor Kiss* (1919–1982) played leading roles in Hungarian populist youth organizations and programs and in the 1944 resistance. He was the first president of the *MADISZ* [Hungarian Democratic Youth Alliance] in 1945 and became director of the *Peasant Alliance* in 1946. He suffered terrible tortures in Gestapo (1944) and in *ÁVÓ* (1947–1950) prisons. He gave two lectures in the oral history series. His first, on February 6, 1981 was titled: "Magyar ifjúság a népi mozgalomban, 1935–1945" [Hungarian Youth in the Populist Movement, 1935–1945]. The second, on March 6, 1981, testified of the "Küzdelem magyar demokráciáért – a

Magyar Parasztszövetség, 1945–1947” (Struggle for Hungarian Democracy – the Hungarian Peasant Alliance, 1945–1947). His lectures were published by the association, unfortunately posthumously in 1983 with the title *A magyar demokráciáért* [For Hungarian Democracy].

*Sándor Püski* became one of the most important publishers and organizers of the populist movement. From 1939 to 1945 he published 125 books – mostly by populist writers – distributing thousands of copies nationwide through his “Könyvbarátok” [Book Friends] network. He organized two week-long conferences of national historic significance in 1942 and in 1943 at Balatonszárszó. His October 1978 lecture at Rutgers was titled: “A Magyar Élet könyvkiadó” [The Hungarian Life Publishing Company]. His second lecture, on November 17, 1978 was about “A második szárszói konferencia” [The Second Szárszó Conference].

#### IV.

Thus thirteen of the twenty-three *Tanúk–Korukról* [History Makers Testify] oral history lectures were about the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Until 1989 the single-party communist dictatorial regime under Soviet military occupation in Hungary perpetrated various official lies about the 1956 Revolution:

The building of Socialism was temporarily interrupted by the 1956 counterrevolutionary insurgence. Western imperialist circles and emigrant fascist counterrevolutionary elements were continually inciting against our people, our regime. They prepared the continually inciting against our people, our regime. They prepared the counterrevolution with the aid of secret local centers. Armed counterrevolutionary forces were pouring into our country from the West. They were striving to overthrow the people’s democracy. They were murdering the communists and the progressive people, they were jailing thousands of patriots... Our government requested the help of the Soviet army and liquidated the counterrevolution.<sup>12</sup>

On October 21, and November 18, 1977 and on January 20, 1978 the first three lectures of the oral history series were delivered by *Béla Király*, one of the leaders of the 1956 Revolution.

Freed from a 1951 sentence of life imprisonment in 1956, General Béla K. Király was elected commander-in-chief of the Hungarian National Guard and was also appointed the military commander of Budapest during the revolution. His lectures had the same title as the book published by the association in 1981, *Az első háború szocialista országok között* [The First War Between Socialist Countries]. This book was re-published by the underground Budapest “samizdat” ABC

publisher in 1986. Béla Király testified one more time in the series. On March 16, 1985 his lecture was titled: "Honvédségből – Néphadsereg, 1945–1951, a szovjetesítés módszerei Kelet-Közép-Európában" [From National Guard to People's Army Sovietization of East Central Europe's Armies, 1945–1951]. The book resulting from that lecture was published in 1986 jointly with the "Magyar Füzetek" [Hungarian Notebooks] of Paris and with the title *Honvédségből Néphadsereg, 1944–1956* [From National Guard to People's Army].

*Miklós Vásárhelyi* was chief press officer of the Imre Nagy government during the Revolution of October 23 – November 4, 1956. After the Soviets crushed the Revolution, Vásárhelyi was deported to Rumania and later was sentenced to five years imprisonment. He was freed with amnesty in 1960. His lecture on February 11, 1984 disclosed the reform plans of the 1953 Imre Nagy government. Vásárhelyi was vice president of the Council of Ministers' Communications Office at the time.

*Sándor Kopácsi* was Budapest's Chief of Police during the Stalinist Rákosi regime. In 1956 he joined the revolution, and became Deputy Commander of the National Guard. In 1958 he was sentenced to life imprisonment. He was freed by the 1963 partial amnesty. His October 20, 1979 lecture was titled: "Az 1956-os magyar forradalom és a Nagy Imre per" [The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the Imre Nagy Trial]. His book by the same title was published by the association in 1979 and again in 1980. A facsimile edition was published by the Budapest underground "samizdat" ABC publisher in 1985.

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Revolution, on October 24, 1981, *Pál Jónás'* lecture was titled: "Az 1956-os forradalom Petőfi Köre" (The Petőfi Circle of the 1956 Revolution). Pál Jónás was elected president of this Budapest public forum during the Revolution. A year later, on October 23, 1982 the military commander of the Corvin Alley revolutionaries *Gergely Pongrácz* described their armed struggle. His lecture was titled: "A Corvin Köz és az 1956-os magyar forradalom" [The Corvin Alley and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution]. He published his day-by-day account in Chicago *Corvin Köz – 1956* [Corvin Alley – 1956] in the same year.

During the Revolution, spontaneously and yet almost simultaneously, within a few days, democratic organizations of self-governance, National Councils, Workers' Councils, Revolutionary Councils were elected in the entire country. Many considered these councils the most significant achievement of the Revolution. Hannah Arendt noted in her *The Origins of Totalitarianism*: "The rise of the [Hungarian Revolution's] Councils was the clear sign of a true upsurge of democracy against dictatorship, of freedom against tyranny."<sup>13</sup> The association invited three former Revolutionary Council leaders to testify about their actions.

*Sándor Rácz* of Budapest was invited in a letter of October 19, 1985 for a lecture on the thirtieth anniversary – October, 1986 – of the Revolution. He answered by a November 21 letter accepting the invitation. Seven months later,

however, on June 26, 1986, he wrote another letter to the association in which he provided details of how his passport applications and repeated appeals were rejected by the Hungarian Interior Ministry and the ruling party officials. It took another year – and the intervention, by the association’s request of the A.F.L. - C.I.O. – for him to send a telegram on March 23, 1987: “Útlevelem megkaptam” (I received my passport).<sup>14</sup>

Sándor Rácz’s lecture, on May 16, 1987 was titled: “A Nagy-Budapesti Központi Munkástanács – 1956” [The Greater Budapest Central Workers’ Council – 1956]. He was elected president of the council on November 16, 1956, and began organizing strikes and negotiating with the Soviet military authorities and with the traitorous Kádár government until his arrest on December 11. He was sentenced to life imprisonment – locked for a while in the same cell with István Bibó – and was released during the 1963 partial amnesty.

*Andor Kovács* was elected president, on October 29, 1956 of the Revolutionary National Committee of Csurgó district in Somogy county, Transdanubia, which consisted of twenty-nine villages and townships. After the crushing of the Revolution he escaped the reorganized political police forces by crossing the border to Yugoslavia on February 19, 1957. His lecture on October 22, 1988 was titled: “Forradalom Somogyban” [Revolution in Somogy County]. His book by the same title was published by the association the same year, in conjunction with the Basel EPMSZ [Protestant Academy for Hungarians in Europe.]

*Elek Nagy’s* oral history presentation provided insight into one of Budapest’s most significant industrial center’s activities during the Revolution. His testimonial had the title “Az 1956-os csepeli forradalmi munkástanács” [The 1956 Revolutionary Workers’ Council of Csepel]. He was elected president of the Central Council which announced its dissolution only on January 10, 1957, after Soviet tanks, completely surrounding the factory complex had demonstrated their overwhelming fire power.

*János Horváth* was acting president of the Imre Nagy appointed National Council for Economic Reconstruction during the last free days of the Revolution. His oral history presentation on October 27, 1984 was titled “Az 1956-os magyar forradalom gazdasági reformtervei [Economic Reform Plans of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution].<sup>15</sup>

*Péter Gosztonyi* was an officer in one of the most important military centers of the revolution, which was commandeered by Pál Maléter, who became Minister of Defense in the Imre Nagy government. His talk on April 10, 1981 had the title: “Maléter Pál és az 1956-os forradalom Kilián Laktanyája” [Pál Maléter and the Kilián Barracks of the 1956 Revolution].

*Sándor Taraszovics* gave an account of his recollections on October 27, 1995. During the Revolution he was a member of the Nyíregyháza Revolutionary Workers’ Council and its delegate to the Imre Nagy government in Budapest.



About 200,000 people fled from Hungary to Western countries after the Revolution was crushed. About 7,000 of these refugees were college students. They organized an association in 1957 with the name of Union of Free Hungarian Students. In 1961 they changed their name to United Federation of Hungarian Students – Magyar Egyetemisták és Főiskolások Egyesületeinek Szövetsége, MEFESZ. This organization functioned with a Geneva central office until 1967. Its president (1959–1960) *Gyula Várallyay* gave a well-documented account of the organization during a March 19, 1988 lecture. By 1992 he expanded his documentation into a book-length analysis published by Századvég and the 1956 Institute of Budapest. It was titled "*Tanulmányúton*" – az emigráns magyar diákmozgalom 1956 után ["On a Study Tour" – the Hungarian Emigrant Student Movement After 1956].

The Student Federation had member associations on three continents in fourteen countries. The founding (1957) president of the Association of Hungarian Students in North America – Északamerikai Magyar Egyetemisták és Főiskolások Egyesületeinek Szövetsége, ÉMEFESZ – was *László Papp*. His March 22, 1986 lecture was titled "Amerikai magyar egyetemista mozgalom az 1956-os forradalom után" [The Movement of American Hungarian College Students after the 1956 Revolution]. Adding ÉMEFESZ, the lecture's title became Papp's documentary book's title as well and was published by the association in 1988.

### Notes

1. The books were edited and the lecture and publication program was organized by Károly Nagy. The project was sponsored by the Magyar Öregdiák Szövetsége – Bessenyei György Kör, Hungarian Alumni Association, (P. O. Box 174, New Brunswick, NJ, USA). Some members who provided especially important assistance included Éva and Pál Fekete, István Hamza, József Held and Katalin T. Nagy.  
The books can be obtained from Hungarian bookstores, most especially from Püski Könyvesház 1012, Budapest, Krisztina krt. 26, Hungary, and Püski-Corvin, 217 E. 83rd. St. New York, NY, USA.  
The audiotapes of the lectures are part of the Archives of the Hungarian Alumni Association at Somogyi Könyvtár, Szeged, Hungary and the Hungarian Heritage Center in New Brunswick, NJ, USA.
2. Title page of the first TANÚK-KORUKRÓL (History Makers Testify) announcement, October, 1977.
3. "Appeal Made on Behalf of Dissident", *The Homes News*, June 3, 1984.  
See also: Károly Nagy, "Hungarian Minority Education Problems in Czechoslovakia – a Case Study of a Social Movement for Ethnic Survival," *Hungarian Studies Review*, University of Toronto XVI nos. 1–2 (Spring-Fall, 1989).

4. The best account and analysis yet of this movement was written by Gyula Borbándi, titled *A magyar népi mozgalom* (The Hungarian Populist Movement), Püski, New York, 1983.
5. István Bibó, *Democracy, Revolution, Self-Determination*, Social Science Monographs (Boulder CO: Atlantic Research and Publications NJ, 1991, 532, 544.
6. For example: György Lukács, *Írástudók felelőssége* [The Responsibility of Writers], *Szakra*, Budapest, 1945; Népi írók a mérlegen [Populist Writers on the Scale], *Szakra*, 1946; Valóság, Budapest: 1946, nos. 1–2, 86–103; *Irodalom és demokrácia* [Literature and Democracy], Szakra, 1948.
7. "A 'népi' írókról. Az MSZMP Közonti Bizottsága mellett működő kulturális elméleti munkaközösség állásfoglalása" (About the "Populist" Writers. Position Paper of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party Central Committee's Cultural Theoretical Working Committee), *Társadalmi Szemle* [Social Review], Budapest, June, 1958.
8. See for example: Zsuzsa Nagy in: *Egy ezredév. Magyarország rövid története* [A Millennium: A Short History of Hungary] (Gondolat, Budapest, 1986), 339.; Mátyás Sárközi in: *Századvég* [End of the Century], 4–5 Budapest, (1987): 39. Gati, Charles: *Hungary and the Soviet Bloc*, Duke University Press Durham, 1986, 64–65; Joseph Held edited: *Populism in Eastern Europe*, East European Monographs, Boulder, 1996, esp. 133, 134, 142 (György Csepeli) and 246 (Stephen Fisher-Galati).
9. See: Konrád Salamon *A Márciusi Front* [The March Front], Budapest, Akadémiai, 1980., and Borbándi, op. cit., 250–251.
10. Bibó, op. cit., 544.
11. "Hungarian Lectures Begin", *The Home News*, New Brunswick, NJ, February 18, 1979.
12. *Történelem az általános iskolák 8. osztálya számára*, (History for the Eighth Grade of the Public Schools), Tankönyvkiadó, Budapest, 1968.
13. See: Károly Nagy and Peter Pastor, eds.: *The Legacy of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution*, Magyar Öregdiák Szövetség – Bessenyei György Kör, Hungarian Alumni Association, 1996. (This publication also contains articles by three of the "History Makers Testify" program's lecturers: János Horváth, Béla Király and László Papp.)
14. Pieretti, Fred: "Ex-labor boss breaks silence on '56 Hungarian revolt" *The Central New Jersey Home News*, May 18, 1987, 1.

### Appeal made on behalf of dissident

*June 3, 1984 The Home News*

Hungarian-American cultural leaders here are making an appeal on behalf of dissident Miklos Duray, who was jailed in Czechoslovakia on May 10 and charged with "activities contrary to the international interests of the state," according to Dr. Karoly Nagy of the Hungarian Alumni Association.

Nagy described Duray, 39, a geologist-writer, as a Hungarian minority rights leader in Czechoslovakia. Duray has been in the forefront of protests against attempts to pass a law which could result in the elimination of the minority language schools and classes serving Czechoslovakia's 1 million Hungarians.

Duray faces up to three years imprisonment if he is convicted, Nagy said.

Since 1978, Duray has authored a number of studies smuggled out of the country and published in Paris and New York, documenting official measures which deprive Hungarians of human rights in Czechoslovakia, according to a prepared statement from the Hungarian Human Rights Foundation in New York.

Duray was jailed in 1982 but was released after an international protest joined by American writers, Susan Sontag, Irving Howe and Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

Nagy asks that those concerned by Dubay's plight write to their congressional representatives or to Ambassador Stanislae Suja, Embassy of Czechoslovakia, 3900 Linnean Ave., Washington, D.C. 20008.

### Hungarian lectures begin

*The Home News SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1979*

NEW BRUNSWICK – "History Makers Give Witness," a lecture series on Hungarian history, begins its second year Friday with a talk by a Highland Park man who is credited with founding Hungary's first tutorial college for sons of peasants.

Louis Boros, now a senior researcher in radiation for the state Department of Environmental Protection, will discuss his experiences in pre-revolutionary Hungary during the 8 p. m. lecture, which will be held in Room 212 at the Rutgers University Graduate School of Library Service on College Avenue. Boros will give the second half of his lecture on Friday, March 23 at the same time and place.

The lecture series, sponsored by the Hungarian Alumni Association and Rutgers University's Soviet and Eastern European Studies program, really had the "history makers" in its first year, said President association Károly Nagy, a sociology professor at Rutgers University College an chairman of social rehabilitation services at Middlesex County College.

Guests included Bela Kirlay, commander of the Revolutionary National Guard, which tried to free Hungary from Communist domination; Imre Kovachs, organizer of a reformist group in the late '30s that wanted to modernize the country; and Sandor Puski, a leading publisher of Hungary's populist writers. The alumni association now plans to publish those lectures in a series of booklets.

The program's purpose, according to Nagy, is to fill in the gaps of Hungarian history. "There are unwritten chapters in Hungarian history. That's why this program is quite sensational," he said. One reason for the "unwritten chapters" is that the current Communist-controlled government is unwilling to acknowledge part of Hungary's pre-revolutionary history, Nagy said.

"We have realized that in the midst of us there are many Hungarians who have not only witnessed history but who have made history," Nagy said. The lec-

tures are especially aimed at younger Hungarians, "who some day in the future may participate in the shaping of their world," he said.

The alumni association, formed in 1960, is wellknown for its Saturday morning classes at Rutgers University for Hungarian children. More than 1,000 children have attended the classes since they began.

The association intends to continue the lecture series, Nagy said. He is trying to schedule Eugene Wigner of Princeton, a Hungarian physicist who worked on the Manhattan Project, as a guest.

Referring to the series, Nagy said: "This is like Hungarian 'Roots.' We are trying to make sense of the things that have happened."

### **Ex-labor boss breaks silence on '56 Hungarian revolt**

*The Central New Jersey Home News*

*MONDAY, MAY 18, 1987*

*BY FRED PIERETTI*

*Home News staff writer*

FRANKLIN — For his role in the short-lived Hungarian revolution in October 1956, former labor leader Sandor Racz says he became a "second-class citizen" in his native country.

Imprisonment, expulsion from his trade union and a partial loss of his pension were meted out to Racz for joining thousands of others in attempting to establish a democratic form of government in this small communist bloc nation in Central Europe.

But perhaps the worst punishment of all for Racz was the sentence of silence. The 54-year-old factory worker, who is compared to Polish labor leader Lech Walesa, is forbidden to discuss publicly the events of 1956. Forbidden, that is until now.

In the first trip of his life outside Hungary, Racz has come to the United States to discuss his experience in the uprising at the invitation of the AFL-CIO and the Hungarian Alumni Association of New Brunswick, as part of the association's "History Makers Testify" lecture series.

Racz's appearance is hailed as historic by Hungarian Americans because he is providing a firsthand account of the most traumatic event in Hungary's post-war history.

In an interview yesterday at the home of Karoly Nagy, a director of the association and professor of sociology at Middlesex County Community College in Edison, Racz said officialdom in Budapest purposely downplays the importance of the massive political upheaval that took 20 Soviet divisions to quell.

"The official media of the government view 1956 events not as revolution but talk about it as a counterrevolution," said Racz in Hungarian. "In our experience

we know that in 1956 the Hungarian nation was fighting against Communists and Marxists and demanding freedom, democracy and human rights."

A tool-and-die maker by training, Racz was 23 when he was elected president of Greater Budapest Workers' Council, which staged a general strike against the Soviet troops that suppressed the uprising.

As president of the council, Racz was invited to participate in the rounds of strike negotiations with the Moscow-installed government of Janos Kadar, who today still leads the Communist Party in Hungary. However, Racz was instead arrested as he tried to enter parliament and sentenced for conspiring to overthrow the "people's democracy."

Although he was released from prison by amnesty in 1963, Racz lost 15 years' worth of pension credits, was kicked out of the toolmakers union and has been denied promotion. He earns only the base pay of about 80 cents an hour for a 40-hour week in a communications technology cooperative.

Undaunted and without a trace of self-pity, Racz has continued to risk his personal well-being to fight for his political vision. He is one of 126 people in Central Europe who signed the "Budapest Declaration," a four-page document issued last October to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Hungarian revolution. The document, Racz said, was a bold reaffirmation of the struggle for democracy for the countries in Central Europe.

Nagy said his organization initially tried to have Racz's trip coincide with this 30th anniversary, but Racz was denied a passport five times. He was finally granted a passport in March – brought to him by two policemen in the middle of the night – only after the AFL-CIO and the American ambassador in Hungary, Mark Palmer, applied heavy pressure on the Kadar government.

Racz says he must be extremely careful in his remarks to American audiences because authorities in Budapest are monitoring his speeches.

One message Racz is bringing to the United States might be hard for his American audiences to hear. He said a lasting peace in Europe, both East and West, would be possible only when the United States and the Soviet Union forgo their "special interests" there.

"There is a danger that Europe may become a battleground of these special interests. Europe must find a humanistic solution to its problems," Racz said.

Racz said Hungary is currently facing dire economic and social problems, including a large foreign debt, growing unemployment and one of the suicide rates in the world. Although he could not speculate on what will happen after Kadar, who turns 75 this month, is replaced, Racz said any government will have its hands full.

Racz, who arrived last week, will spend two months traveling throughout the United States.