

# AN EMBLEMATIC SHOT OF THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION OF 1956: THE LIFE STORY BEHIND THE PHOTOGRAPH AND THE AFTERLIFE OF THE PHOTOGRAPH<sup>1</sup>

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Armed teenagers who fought in the 1956 revolution are preserved in the nation's memory as "the kids from Pest", among them, there were several girls who did not get a separate designation, however several photographs of them survived and some appeared widely in the world press.

My fellow researcher, a French journalist Phil Casoar, and I selected a captivating photograph of an armed young man and a young woman wearing a red-cross armband that might be described as the extraordinary starting point of our research. In November 1956, numerous prominent western weekly magazines published the photo; subsequently books, documentary films and exhibitions made it widely known. It first appeared as the opening image in a series of articles about the Hungarian revolution, entitled "Budapest Heroes", appearing in the magazine *Paris Match*. During the Cold War, the image became well-known in the west as well as the east, but it was placed on opposite poles. In the west, the characters were portrayed as heroes who defied the Soviet tanks; in socialist Hungary and in the east, they were officially considered to be criminals along with other armed rebels. Subsequently, the Hungarian political police used the photos as conclusive evidence during trials. In my presentation I use approximately 35 photographs and documents related to the *Paris Match* picture to discuss our investigation since 1999, the fate of the young woman appearing in that picture, and the different usages of the *Paris Match* picture.

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The armed teenagers who fought in the 1956 revolution have been preserved in the collective memory as "the kids from Pest". Despite the fact that there were several girls among them, and many photographs of them survived, some even circulated widely in the world press, they did not get a separate designation. The photograph, which is the subject of my analysis, is one of the most emblematic shots of the revolution and had the caption: "Les Héros de Budapest" (the Heroes of Budapest). This image first appeared as the opening picture for a series of reports written by the newspaper's correspondents, who had been sent to Buda-



According to the title of *Paris Match* “our reporters discover the spirit of the revolution in the eyes of the couple stopped on the street”

pest, and appeared on November 10, 1956 in *Paris Match*. This photograph is captivating for several reasons: it is a frontal photograph, which is something of a rarity in a war situation, and it depicts an armed young man and a young wounded woman wearing a red-cross armband in the foreground. Alongside the well-known headlines of all revolutions (youth, heroism, romance), the photograph also shows a representation of what is very common, a female role in armed conflict with the woman providing care and a secure background.

The lack of a separate designation can be mostly explained by the representations of women in armed conflicts. Various forms of armed conflict have to be distinguished when looking at women and their involvement in them. This may be due to the fact that for women, revolutions offer a completely different scope than a war situation might. In war, the individual does her best to remain silent in the interest of the community, whilst revolutions may disrupt existing political structures and traditional gender relations. Despite the fact that men are naturally better suited to getting the most out of the opportunities offered by “great vacations from life”, nevertheless, revolutions offer women the opportunity to step out of their usual environment. This is true even if the majority of women are still allocated traditional reproductive roles.<sup>2</sup> The academic literature addressing the role played by women during the armed conflicts of modern times cannot bypass stereotypes

of women's involvement at the time and subsequently.<sup>3</sup> Coexisting stereotypes often contradict one another, for example, "while in one respect femininity is associated in military ideology with (desirable yet despicable) submission, in another – and quite paradoxically – it is associated with a wholly undesirable and 'dangerous' individualism".<sup>4</sup>

In the context of the 1956 revolution – apart from a handful of known female figures (Anna Kéthly, Mária Wittner and Ilona Tóth)<sup>5</sup> – up until recently there has been little academic interest in the role of women as either individuals or as members of a group. For this reason, the assessment of their participation has been hindered by general stereotypes of female roles during armed conflict, which are also part of the myth of the 1956 narratives.<sup>6</sup> According to the first academic evaluation of the role played by women in the 1956 revolution, women's recollections of 1956 are fragmented and anecdotal in much the same way as the account of other participants are.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, we should also add that some women became suddenly "visible" due to the marks left by the "opened social scope" in the wake of the revolution.<sup>8</sup> For example, it is thanks to the uprising that those previously excluded from political opportunity – because they came from poor families, most of them young workers – were provided the opportunity (within certain bounds) for political action. Extensive documentation and recollections describe this effect; even so, we need to handle these with a critical eye, not taking them at face value. Several photographs of women survived and some travelled widely in the world press at the time and slightly later and subsequently, the Hungarian political police used them on occasion as conclusive evidence during trials.<sup>9</sup>

Such a well-known photograph became the unusual starting point of the investigation.<sup>10</sup> First of all, we managed to identify the photographer. The American who took the photographs, Russ Melcher, was only twenty-six years old and – as a freelance photographer for *Paris Match* – came across the couple on Múzeum körút in Budapest at half past seven in the morning of October 30. In the couple he discovered the spirit of the revolution. The photographer later recounted that:

It was a glorious morning on a day of ceasefire and this young couple – the boy with the machine gun too large for him and the girl with the wound on her face, a red-cross armband and the first aid bag – half bohemian, half proletarian, in shabby, worn clothes captivated me; I was struck by the realism of the image.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the fact that this photograph, which first appeared in *Paris Match*, toured around the international press world,<sup>12</sup> not only the fate of those appearing in the photograph was unknown but their names were not even known. When, along with my French colleague, we still decided to go on an "impossible mission" and follow the trail of those appearing in the photograph, we had no inkling that not only the name of the girl in the photograph would become known to us but

so would several important moments in her life.<sup>13</sup> After one year of research, we eventually stumbled across the young girl's trail: she was called Julianna Sponga but everyone knew her simply as Jutka. When the photograph was taken, she was nineteen years old and worked in a textile factory. Later we also learned that she fled to Switzerland following the revolution and went on to start a family in Australia.<sup>14</sup> We also managed to establish contact with her husband, Stephen Toth, also of Hungarian origin, and it was from him that we learned that Jutka died on May 27, 1990 of throat cancer and – in accordance with her own request – her ashes were scattered into the ocean. This meant that Jutka's biographer was forced to do without her interpretation of the "life story", the "ideology self-portrait".<sup>15</sup>

The aim of the researcher is to thoroughly represent blocks of memory of the subject's life, which can only result in a "kaleidoscope-like" biography.<sup>16</sup> The aim in writing this biography is identical to the democratic ambitions of writing women's history and historiography in general and that is to present an individual who once lived in the past about whom no specific historical record remains.<sup>17</sup> Similarly to the French historian, Alain Corbin, and who documents the life of the French clog maker, Louis-François Pinagot, who lived in the nineteenth century, Jutka's biographer has to aim to present the main character's world, surroundings, possible likes and dislikes, habits, use of language, network of connections, circumstances and concept of time and space as well as the determining events in her life.<sup>18</sup> Even though the work of the French academic did not instinctively affect the initiation of our research, and possibilities to become familiar with Jutka's life were more favourable than in the case of the French clog maker, the questions posed by Corbin in his biography were also useful when looking at our research.

In the twentieth century and within the dictatorship under which Jutka lived, one which placed such great emphasis on recording information, there were naturally more surviving documents – directly related to the individual – than in the case of Pinagot, who was born at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the out-of-the-way, little village of Origny-le-Butin.<sup>19</sup> The starting point for our research was a photograph rather than a name, the face was only joined by a name a year later.<sup>20</sup> Beyond this, in Jutka's case, we have more than the notes that the suppressive system had on her (in Pinagot's case this was local power) to rely on – which only shed light on Jutka's personality very indirectly, and so we can add more questions to those basic ones asked by Corbin. Jutka's face, expression, stance and appearance were known to us.<sup>21</sup> Further details would come from her husband and other individuals who knew her well at the time (colleagues and friends from her life in Switzerland and Australia, her comrade in arms – László Jánoky – who fled to Canada in 1956, as well as one of her sisters-in-law and her neighbours from Csepel). Our research was based on interviews with these figures from her past so that the personality and the fate of the nineteen-year-old textile-factory worker walking on *Múzeum körút* became accessible to us, albeit in a

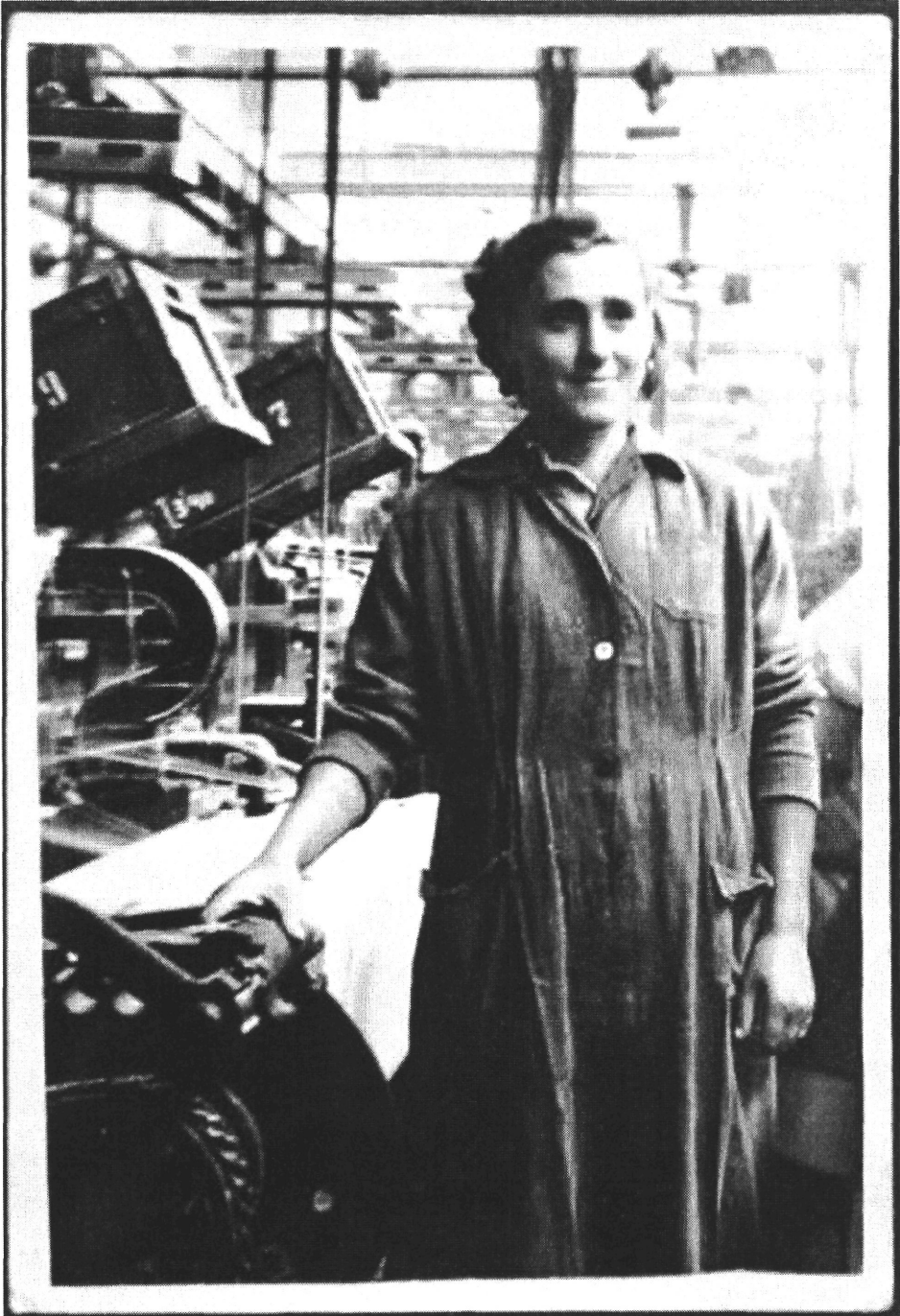
limited form. In this study, in presenting information and sources on Jutka, we hope that, while sorting out the data, we will come closer to mapping out the problems of her biography.

### The Life Story Behind the *Paris Match* Photograph

Julianna Sponga was born on October 29, 1937 in Tatárszentgyörgy, which lies only fifty kilometres from Budapest, as the only girl in a large humble family.<sup>22</sup> During the war, this family, which had lived from agricultural work in the area around the capital city – similar to many of their kind – came to settle in Budapest. Due to links with their earlier lifestyle and the work opportunities offered by the steelworks in Csepel, the family moved to 32 Jegenye street, in the garden suburb of Csepel, one of the most characteristic working-class areas of Budapest.<sup>23</sup> Jutka's father, István Sponga, was a worker in the Csepel steelworks. Jutka's sister-in-law and neighbours from Csepel said that he drank heavily and had a tendency for violence.<sup>24</sup> Her mother, Erzsébet Tóth, was illiterate and worked as a domestic housewife. Jutka had three elder brothers and one younger. When she was seven Jutka started manual labour in agriculture. It was close to their home in a private vegetable growing settlement in Soroksár. Later, similarly to the mass of women who moved in from the villages, she also ended up in the textile works and in her case this was the Sortex factory in Soroksár. The photographs which depict her in the fields and standing next to machinery in the factory – the woman coming from agriculture into the factory – also offer a plastic image of the changes in her dress and hairstyle as well as her new working conditions and establish a starting point for the anthropology typical of a woman working in the textile industry at the beginning of the 1950s. These pictures also show that Jutka had a tattoo on her lower arm which was not very rare among workers from that period.<sup>25</sup> She acquired the tattoo visible in the photographs between the ages of 17 and 18.<sup>26</sup> It was perhaps because of her older male siblings (who, similarly to the younger brother, are no longer alive) or because of her strict parents (neighbours from the time, the Taschlers, said that the Sponga couple were closer to their sons) that Jutka, who worked in the textile factory, happily sought the company of "street men" in Csepel.<sup>27</sup> From the records surviving in the Hungarian Prison Service Archives, we know that she was arrested three times between the ages of 15 and 17 for "penal idleness" and "vagrancy".<sup>28</sup> She was only detained for two days on a couple of occasions but the third incident led to a sentence of six months in prison of which she finally served only four months and fifteen days in the infamous detention facility at Markó.<sup>29</sup> In Jutka's case, it can be said that, prior to the 1956 revolution, she came into serious conflict with the oppressive regime as a "recidivist". If we call on the identity-crisis definition of "psychohistory" for help,



Jutka in the vegetable growing settlement in the suburbs of Budapest



Jutka as a textile factory worker of the Sortex



we can state that in Jutka's case the "lifestyle-rebellion" of a young individual, with an immature identity against the adult world received a political content, which naturally expanded as the "opened social scope" offered opportunity for this in October 1956.<sup>30</sup>

We do not know what exactly happened to Jutka in the days before the *Paris Match* photograph was taken and what it was that caused her to decide to join the armed uprising. The events leading up to this turning point in her life still remain unknown to us.<sup>31</sup> Of her siblings, it is known that Károly took an active part in the fighting at Csepel.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, her brother, who served in the ÁVH (Hungarian Secret Police), remained loyal to the system in the days of the revolution.<sup>33</sup> (As part of the "silent assimilation policy"<sup>34</sup> of the Stalinist regime, Jutka's elder brothers Hungarianised their name from Sponga to Solymosi in around 1953.<sup>35</sup> This understandably hindered our research of the family.) According to Rózsa Solymosi, István's widow, one of Jutka's elder brothers, Jutka was involved in a tragic experience directly before the beginning of the revolution, which most definitely had a determining effect on her decision to join the struggle at the time of the first Soviet intervention. Her younger brother had thrown stones at the Soviet tanks approaching Hősök tere (Heroes' Square) in Soroksár and was shot dead.<sup>36</sup>

The earliest data following the *Paris Match* photograph, which was succeeded by other photographs taken the same day of the *Paris Match* couple at Felszabadulás tér (Liberation square, today Ferenciek tere) by Italian photographer, Mario De Biasi and one photograph taken only of her as a member of a fighting group by Dutch photographer, Dominique Beretty on Múzeum körút<sup>37</sup> comes from November 4. Jutka got caught up in the street fighting in the 8th District on the day of the second Soviet intervention. It was then that she joined the group from Vajdahunyad street<sup>38</sup> of which, as well as many others, Mária Wittner was a member (it was then that Jutka sustained an injury to her shoulder and that is why she ended up in hospital).<sup>39</sup> When several members of the group from Vajdahunyad street decided to flee, they took Jutka along with them from the hospital.<sup>40</sup> According to László Jánoky, who later emigrated to Canada and who was the brother of the group's second in command, they took the unconscious Jutka across the Danube in a row boat.<sup>41</sup> Then they made their way on foot and later in a truck to the Austrian border. They reached Eisenstadt on November 9 and this is where reporters, Massimo Mauri and Maurizio de Biasi, from the Italian magazine *Epoca*, discovered Jutka. In the interview carried by *Epoca*, they noted that the young man who appeared next to Jutka in the famous photograph was called György, and that he died in the fighting.<sup>42</sup> The Hungarian refugees, fifteen people, first went from Eisenstadt to the refugee camp in Traiskirchen;<sup>43</sup> they were then directed to Switzerland via Vienna.

On November 13 the Swiss authorities granted the group of Hungarian refugees permission to settle in the French-Swiss town of Neuchâtel. Their numbers



had eventually swollen to a total of seventy-two. They were provided with accommodation in what was referred to as the “Chanet House” on the side of the hill next to the lake. A local journalist interviewed several of them and made mention of Jutka’s name in one of the two reports carried in the local newspaper called *La Feuille d’Avis*.<sup>44</sup> In August 1957 she came to La Chaux-de-Fonds next to the French-Swiss border and took up a position as a worker in the local Steinmann textile works at the beginning of 1958 and was employed along with ten other Hungarians.<sup>45</sup> She lived at 17 rue des Champs with the Etter family who also worked for Steinmann. René Hess, who was employed as a manager at the factory at the time, recalled that Jutka came to see him to help her find a doctor who would be willing to remove the tattoos that she had on her body. He directed her to a doctor he knew who had previously been involved in cosmetic surgery and who carried out the procedure.

Jutka decided to leave Switzerland in 1961, and she sailed to Australia on the ocean liner, *Oceania*, on March 24. Her passage was financed by ICEM, an international organisation of help to refugees.<sup>46</sup> It was in October of the same year that she met Steven Toth (István Tóth) at the Hungarian club in Melbourne who later became her husband. He had also fled Hungary in 1956 but he did not take part in the revolution as he was a conscripted soldier at the time. After their two children were born, Jutka no longer worked and she remained a housewife for the rest of her life. She gained Australian citizenship in 1972 and lived in one of Melbourne’s suburbs. Jutka corresponded with her parents who – her husband claims – talked her out of returning home because they were frightened that the photograph published in *Match*, which they had seen published in Hungary, would lead to her being recognised by the Hungarian police who would hold her to account.<sup>47</sup>

We only know of one specific interpretation of the photograph from *Match* in Hungary before the political transition. It appeared in Ervin Hollós’s infamous propaganda book, published in two editions in 1967,<sup>48</sup> with the caption: “The underworld in arms”.<sup>49</sup> Ervin Hollós – who, after 1957, headed the Political Police Inner Reaction-Prevention Department (Ministry of the Interior, II/5) – collected the photographic material for his book from the police archive known as the “1956 Separate Collection”.<sup>50</sup> This archive contains photographs and newspaper clippings, from Western magazines, related to the revolution, and in the preparations preceding the 1956 trials the police used these to try to ascertain who appeared in them. Four clippings of Jutka repeatedly appear in the collection: the *Paris Match* picture (the photo of the third male figure was filed with a separate clipping) as well as the three other pictures carried in *Epoca* (one of these shows Jutka as a member of a rebel group on Múzeum körút and the other two were taken of her in Eisenstadt).<sup>51</sup> Each photograph was given its own filing reference number and there was a note in pencil next to the *Match* photograph saying that the girl in the picture had “defected”.

Both the fear of Jutka's parents and her own fears seem founded in light of the dossier started by the Hungarian Central Alien Control Office in 1976.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, from her Ministry of the Interior registration, it appears that Jutka's name and the photograph taken of her in 1956 were not successfully linked either directly following the reprisals or afterwards. The fact that she had immigrated to Australia was unknown to them, as she was recorded as being "stateless". According to the Central Alien Control Office material – it is not clear why from July 1978 – she was included in the list of prohibited persons and her data was transferred to the combined computerised records (EGPR) of the state security organisations in 1985. Her inclusion in the list of prohibited persons was reconfirmed annually until June 26 1989, which is the day that registration was discontinued. It is a double tragedy that Jutka passed away less than a year after her name was removed from the records.

### The Afterlife of the *Paris Match* Photograph

The interpretations of the *Paris Match* photograph by the Hungarian Ministry of Interior were not unique. During the Cold War, the *Paris Match* photograph, with Jutka and György in the foreground, gained totally different meanings on the two sides of the Iron Curtain.<sup>53</sup> In the West, they appeared as David's fighting the Goliath of the soviet oppressors and their tanks. In the East, mostly articulated by the Communist Kádár-regime of Hungary, they were described as toughs motivated by Fascists, as representatives of counterrevolutionary movement opposing the Proletariat and the power of the people. The photograph appeared several times as an illustration in propaganda or reference books and even on a postcard. The cover of Andy Anderson's *Hongrie 1956: la Commune de Budapest, les conseils ouvriers* [Hungary 1956: Commune of Budapest, the Workers' Councils] published in 1975, was a publication in the West guided by an extreme leftist ideology, emphasising the importance of Workers' Councils in the 1956 Revolution.<sup>54</sup> Also the *Match* picture appears on a postcard with the motto "Souvenir de Budapest" which was possibly produced by a French situationist group in the 1970s, who pointed towards the spontaneous and libertine aspects of the events in Hungary in 1956.<sup>55</sup> Among works of authors of Hungarian origin we need to mention: *23 octobre 1956. Budapest – Ce jour-là* [23rd October 1956. That Day – Budapest] by the journalist Tibor Méray and *Az elhagyott tömeg. Tanulmányok 1950–1956-ról* [The Abandoned Crowd. Studies on 1950–1956] by the historian László Varga.<sup>56</sup> This latter was a book published in Hungary after the transition of 1989 and showed the photograph on its cover.

Moreover, one could also mention a rather artistic interpretation of the *Paris Match* photograph, which also appeared in a Jean-Luc Godard's film entitled *Le*

*Petit Soldat* (The Little Soldier) and was made in 1958 but only premiered in 1963 for its unusual approach to politics: Godard's film tells the story of an ex-army terrorist, not having any strong political feelings, who is hired to kill an Algerian journalist and sympathizer. In one of the most characteristic scenes of the film the *Paris Match* picture appears, but cut into two so that the word "hero" is missing, perhaps because *The Little Soldier* is an anti-hero's story.

The *Paris Match* photograph is a fascinating historical subject for three reasons: first because it helps us to have better knowledge about the stories of women and, in general, freedom fighters coming from poor families participating in the Hungarian revolution; second because it illuminates the role that foreign photographers played in shaping representations of the revolution; and third because it helps us to understand the various interpretations of the 1956 photographs during the Cold War.

### Notes

- 1 The present paper is an extended version of that previously published in a women's history volume: "Sponga Julianna, az 'ismeretlen ismerős': egy világot járt 56-os fénykép nő szereplőjének sorsa", in Palasik, Mária-Sipos, Balázs-Tóth, Eszter Zsófia. *Házastárs, munkatárs, vetélytárs? A női szerepek változása a családban, a munkahelyen és a közéletben a 20. századi Magyarországon* (Wife, Colleague, Concurrence? Changing Roles of Women in Family Life, at Work and in Public Life in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Hungary) (Budapest: Napvilág, 2005), 220–229. An English translation of that paper was also published: "Tracking Down the 'Girl from Pest' on an Emblematic Photo of the Revolution of 1956" in *Regimes and Transformations. Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, edited by István Feitl and Balázs Sipos (Budapest: Napvilág, 2005), 353–370.
- 2 Perrot, Michelle. "Stepping Out", in *A History of Women in the West. IV. Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War*, eds. Friesse, Geneviève–Michelle Perrot (Cambridge–Massachusetts–London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993), 480–481.
- 3 Macdonald, Sharon. "Drawing the Lines – Gender, Peace and War: An Introduction", in *Images of Women in Peace and War*, eds. Macdonald Sharon–Pat Holden–Shirley Ardener (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 3, 15–16.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 16.
- 5 *Anna Kéthly* (1889–1976) Politician. As member of the Social Democratic Party, she was elected to Parliament after the First World War. By 1948, as opposition politician, she had been imprisoned by communist government. During the Revolution of 1956, she became a member of the coalition government of Imre Nagy, formed on November 3. Kéthly went into exile and in 1957 became head of the Hungarian Revolutionary Council in Strassbourg; *Mária Wittner* (1937–) Mária Wittner, of working class origins, was arrested in 1957 – tried and sentenced to be hanged the following year – for having fought as an armed combatant in the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. The sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 1958. She was released in 1970; *Ilona Tóth* (1933–1957) a graduating doctor who was healing the wounded of the 1956 Revolution at a Budapest hospital, was accused of the murder of a wounded member of the ÁVH (Hungarian Secret Police) and executed in 1957. The role of Ilona Tóth in the 1956 Revolution is still object of controversy.

- <sup>6</sup> Juhász, Borbála. *The Memory of 1956. A Gendered Transcript* (Budapest: CEU, 1998/50), 1 and 29. The majority of women worked in kitchens or tended to the injured during the revolution. Some of them accepted the role of intermediary and helped in the distribution of food supplies. We do not know how many of these women used weapons because very few of them make mention of this: See *ibid.*, 47.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 2–3.
- <sup>8</sup> For more information on this topic see Pető, Andrea. *Nőhistóriák: A politizáló magyar nők történetéből 1945–1951* (Women's Histories: From the History of Politicising Hungarian Women 1945–1951) (Budapest: Seneca, 1998), 11.
- <sup>9</sup> It is primarily those pictures, which easily became condemning evidence that depicted women belonging to the insurgent groups with weapons in their hands: it is known from the trial of Mária Wittner and associates that the photograph taken of Mária Wittner and Katalin Havrila Sticker provided conclusive proof, although they insisted that they only posed for the photograph. See Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security (hereafter HAHSS), Trial of Mária Wittner and Associates, V-14 2941.
- <sup>10</sup> The whole research is presented in a book prepared by Les Arènes Publishing: Phil Casoar–Eszter Balázs, *Les Héros de Budapest* (Paris: Les Arènes, 2006). In a shorter form – primarily focusing on the photographer – in the October 2004 edition of *National Geographic* which carried the latest results of our research. See Balázs, Eszter. “Ő volt a pesti lány” (She Was the Girl from Pest), *National Geographic Magyarország*, No. 10 (2004), 126–133.
- <sup>11</sup> Interview with Russ Melcher in May 2002. Melcher also recalls that, after nine in the morning, the news spread among the insurgents that they should not let photographs be taken of their faces. (The names of two other photographers, Franz Goëss and Jean-Pierre Pedrazzini, appear on the contact sheets in the *Paris Match* archive. It also took time to identify and discover the whereabouts of Melcher as the actual photographer.)
- <sup>12</sup> This most definitely appeared in the world's press among photographs taken of Hungarian women and photographs with a political theme, the photograph that we selected being the most well-known after the photograph taken for the article on Júlia Rajk and her husband. Andrea Pető reminds us in her book that this latter photograph made the entire world's press. Pető, Andrea. *Rajk Júlia, Feminizmus és történelem sorozat (Júlia Rajk. Women and History Series)* (Budapest: Balassi, 2001), 8.
- <sup>13</sup> We continued to research the boy in the picture holding a machine gun and the man holding the pistol. In October 2003, a report was shown as part of the television programme called Fókusz – one of the most popular shows on the Hungarian commercial television channel, RTL Klub – which featured this photograph. There were no relatives among those who responded to our call made for family members and friends. In a report made with Jutka in 1956, the girl claims that the boy appearing in the picture was called Gyuri (shortname of György) and he was killed in the fighting. (We will return to this report later on.) The man with the pistol goes on to appear in a photograph taken on Köztársaság tér (Republic square) by the British photographer, John Sadovy, who had been exiled from Czechoslovakia in 1938, and was one of the photographs taken at the time of the siege of Party headquarters which were published by *Life* magazine. (See Gadney, Reg. *Cry Hungary!* (New York: Atheneum, 1986).)
- <sup>14</sup> The Australian journalist, Frank Bren, who helped to trace Jutka in Melbourne, discussed our research on Jutka in *Memento*, the journal of the Australian National Archives. See <http://www.naa.gov.au/Publications/memento> “Searching for Julia of Budapest” pdf/memento30.pdf.
- <sup>15</sup> Here I use Andrea Pető's expression. Pető. *Rajk Júlia*, 9–10. For the time being, chances are slim that at least an autobiography or even letters of her would have survived. Documents from the Sortex works, Jutka's former workplace – not including the material of the party commit-

tee – have not survived either (based on information supplied by the Budapest Municipal Archive, its reference section in Óbuda and the Pest County archive). There is no sign of the factory's own newspaper.

16 Andrea Pető quotes Liz Stanley. Pető. *Rajk Júlia*. 11.

17 In Hungarian historical writing looking at the period after 1945 – due to the generous and, in good cases, accessible resources – for the time being, it has only been the privilege of known politicians and the intelligentsia to have biographies written on them.

18 The renowned French historian, Alain Corbin, undertook a special challenge: he picked a name from the register of a remote county in 19th-century France – the only criterion being that the life of the individual should not be too short – and he set about writing his biography. The only personal sign left by the illiterate Louis-François Pinagot was a shaky cross signed next to his name: Corbin took this as his starting point and tried to reconstruct for posterity the hidden and inaccessible life of Pinagot, whom he had selected and referred to as the “man without characteristics”. This research was then published and is available in both French and English. Corbin, Alain. *Le Monde retrouvé de Louis-François Pinagot. Sur les traces d'un inconnu (1798–1876)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1998).

19 In his book, Corbin draws attention to the fact that, prior to the 20th century, written records on the “masses” largely survive related to poverty, catastrophes and wars and that is why research results which rely solely on these may be one-sided.

20 The first more serious clue for us to explore was the interview with Jutka which appeared in the November 1956 of the Italian magazine *Epoca*. This tells us that the girl appearing in the picture was called Jutka, was 19 years old and textile worker. Reporters from *Epoca* discovered her in Eisenstadt in Austria based on the “notorious” photograph that appeared in *Paris Match*.

21 It transpired from the surviving records from the archives of the Hungarian Prison Service Archives (hereafter HPSA) – Jutka was taken into the Markó, one of the main prison three times before 1956 for penal idleness – that Jutka had brown eyes and brown hair; she was 158 cm tall. (See later analysis of her files.)

22 Tatárszentgyörgy today is still one of the furthest points from Budapest within Pest County – the railway and mainroad still avoid its boundaries – the village might just as well be in the centre of the country. The characteristics of the area – rough land covered in juniper bushes – never favoured agriculture by the local population.

23 The father still enjoyed helping out with agricultural work while employed at the Csepel Works. Interview with the Taschler family, May 2003.

24 In May 2003 (based on the files created on Jutka in the 1950s by the HPSA) we went to visit Jegénye utca and, based on the old address, we knocked on the door of the neighbours (30 Jegénye street), who were very happy to help us with our research. They introduced us to Jutka's sister-in-law, Rózsa Solymosi (widow of István Solymosi) living at 27 Jegénye street who only knew Jutka based on what she had been told by her husband. István Solymosi died in 2002 and had not seen his sister since 1956 and he had not known of her death in 1990.

25 Tattoos forming part of “urban folklore” in the 1950s in Hungary affected a wide band of society. See, for example: Kovács, Ákos–Sztrés, Erzsébet, *Tetovált Sztálin. Szovjet elítéltek tetoválásai és karikatúrái* (A Tattooed Stalin. The World and Art of Bandits in the Soviet Union) (Szeged: Sprint GMK-Népszava, 1989), 10. There is, however, no data on quite how widespread tattooing was, not only amongst workers but also female workers. We do not as yet have any information on what symbols were hidden in the tattoos visible in the photograph. René Hess, later Jutka's colleague in Switzerland recalls she had a snake on her right arm and two crossed fists on her left arm. Mária Soós, also Hungarian and a colleague living in Switzerland, recalls that Jutka had tattoos on her stomach as well as her arms. Interview with René Hess and Mária Soós, July 2002.

- <sup>26</sup> Only the last of the three files found in the HPSA (the one from 1955) mention that she had a tattoo and the one before (from 1954) does not. This means that the tattoos visible on her arm were acquired somewhere between 1954 and 1955. The chronological filing references of the files: 1. from 1952: 509-A-931; 2. from 1954: 32-A-679; 3. from 1955: 40-A-012 (HPSA).
- <sup>27</sup> We know very little about Sortex for the present and even less from Jutka's perspective. Only a general picture is available from the Party committee material – also with the area we highlighted between 1950 and 1956 – of the work conditions in the factory, conflicts between the workers and the party leaders, the over-pushed work effort. The material from the Sortex Party committee is to be found among the materials for the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party Budapest District Committee (Hungarian National Archive Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party Budapest District Committee, records from the Sortex factory). It is here that Jutka was most likely to have directly felt the interference by the state in her everyday life. For further background on the relationship between the youth and the state with reference to the Rákosi era and with special attention paid to Csepel, see Kürti, László. *Youth and the State in Hungary, Capitalism, Communism and Class* (London–Sterling: Pluto Press, 2002), 82–101.
- <sup>28</sup> Under the employment section on the HPSA files, the following data is listed. In the 1952 file: completed school studies at the age of 14 and a year later was working as an apprentice "textile worker". Her class background was "working class". In the 1954 file she was merely described as a "casual worker" and was therefore no longer seen as being qualified. The following can be read in the 1955 file: "parasite", "unemployed". Inasmuch as we rely on the files, it transpires that between the ages of 15 and 18, Jutka's status as seen by the state continuously declined. Her husband claims that she was arrested in 1955 for fly-posting; this information has not been supported by another source.
- <sup>29</sup> Even though mention is made in the file that sentence was passed, there is, as yet, no other reference made to this sentence.
- <sup>30</sup> For background information on the identity-crisis term related to psychohistory adolescence, see Erikson, Erik H., *A fiatal Luther és más írások* (The Young Luther and Other Writings), (Budapest, 1991), 368. György Kövér refers to Erikson from this point of view in his book on Géza Losonczy, participant of the Revolution 1956: see *Losonczy Géza (1917–1957)* (Budapest, 1956-os Intézet, 1998), 85–86.
- <sup>31</sup> It would be fascinating to gain an answer to the question of how Jutka saw the 1956 Revolution and whether she saw it as being instrumental in her life and, if so, whether she also saw it as being instrumental for the country. Her husband recalls that, in the early days of his relationship with Jutka, she claimed that had taken up arms in the street fighting. Her colleagues from Switzerland also claimed that Jutka told them that she had fought with a weapon during the revolution. One of them also recalled that there was a picture hanging on her wall showing her with a weapon in her hand. (Until now we could not find this photograph.) It is also true that Jutka only told her Swiss colleagues about the revolution and she did not readily speak about this in front of her fellow Hungarian émigrés. (Interview with Jutka's former, Swiss colleague, René Hess, July 2002.) It is also fascinating to know what makes part of her representation shaped by herself later, in Australia. Respective recollections of the husband, Steven Toth and the younger son, Steve about her fight against János Kádár just as a Russian general during the Revolution are telling much about how myths arise in exile. Interview with Steven Toth and Steve juinor in March 2005.
- <sup>32</sup> The following is written in the file in the Ministry of the Interior records created in 1966 on Károly Sponga, born in 1935: "From November 4th, 1956, he fought as an actual artillery commander of the Hungarian army with the anti-revolutionaries from Csepel against the Soviet troops. He fired at an armoured car and its military personnel were shot in the head by armed men. No proceedings were initiated against him." Based on the file, it also transpires

that he also used the Solymosi surname earlier (we will return to this point later on) and he worked as a knife-grinder in Nyiregyháza (Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security (HAHSS) file on Károly Sponga). (Károly Sponga was summoned to appear at the trial of Sándor Kőrösi and associates and although he was not sentenced, a file was opened on him. HAHSS, Sándor Kőrösi and associates, Investigatory Section of II Department of Ministry of Defence, June 26th, 1957. V-143 818.)

<sup>33</sup> Jutka's eldest brother, József – a qualified arms technician – served with the ÁVH (Hungarian Secret Police) between 1950 and 1959. As a member of the newly-formed armed force, which played an active role in the suppression of the 1956 revolution, he was entrusted with the collection of ownerless weapons after the revolution, and their distribution to members of the armed force. That is why he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant and also received the “For People’s Power” decoration. He was forced to resign in 1959 because of his younger sister’s defection, news of which had reached his superiors in the interim period. József Solymosi served in the special armed forces of the communist regime from the age of twenty and quickly built a military career for himself. When he was forced to resign, he was able to find work as an apprentice locksmith. As a former minion of the communist regime, he was never able to overcome this sudden break in his career and he went on to commit crimes: he started with fraud, theft and robbery before finally committing murder for which he was tried in 1966 and executed. In appeal against this severe sentence, mention made of his past in the ÁVH was not considered to provide alleviating circumstances. In the eyes of the regime, József Solymosi’s crimes were probably seen as betrayal of earlier favouritism and ultimately the regime itself. See trial of József Solymosi, XVI. 2115/1966, Central Archives of the Budapest Municipal Court.

<sup>34</sup> Karády, Viktor–István Kozma. *Név és nemzet. Családnév-változtatás, névpolitika és nemzetiségi erőviszonyok Magyarországon a feudalizmustól a kommunizmusig* (Name and Nation. Surname Change, Name Politics and Nationality Power Relations in Hungary from Feudalism to Communism) (Budapest: Osiris, 2002), 340–341. “The Stalinist regime in Hungary created a type of silent-assimilation policy but not in the name of some form of nation state building concept but stemming from an indifference to the problems and needs of ethnic minorities, occasionally as a result of distrust.”

<sup>35</sup> The other reason for the name change may have been dissociation with their father’s name who was a heavy drinker and had allegedly spent time in prison. See appeal worded by József Solymosi himself in the original copies of the criminal investigation documentation against József Solymosi II., Criminal Investigation Section of Investigative Department of Budapest Police Headquarters, B51055/1966, 4. Central Archives of Budapest Municipal Court.

<sup>36</sup> Of her Swiss friends, Fritz Zaugg recalls Jutka telling him that she herself had witnessed the event. Interview with Fritz Zaugg, June 2003. On the contrary, according to Mrs Taschler, the neighbour, Jutka did not witness the death of her younger brother. Interview with Mrs Taschler, May 2003.

<sup>37</sup> This latter was published by the Italian magazine, *Epoca* (on November 11), but the previous ones – coming from the personal archives of Mario De Biasi – have been undeveloped until now. Since several members of this fighting group appearing on Beretty picture participated in the siege of the Communist Party headquarters, Köztársaság tér (Republic square) – they reappear on other pictures taken during the siege – there are some chances that Jutka and György also were at Köztársaság tér.

<sup>38</sup> László Eörsi dedicates a whole chapter of his book, *Corvinisták, 1956*, on the Vajdahunyad street group and even though he considers Julianna Sponga as a member of the group, he does note that information on her is contradictory. It is important to note that Eörsi’s information on Julianna Sponga relies solely on the Wittner trial material. As Jutka only joined the group on



November 4th, Eörsi – during his research into the group from Corvin köz – cannot have come across her name in any other way. See Eörsi, László, *Corvinisták, 1956. A VIII. kerület fegyveres csoportjai* (Corvinists, 1956. The Armed Gangs of the 8th District) (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2001), 239–255.

39 In the trial of Mária Wittner and associates, Katalin Havrila Sticker and Mária Wittner make mention of her name but of the two of them, it transpires from Mrs. Havrila's account that she really did know Jutka. Katalin and Jutka went together to Switzerland from Austria from where Mrs. Havrila returned to her death. (She was executed for her role in the revolution: a photograph where she appears with a gun was conclusive evidence during her trial.) Mrs. Havrila said of Jutka that: "Julianna Sponga was about nineteen and as far as I know she worked in Soroksár at the market-garden and more recently at the Sortex textile works, she was a resident of Soroksár. [...] She didn't belong to our group, she joined us on the 4th when we were no longer fighting. As far as I know, she didn't fight in other groups either." (Minutes, November 27, 1957.) Mária Wittner's recollections are much fainter and, from the information we gained later, are unfounded: "If she was that long, tall woman then I can say that she also fought with arms against the Soviets and the ÁVH. She was asked to present her identity papers in the ceasefire. She had a machine gun. She disappeared from Vajdahunyad street on November 3. I heard that she became an informer and she betrayed us to the Russians." (Minutes, October 11, 1957.) HAHSS, Trial of Mária Wittner and associates, V-142 941.

40 For the time being it is not known which hospital this was.

41 From a telephone conversation with László Jánoky who now lives in Canada, spring 2002.

42 From the Italian magazine *Epoca*, editions from November 11 and 18, 1956.

43 The material from the Austrian refugee camp in Traiskirchen cannot be researched because of information protection legislation.

44 *La Feuille d'Avis de Neuchâtel*, editions from November 17 and December 7, 1956. Reports by Ruth Widmer-Siedler.

45 The factory was founded and owned by Steinmann, a man of Jewish descent who had fled to Switzerland from Germany in the Second World War and who himself initiated the employment of workers from among the Hungarian refugees. Interview with René Hess, July 2002.

46 Jutka travelled abroad twice during her stay in Switzerland: according to the passport issued in Bern on July 29, 1958, she spent eight days in West Germany and two weeks in Italy in the summer of 1959. Jutka, who had been born in Tatárszentgyörgy in the Hungarian Lowlands and who had made her way to the flat suburbs of Pest, according to her Swiss colleagues, did not like life in the mountains. She wanted to get away. According to one of her fellow Hungarian refugee friends, the other reason she decided to go to Australia was because she had heard it was easy to marry there. Interview with Géza Csefalvay, July 2002. A friend of Jutka in Australia, Carolyn Fairley emphasized that Jutka scared of the Hungarian Security Police agents in Switzerland. Interview with Carolyn Fairley, July 2002. Also Fritz Zaugg mentioned that Jutka believed that Hungarian police had been after her in Switzerland. Second interview with Fritz Zaugg, October 2004.

47 Interview with Steven Toth in June 2002 and with Rózsa Solymosi in May 2003.

48 Ervin Hollós. *Kik voltak, mit akartak?* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1967). The photograph can be found in the first two editions on the page with no page number, but it does not appear in the 1976 edition. Ervin Hollós refused to be interviewed about the "1956 Separate Collection" including photographs and cuttings from newspapers on freedomfighters.

49 The *Match* picture also appears in a series of images at the end of an untitled, 15-minute film, rather like a foreign body, which is held in the Open Society Archives at the Budapest Central European University. The film was never released and it is highly likely to be an early version of the propaganda film, Ilona Kolonits' *Így történt...* (It Happened Like This...). Source: OSA

- Home Affairs Film Studio. 19. It appeared at first time in the exhibition on the counterrevolution of 1956, organized by the Ministry of Interior in June 1957.
- 50 HAHSS 1956 Separate Collection.
- 51 The pictures copied from *Match* and *Epoca* carry the reference number: V-150 381/10, in the HAHSS 1956 Separate Collection.
- 52 HAHSS, Central Alien Control Office on Julianna Sponga, Department III/2, later Department III/II-9.
- 53 About the afterlife see more details in our article: Eszter Balázs–Phil Casoar: “En Emblematic Picture of the 1956 Revolution: Photojournalism during the Hungarian Revolution”. *Europa-Asia Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 8, December 2006, 1241–1260.
- 54 Anderson, Andy. *Hongrie 1956: la Commune de Budapest, les conseils ouvriers* (Paris: Spartacus, 1976).
- 55 On the verso of the postcard is written: “Les mauvais jours finiront” (Bad days will be over), n4. Editor: Editions Négation de la Négation, Avenue de la Grande Perruque, Budapest.
- 56 Méray, Tibor. *23 octobre 1956. Budapest – Ce jour-là* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1966); Varga, László. *Az elhagyott tömeg. Tanulmányok 1950–1956-ról* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi Kiadó–Budapest Főváros Levéltára), 1994.