JOURNAL OF POLITICAL HISTORY

múltunk

Openness and Closedness — Culture and Science in Hungary and the Soviet Bloc after Helsinki

The front page:

Disneyland Ambassador Melissa Tyler Wackerman and Mickey Mouse at Ferihegy International Airport, Budapest, 1985. Source: Fortepan; original: Magyar Hírek

GYÖRGY FÖLDES
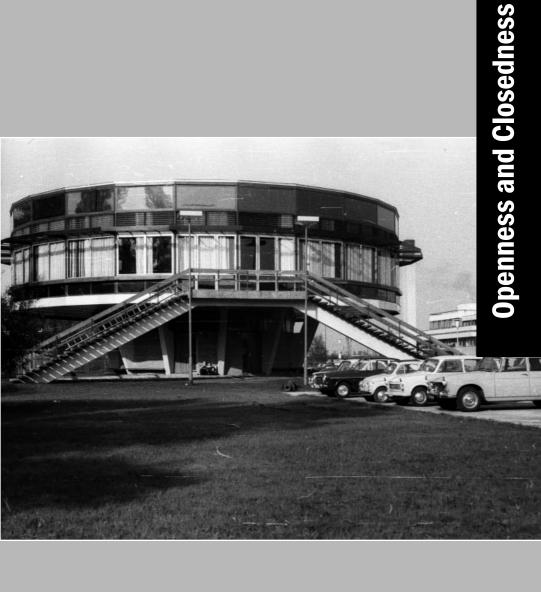
Economic Reform, Ideology, and Opening, 1965–1985*

It was apparent for Hungarian pro-reform experts and politicians from the very beginning of the economic reform: they could not neglect ideological questions. In vain did the leadership emphasize—as we shall see, not without reason—that the reforms were to be confined to the transformation of economic life; in state socialist systems, economics and politics were inseparably interlocked not only in practice, but also in the theory of socialism.[1] Therefore, it was a crucial condition in having the reforms accepted to connect its reasons with the official ideology, Marxism-Leninism. The objectives—like increasing economic efficiency and improving the quality of products—were not novel. The methods of implementation were new. The developers of the reforms believed that their objectives were attainable by making socialist enterprises more independent from the state and placing them into a competitive situation. They had to find how market regulations could be inserted into a planned economy with dominant state ownership. This was not merely a practical but also a theoretical—moreover an ideological—task. In order to make the reform acceptable, a harmony had to be established in "theory" among the principles

---

[1] An enormous body of literature exists on this topic. In particular, see János Kornai, *A szocialista rendszer* [The Socialist System] (Budapest: HVG Könyvek, 1993), 65–94.

legitimizing the system while also denying the capitalisms of the past and present, as well as market economy-based regulatory elements. This is a current topic even today.

Nevertheless, it is not self-evident to discuss this problem in connection with the contrasting notions of openness and closedness. Why not? Because from the fact that following direct political goals one can frame an ideological explanation for the co-existence of fire and water, we might come to several conclusions. Innovation—that the reception of given elements of a conflicting theory might strengthen our own truth—as the supervision of old dogmas might become proof of a sense of reality.[2] Undeniably, this kind of openness might increase the attractiveness of such ideas. On the other hand, adopting previously rejected elements of confronting ideologies that were earlier held to be antagonistic might prove fatal. As such, innovations might appear as concessions; they might become signs of weakness. Finally, there is a risk that due to its eclectic nature the elements of the ideology lose their coherence. The surrender of certain principles might be deemed as heresy in the eyes of the old believers, while earlier opponents see themselves justified in the "concessions" given to them. So, it might occur that reformers find themselves caught between two stools. Reformers at any time hope that their innovations will revive their ideology, increasing its appeal and legitimizing capacity.

The central virtue of an "ordinary" ideology is not exactly being open and inclusive. It is particularly true in the case of such a radical ideology that anchored its truths in rigid theses as Marxist-Leninism. It had to face much more important requirements than openness. It is enough here to remind the reader of those that made opening specifically difficult. Marxist-Leninist ideology had to *prove the superiority of socialism* over capitalism. This applies to ideas, society, politics, culture, morals, and, last but not least, the economy. From this aspect, the reality of the "bourgeois" system of the 1960s—

---

[2] The excellent sociologist C. Wright Mills called it the "plain procedure" in his book on the Marxism-Leninism of his age. C. Wright Mills, *The Marxists* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1962), 98–99.

its welfare state, parliamentary democracy, and its standard of living—formed a major challenge for communist theorists and politicians. Capitalism did not seem to have suffered a general crisis, nor did the Western working class seem to have become impoverished. Therefore, *an ideological struggle against "bourgeois" ideology remained particularly important*, which was further complicated by recognition: the superpowers must avoid war and try to give way to peaceful coexistence and the improvement of economic, political, and cultural relations.

The Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) elevated the idea of peaceful coexistence to the level of official strategy. Communist ideologists had to draw conclusions. The main task was to preserve the *coherence* between the theses and principles of Marxism-Leninism, which was supported, but at the same time somewhat encumbered by the process called "the renaissance of Marxism." The leaders of the communist parties gave clear instructions for this work. They declared on the conference of communist and workers' parties in November 1960 that peaceful coexistence is not applicable in the sphere of ideology, where relentless struggle must be fought for the triumph of socialist ideas.[3] Last, but not least, they had to *legitimize* power. It was an easier task when the political line and leadership was stable, and more difficult when strategy and/or leadership was changing. Either way, in both cases it had to follow from Marxism-Leninism and therefore show its truth in the case of reforms as well.

Lenin wrote about the constituents of Marxism.[4] However, Marxism-Leninism was different, because the classical doctrines were complemented with certain statements made by Lenin and Stalin over time. However, the theses of Stalin had been screened out of the basic principles by the 1960s.

[3] "A kommunista- és munkáspártok képviselőinek 1960 novemberében megtartott Moszkvai Ertekezletén egyhangúlag elfogadott NYILATKOZAT [The DECLARATION Univocally Accepted by the November 1960 Moscow Conference of the Representatives of Communist and Workers' Parties]," *Társadalmi Szemle* 12 (1960): 3–41.

[4] V. I. Lenin, *Válogatott művei*, I [Selected Works, vol. I] (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1967), 52–56.

Nevertheless, we can state that Marxism-Leninism had become an ideology that was composed by the thoughts of its classics, their expressed theses, and the theoretical summary of the Soviet experience. This was the background that those working on the economic reforms in Hungary had to take into consideration.

Which were those principles with which economic reforms had to be reconciled? Half a century after the victory of the Russian revolution, the list was not difficult to compile. The document submitted to the Communist World Congress in 1957 in Moscow, which was finalized there and published afterwards, was a great help in this work. In this document, the leaders of the international communist movement declared the general principles of building socialism. According to this, the theoretical foundation was Marxism-Leninism. The social and political leadership was the role of the working class and the communist party. The tool was state power and the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the economy, state property was dominant and goods were produced according to plans. The relations among communist parties and already socialist states were built on internationalism, mutual solidarity, therefore the common interest of the movement and the countries. This thesis was derived as the consequence of the widening and advancement of the communist movement. This thesis also reflected the experience of the Polish and Hungarian 1956; and retrospectively justified the crushing of the Hungarian revolution by the Soviet Union.

In the years of de-Stalinization, internationalism could not remain such an absolute principle as earlier, because the individual communist parties, if they wanted to be successful, could not subordinate themselves to Soviet interests as in previous decades. Therefore, much greater emphasis was laid on the self-determination of the parties and the sovereignty of socialist countries. One of the main lessons of 1956 was that total uniformity is pointless; the ruling communist parties must be given space for movement and tactical independence. This is why the 1957 document recognized the thesis of different

national paths beyond general principles.[5] However, it was not evident how to interpret this formula. Obviously different historical backgrounds, varied economic and geopolitical conditions, as well as differing national cultural heritages and traditions had to be considered. The main point was that by recognizing "specialities," the international communist movement—essentially the CPSU—"in principle" accepted that the parties might act on their own in configuring political accents and alliance policy.

The recognition of national paths and specificities offered a postern door for the Hungarian reforms; however, they did not open it too wide. The reform could not simply "pass" through the postern door. It could not be simply smuggled into the inner world of socialism as a national speciality. What is more, the most faithful Cerberuses of Marxism-Leninism were suspicious, and they feared that under the shroud of reform a Trojan Horse might get into the fortress of ideology. These dogmatists were of the opinion that reform could easily transform into reform*ism*.[6] Not even a decade had passed since the spring of 1957, when the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (*Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt*, MSzMP), due to ideological arguments and considerations, took the concept of the reform of the economic mechanism elaborated by economist István Varga off the agenda. This decision was brought about under Soviet pressure, for the Yugoslav-style workers councils were crippled according to the Soviet view. Yet, by the middle of the 1960s, the fight against revisionism, against the Yugoslavian model, and against social democratic parties had just come to an end.[7]

[5] "A szocialista országok kommunista és munkáspártjai képviselőinek 1957. november 14–16-i, moszkvai értekezletén elfogadott NYILATKOZAT [The Declaration of the Representatives of Communist and Workers' Parties at the Moscow Conference, November 14–16, 1957]," *Társadalmi Szemle* 7–8 (1957): 129–143.

[6] See Iván T. Berend, *Gazdasági útkeresés 1956–1965* [Searching for an Economic Path, 1956–1965] (Budapest: Magvető Kiadó, 1983).

[7] Ágnes Szécsi, ed., *A revizionizmus a legfőbb veszély. Cikkgyűjtemény* [Revisionism is the Main Danger. Collected Articles] (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1959).

This did not bring relief on the ideological front. One division was replaced by another. Moreover, this time the charge of revisionism was raised against the Soviet leadership, which had been pursuing this ideological struggle previously. Khrushchev and the CPSU were indicted by the Chinese Communist Party, led by Mao Tse-tung, who accused them of appeasement and concessions to imperialism, thus a betrayal of revolutionism.[8] This twist might have made it easier for those searching for new paths, but not this time. In particular, they had to defend Marxism-Leninism from a leftward attack from above; in other words, they had to stand up for the validity of its theses. In addition, widening the scope of economic incentives could hardly be interpreted as the sign of revolutionary praxis.

For theoretical and political reasons, the Hungarian party stood on the side of the CPSU. However, in spite of cloudless Hungarian-Soviet relations, there was no opportunity for major Soviet material-financial aid—similar to that of 1957—to solve the problems of the Hungarian economy. It became clear during the preparations of the third five-year plan that significant external help cannot be expected to promote the transformation of the economic structure in general and the modernization of the production structure in particular. An important portion of the problems derived from reasons other than technological lag or false or poorly implemented plans; by contrast, the limits of central planning and coordination itself had become more and more apparent. Therefore, a different way had to be found to improve the operation of the economy. The existing companies had to be entrusted with the transformation of the structure, while this demanded that they become substantive actors of the economy.

A political climate favourable for the implementation of these reform intentions appeared by the mid-1960s. It is worth distinguishing the general and particular components of this climate change. Among the former, it is important to emphasize that the period between 1957 and 1968 was a successful

---

[8] About ideological debates on peaceful coexistence, see Aladár Mód, *Korunk vitája* [The Debate of our Age] (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1965).

decade for both the Soviet and the European state socialist regimes, even with all of their difficulties. The economy, the standard of living, and the standards of education and culture of these countries improved at a significant pace.[9] It seemed that state control of technological development could establish the conditions necessary to work past the existent handicaps.[10] At least the Soviet successes in military and space technology, seen in the strategic balance between the Soviet Union and the United States, seemed to support this. This was the basis of the slogan "catch up and overtake" that Khrushchev announced along with the twenty-year program of building communism at the Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU.[11] An important indicative element of this plan was the statement that socialist countries reach the antechamber of communism by and large at the same time. This thesis was officially accepted in the beginning of 1959 when it was included in Khrushchev's report to the congress and from there to the resolution of the congress.[12] By the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, the de-Stalinization process more or less advanced and drew to a close.[13] Last, but not least in these years, it seemed that liberated former colonial states were trying to get rid of the control of capitalist powers and were seeking the opportunities to choose the socialist way. Consequently, and in addition to that, thanks to the strengthening movement of non-aligned countries, the geopolitical situation changed in favour of the Soviet Union

---

[9] About the development and problems of European socialist countries, see Iván T. Berend, *Terelő úton. Szocialista modernizációs kísérlet Közép- és Kelet Európában 1944–1990* [On Detour. The Attempt for Socialist Modernization in Central and Eastern Europe, 1944–1990] (Budapest: Vince Kiadó, 1999), 191–265.

[10] Melinda Kalmár, *Történelmi galaxisok vonzásában* [In the Pull of Historical Galaxies] (Budapest: Osiris, 2014), 182–188.

[11] *Az SZKP XXII. kongresszusának jegyzőkönyve* [The Proceedings of the Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU] (Budapest: Kossuth Könyviadó, 1962).

[12] *Az SZKP XXI. Kongresszusa* [The Twenty-First Congress of the CPSU] (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1959), 130; 632.

[13] The Scientific Department of the Institute of Political History organized a conference on this topic in February 2012. See "De-Stalinization and Reforms in Central-Eastern Europe, 1953–1968," source: http://polhist.hu/progra-mok2/desztalinizacio-es-reformok/ (Retrieved October 28, 2019).

and socialism. The consequential optimism and the favourable perspectives made the leadership of the CPSU more receptive to its allies, who were seeking distinct paths and willing to prove their sovereignty. Political realities dictated this as well.[14]

However, the above list does not cover all the important general factors regarding the relationship of reform and ideology. The attempt to get within reach of communism failed after a few years essentially because it was built on false assumptions. By the 1960s, the great reconstruction period after WWII had ended.[15] In most socialist countries, after the process of agricultural collectivization and women entering the labour market in great numbers, the sources of extensive economic growth based on a new labour force had been drained.

From these particular circumstances, one must be by all means emphasized: the leading politicians of the CPSU became fed up with the inner and foreign political improvisations and continuous reorganizational campaigns of Khrushchev. They organized a coup against him and dismissed him. Consequently, János Kádár lost his number one supporter. The Soviet decision affected him negatively and he did not hide it. The Hungarian party worded its reservations in an official letter to the CPSU. Later on, Kádár personally explained his deprecating opinion about the procedure to Leonid Brezhnev and his colleagues.[16]

In a pinch, Kádár showed strength. This event offered him and his Hungarian leadership an occasion to bring about a long-delayed decision. A few weeks after his return from

---

[14] This is well illustrated by the moderate handling of the aspirations of the Romanian Communist Party for independence after 1961, which became public in 1964.

[15] See: Ferenc Jánossy, *A gazdasági fejlődés trendvonala és a helyreállítási periódusok* [The Trend Line of Economic Development and Recovery Periods] (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1966).

[16] György Földes, *Kádár János külpolitikája és nemzetközi tárgyalásai I. kötet* [The Foreign Policy and International Negotiations of János Kádár, vol. I] (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2015), 62–65; Magdolna Baráth, "Kádár, Hruscsov, Brezsnyev. Szovjet külügyi dokumentumok a magyar pártvezetés reakciójáról Ny. Sz. Hruscsov leváltására [Kádár, Khrushchev, Brezhnev. Soviet Foreign Affairs Documents on the Reactions of the Hungarian Party Leaders to the Dismissal of N. S. Khrushchev]," *Történelmi Szemle* 3–4 (2003): 331–349.

Moscow, in December 1964, the MSzMP gave green light to the reform operations.[17] We must add that the Czechoslovak Communist Party passed a similar resolution a month later.[18] Soon experiments started in the Soviet Union to improve the economic governance mechanism, which was attached to the new Prime Minister, Aleksei Kosygin.

In 1964–65, the debate was not about the question whether the laws of commodity production have their place in a socialist economy, but rather to what extent and how.[19] The innovative efforts exactly differed in extent and method. Those who concentrated on reducing target-figures and increasing material interest in order to enhance the quality of production wanted to modernize the classical planned economy. Those who wanted to give space for the market, market competition, prices, and the independence of enterprises—within the conditions of collective property—demanded real reforms.[20] Their exercise was much harder, because they had to find means and arguments to prove the "socialist nature" of the new economic principles and methods. This is why books on political economy and economics

[17] Henrik Vass, ed., *A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt határozatai és dokumentumai 1963–1966* [Resolutions and Documents of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, 1963–1966] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1968), 107.

[18] Zsolt Horbulák, "Gazdasági reformkísérletek Csehszlovákiában a szocializmus idején [Economic Reform Experiments in Czechoslovakia under Socialism]," *Világtörténet* 3 (2018): 399–414.

[19] It is enough to recall the debate in the journal *Közgazdasági Szemle* [Economic Review] during the late summer and early autumn of 1964. See Tamás Nagy, "Az értéktörvény és az árak centruma a szocializmusban [The Law of Value and the Centre of Prices in Socialism]," *Közgazdasági Szemle* 7–8 (1964): 790–807; Géza Ripp, "A szocialista gazdaság modelljeiről [On Models of Socialist Economy]," *Közgazdasági Szemle* 7–8 (1964): 912–918; Béla Csikós-Nagy, "A szocialista gazdaság 'két modell' elmélete [The 'Two Model' Theory of Socialist Economy]," *Közgazdasági Szemle* 9 (1964): 1095–1101. The same was reflected in MSzMP's resolution on current ideological questions in March 1965, which condemned revisionism in terms of a "two-front battle," while at the same time it called for a fight against *petit bourgeois*, material thinking and stood for the economic reforms. See Vass, ed., op. cit., 132–133.

[20] Several works discuss the further evolution of economic reform thinking. See László Szamuely and László Csaba, *Rendszerváltás a közgazdaságtanban – közgazdaságtan a rendszerváltásban* [Regime Change in Economics—Economics in Regime Change] (Budapest: Közgazdasági Szemle Alapítvány, 1998).

linking the socialist economy to commodity production were published one after the other in this period. We should mention at least two of them: *The General Problems of the Functioning of the Socialist Economy* by Włodzimierz Brus (1967) and *Socialist Market Relations* by Ota Šik (1966).

In the mid-1960s, it was not mission impossible to have it accepted that commodity production would not cease in socialism and the law of value would make its way, and furthermore that markets and competition among manufacturers also have their advantages. The widening of international trade, quickly changing and unsatisfied social demands, and bulks of redundant or poorly produced goods made the actors and leaders of the socialist economy face the reality. The majority of the population also experienced a shortage economy and its anomalies.[21] Consequently, resistance against the reforms weakened. These reforms then became part of the official strategy of the Hungarian party from 1966 onward. This had to be taken into consideration by the party ideologists as well, if for no other reason than that of party discipline.

The fact that Marxism-Leninism adopted the category of socialist commodity production did not make ideological work unnecessary. Moreover, in a sense, the difficult part started there. First, the Hungarian reforms had to have accepted by the allies, most of all by the Soviets and the domestic public. The former task was achieved by September 1967. Brezhnev visited Hungary at that time and took notice of the reform initiatives. Incomprehensibly, he accepted only a few points, namely the agricultural cooperatives' level of independence and that they were allowed to own the lands they used. In these questions, Kádár could utilize the thesis of national specialities.[22]

---

[21] Shortage as an inseparable feature of a centrally planned economic system was analysed a decade after the introduction of the Hungarian economic reform with elucidative strength by János Kornai. See János Kornai, *A hiány* [Shortage] (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1980).

[22] The proceedings of the negotiation between Kádár and Brezhnev trustworthily reflect the space for movement and tactics of the Hungarian leadership. See György Földes, *Kádár János külpolitikája és nemzetközi tárgyalásai 1956–1988. II. kötet. Dokumentumok*, [The Foreign Policy and

In the meantime, reform propaganda shifted to a higher gear. The new rules of the game portrayed the practical meaning and consequences of the reform for all actors. An even more important aspect was to gauge how the new modes of operation and regulation affected governing organizations and enterprises. Hence, it is worthwhile to outline briefly the most important characteristics of the reform introduced on January 1, 1968. Central plan directives for enterprises were petered out, while agricultural cooperatives had already been given freer hand in framing their plans earlier. One portion of consumer goods remained at set prices, the prices of another part became maximized, while a third part evolved freely, according to supply and demand. The share in profits of enterprises was widened, as well as the opportunity for leaders and employees to receive bonuses. Running investments were distributed according to the competency of enterprises. Thus, the reform also changed the structure of economic interests—it inserted group interest between social and individual interest.[23] This also rearranged the role of departmental and functional bodies; their relations were altered, and the significance of strategic planning and financing was raised. The tasks of ministries and national directorates for departmental governance was, in theory, reduced to strategic planning and professional assistance instead of daily hand-gearing. Wider opportunities arose for enforcing territorial and professional interests. The flow of labour became freer, too.

International Negotiations of János Kádár, 1956–1988, vol. II: Documents] (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2015), 232–268.

[23] These developments and effects were at the front of the preliminary agitation and propaganda work of the reform, and political leaders also shone the spotlight on these issues before the introduction of the reform. See, for example, the article by Prime Minister Jenő Fock and the speeches of Rezső Nyers and János Kádár at the plenum of the Central Committee in November 1967: Jenő Fock, "A gazdasági mechanizmus reformjának az útján [On the Road to the Reform of the Economic Mechanism]," *Társadalmi Szemle* 11 (1967): 62–79; Rezső Nyers, "Beszámoló a Központi Bizottság november 23-i ülésén [Report at the November 23rd Plenum of the Central Committee]," *Társadalmi Szemle* 12 (1967): 5–20; János Kádár, "Felszólalás a Központi Bizottság november 24-i ülésén [Speech at the November 24th Plenum of the Central Committee]," *Társadalmi Szemle* 12 (1967): 21–29.

There were deep concerns that the symbolic achievement of full employment supporting the superiority of socialism would be damaged, if only temporarily. Therefore, companies were enticed to keep their workforce through average wage administration. Agricultural cooperatives were granted more opportunities to establish side-line enterprises, namely to pursue industrial and trade activities. Finally, yet importantly, the role of company party organizations in economic work decreased.

It is no wonder that the public followed these changes interestedly. The new mechanism had different effects on heavy industry and light industry, ranging from large-, medium-, and small-sized enterprises. The officers of industrial ministries looked at the events differently from those working in banking and finance. Company management and party organizations took diverging approaches. After 1956, MSzMP strived to place the interests of urban industrial workers at the core of its worker policy. Now new opportunities and expectable structural transformations quickly improved the situation of commuters and worker-peasants, especially for those who had cooperative workers in their families and possessed household and auxiliary plots. The same was applicable to those employed in services and those who could convert their workforce to this field, as the broadening and changing demands of the population found the state and cooperative sectors unprepared. The so-called "second economy" emerged; nevertheless, it only become all-pervasive in the second half of the 1970s.

This process broke the social, economic, and political schemes, which had been formulated thanks to ongoing industrialization, agricultural collectivization, and political consolidation, and had just settled down by the mid-1960s.[24] It was a serious ideological and political challenge to face for the MSzMP leaders, who were certain that the reforms were right.

The Hungarian reforms also challenged the leaders of other socialist countries; the Hungarian party hoped that

---

[24] For the social, economic, and political connexions of the reform, see György Földes, *Hatalom és mozgalom 1956–1989* [Authority and Movement, 1956–1989] (Budapest: Reform és Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1989), 33–48; 97–126.

there would be followers among them. Insofar as János Kádár even formulated such a thesis in his November 1967 speech before the Central Committee, allied countries saw the chance for advancement in similar reforms, which was also valid for economic cooperation. His optimism was confirmed by the Czechoslovakian events at the beginning of 1968, as well as the fact that the qualitative improvement in international economic cooperation among the socialist countries and that the reform of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) appeared on the agenda.[25]

Yet, these expectations were eliminated by the "re-Sovietization" of Czechoslovakia and the Brezhnev Doctrine elaborated to justify Soviet intervention, which declared restricted sovereignty. The leadership of MSzMP pursued its rear-guard action for the reform of Comecon for two years, but standing alone in the battlefield, it had to withdraw in 1970. A year later Eastern European socialist countries decided to harmonize their long-term planning instead of putting their economic relations on a market base. This was the so-called Complex Program. The Hungarian party still endured and defended its reforms constrained within national frames. Prime Minister Jenő Fock resorted to self-criticism, given in information on the Central Committee's plenum approving the Complex Program. According to his self-criticism, it was a mistake to overemphasize the role of economic factors, and the party should have stood up for major common investments as well. Fock suggested that the MSzMP should stick to the reforms and not take a defensive stand, but also discard the propagation of the Hungarian example.[26]

In spite of a quiet defence dominating over a combative attitude, it was not enough for the internal and external opponents of the reform. In 1972, under Soviet pressure, the

[25] István Feitl, *Talányos játszmák. Magyarország a KGST erőterében 1949–1974* [Mysterious Games. Hungary in the Force Field of Comecon, 1949–1974] (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2016).

[26] The speech of Jenő Fock at the joint session of the Central Committee and the Council of Ministers (August 4, 1971), MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 4/113. ő. e.

Hungarian party leadership had to impose order in its own house. By this time, the internal and external critics of the reform could argue by referring to each other's statements. On the other hand, the supporters of the reform did not capitulate easily. To demonstrate it, it is enough to quote two articles from the theoretical journal of the party. In May, Imre Pozsgay—referring to the long, drawn-out problems—remarked that not all of the mistakes could be attributed solely to the shift in the course of reforms. He also added that the reforms were more adequate in enforcing responsibility than the previous economic mechanism. Therefore, the reform should be further improved by the development of public thinking. His conclusion: The party should not beat a retreat by only seeing the negative phenomena, but rather should fight conservatism.[27] Rezső Nyers, the party leader responsible for economic policy and the reforms, took up the challenge from the "defenders of Marxism-Leninism." In June 1972, he argued that the Hungarian development was in accordance with the general laws of socialism.[28]

These efforts did not prove successful. In November 1972, after long debates, the Central Committee of MSzMP passed a decision about the relief of enterprises in difficulties, the relaxation of market regulations, the increasing role of planning, and the universal wage lift of industrial workers.

The deadening of the reforms was framed as strengthening the leading role of the working class. This is what Miklós Óvári emphasized at the Central Committee, underlying that the restitution of the material interests of the workers was not enough, the complete duty of the party included supporting the leading role of the workers.[29] The problem remained on

---

[27] Imre Pozsgay, "A haladás ára [The Price of Progress]," *Társadalmi Szemle* 5 (1972): 21–26.

[28] Rezső Nyers, "Hogyan fejlődnek a termelőerők és a termelési viszonyok Magyarországon [How Do Means of Production and Relations of Production Develop in Hungary]?" *Társadalmi Szemle* 5 (1972): 12–27

[29] During the April 1973 session of the MSzMP Central Committee, Miklós Óvári stated that "the working class undertakes the great political responsibility that amounts to its leading role, it does its share of the work, and if necessary of the sacrifices as well, but it rightfully demands that its moral

the agenda, because sticking to and stressing the concept of the leading role of the working class was the main tool for the leadership of the MSzMP to demonstrate its adherence to Marxism-Leninism. This became a compelling task after August 1968 and the Polish workers' revolt in 1970, provided the Hungarian party wanted to avoid isolation within the Soviet bloc. These two events forced the CPSU to draw the conclusion that the reasons behind the Czechoslovak and Polish crises in 1968 and 1970, respectively, centred on the negligence of industrial workers' needs. In March 1974, the Central Committee of MSzMP passed a principal resolution about strengthening the social significance of the working class, and at the same time a most practical one about the representatives of the reform policy. Rezső Nyers, Lajos Fehér, and György Aczél had to step back.[30] Nevertheless, Brezhnev still found these modifications unsatisfactory and he demanded the removal of the reform politicians from all leading positions in an offensive manner in the summer. He made it clear that he expected the forthcoming Hungarian party congress to announce a program from the "socialist perspective."[31]

Nevertheless, the need for the clarification of perspectives was not primarily motivated by anti-reform policy. The experiences of the previous half decade pushed the CPSU into a defensive position. It strived to get out of this situation, and its allies urged the same. The promising plan of building communism by 1980, which had already failed a decade before, had to be replaced with a new vision. This space was finally filled with the theory of "developed socialism," and its construction was matured by

---

and material appreciation should proportionally increase with the undertaken responsibility and tasks." MNL OL M–KS 288. f. 4/121. ő. e.

[30] The resolution and the communiqué of the MSzMP are found in Henrik Vass, ed*., A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt határozatai és dokumentumai 1971–1975* [Resolutions and Documents of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, 1971–1975] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1978), 653–676.

[31] From Kádár's memories of the negotiations between himself and Leonid Brezhnev between August 3–4, 1974. See György Földes, *Kádár János külpolitikája*, vol. II, 418.

Soviet and East German ideologists.[32] The notion expressed that socialism was able to develop in its own base and according to its own laws. This was the platform of the program of building a developed socialist society, which embraced several objectives at the same time: lifting the economy to a higher technological level, developing infrastructure, raising the standard of living, establishing the fundaments of a socialist way of living, and decreasing still existent social inequalities.[33] In addition, the strategic balance between socialist and capitalist countries had to be preserved.

The oil and energy crisis of 1973–74 seemed to support the Soviet ideological offensive, which created a favourable situation for the Soviet economy. We must not forget that these were the years of détente. The CPSU had to make it clear that détente, the widening contacts between the two world systems, did not mean their uniformization. However, the case was different regarding the socialist world. The thesis was worded repeatedly in different ways: due to socialist development, the social, economic, and political relations of these countries would become more and more uniform.[34]

Ideology and politics cannot be understood separately. The notion of developed socialism and Soviet foreign policy were closely connected. In the détente period, those concepts gained strength that expressed the division between the two world systems, about the socialist world economic system, socialist integration, and the international socialist division of labour.[35] Finally, yet importantly, after the successful settling of the

---

[32] G. E. Glezerman, O. Reinhardt, eds., Развитое социалистическое общество [Developed Socialist Society], (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Misla, 1975).

[33] These were the points contained in the new program manifesto accepted at the 1975 MSzMP Congress.

[34] Brezhnev referred to this process with contentment at the Twenty-Fifth Congress of the CPSU. *Népszabadság*, February 25, 1976.

[35] In Hungary, Ferenc Kozma advocated for the issue of socialist economic integration at the highest level. He strived to find a socialist solution for the challenges from world economic processes, and as one of the most important elements, he proposed the intensification of the division of labour among socialist countries. He argued that Comecon should not "copy" the Common Market, but should utilize its experiences. Ferenc Kozma, *Gazdasági integ-*

European security conference in Helsinki, more precisely the treaty on the European status quo, Soviet foreign policy turned in the direction of the Third World.

Not much time was necessary to see that the assessment of the situation on the one hand and the objectives set on the other were both inadequate. The former underestimated the ability of the capitalist system to manage crises and renew and the capacity of leading Western powers—especially of the United States—for action and, in turn, overestimated the action potential of socialism. These directly led to mistaken objectives. Forced economic growth, raising the standard of living, military development, and expanding Soviet influence over the Third World proved exaggerated commitments.

It was exactly the crisis of 1973–74 that made it clear: The world economy exists and all participants have to face its challenges.[36] This held true also for socialist countries. Among other reasons, due to their low-level economic efficiency and competitiveness. The Soviets, who also recognized this situation, wanted to answer it with the concentration of the resources of socialist countries and the harmonization of plans and technological developments. However, its realization was moving at a snail's pace due the resistance of rigid structures of control (which in theory served to promote the implementation of common objectives), a lack of capital, and the hardships of the very similar development conceptions that had been tuned to import substitution strategies and therefore resulted in conflicting national interests. It was especially too slow to keep up with the accelerating economic speed that was clocked in at the end of the 1970s with the ongoing economic-technological development in the core states of the global capitalist economy.

Hungary had no time to spare to get moving in the Eastern hemisphere. It had to make a move, since the structure of the Hungarian economy was more open and, at the same time,

---

ráció és gazdasági stratégia [Economic Integration and Economic Strategy] (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1976).

[36] József Bognár, *Világgazdasági korszakváltás* [World-Economic Turning Point] (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó–Gondolat Kiadó, 1976).

its indebtedness was deeper than its neighbours'. As a first step, the Central Committee of the MSzMP elaborated a new external economic strategy: its main intention was turning to an export-oriented attitude instead of import substitution. This had serious consequences, like the interconnection of export, import, business, and consumer price systems, and forcing enterprises to hold on to the world market, etc. It was inevitable to turn back to the path of reforms that had been abandoned five years earlier.

This shift did not come with easy navigation. On the one hand, enterprises themselves were reluctant to step out from under the umbrella of the state. Their managers and workers had mixed feelings about growing requirements in exchange for greater independence. Their defensive manoeuvres were supported by the fact that the recovery of the drastically tumbled external balance had become a main priority of Hungarian economic policy. Import controls became more rigorous, and export activities bringing convertible currency had to be forced, which on the other hand prolonged the need for the production of marketable goods, however loss-making they were. This contradiction remained a neuralgic point in the Hungarian economy until the regime change and thus contributed to the debacle of the regime. There would have been another path to take: giving up the requirement of full employment and undertaking the social and political conflicts arising from the termination of uneconomical production, and thus enforcing a radical shift in the product structure. Nevertheless, the MSzMP could not undertake such crisis management for ideological and political reasons alike. Moreover, this solution would have been very similar to those methods that were successfully applied in capitalist core states from the late 1970s and early 1980s in terms of neoliberalism and neoconservativism. Nonetheless, such crisis management could only succeed in Western countries, because the majority of the middle classes broke with the social democratic welfare state and the ideal of solidarity. There was abundant capital in core states and nothing could impede its free flow. In addition, new industrial

and information technologies were on the rise. These conditions were not at all given in Hungary. To the contrary, by turning back to the reforms, Hungarian leadership had to bear in mind the possible resistance and irritability of its internal party opposition and of Moscow, who had already eyed the opening to the West with suspicion.

January 1, 1978, was the tenth anniversary of the introduction of the new economic mechanism in Hungary. The leading article of the party daily *Népszabadság* emphasized continuity this time. According to its logic, the reform was good, its correction was not mistaken either, the reform must neither be depreciated, nor overvalued; we must preserve the ability to change.[37] The breakthrough of the reform—or more precisely the return to the path of the reform—was enforced by the deteriorating economic situation. In April 1978, János Kádár removed Béla Biszku from the party leadership, who was the main opponent of the reform and the opening policy.

In the summer of 1979, the Central Committee called on ideologists and professionals to interpret socialist society as a transitional and market society, where the laws of the market prevail.[38] This practically withdrew the program of developed socialism from the agenda.

The following three years of Hungarian economic policy and economic governance can rather be described as constant balancing and pragmatism rather than further development of the reforms elaborated in the 1960s. Nevertheless, the measures taken in order to counterpoise the freezing standards of living for the Hungarian population and to preserve the confidence of the Western financial world proved that the reform approach predominated in Hungarian politics. In this period, the "second economy" became semi-legal, that is, small enterprises and cooperatives were granted wider space for movement. Thus, the market gained more ground as well. The party leadership,

---

[37] "Eredményes évtized [Successful Decade]," *Népszabadság*, January 1, 1978.

[38] The June 29, 1979, plenum of the Central Committee of the MSZMP. MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 4/163. ő. e.

even if uneasily, tolerated the emerging opposition. After twists and turns, Hungary finally applied for membership to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. And this all happened in a period when Poland was paralyzed with crisis, Romania was sinking into neo-Stalinism, and time stopped in the Soviet Union. These sequels revalorized the Hungarian socialist regime, because it manifested viability and the ability for reforms. Nevertheless, the Hungarian economic structure did not undergo significant change, its effectivity hardly improved, and Hungarian products did not become more modern and competitive.

It is no wonder that reform works accelerated in the early 1980s. The conditions were favourable. The balance of payments had been more or less stabilized by 1983. Remarkable reform experience had been accumulated in the previous two decades as well. The party secretary responsible for economic policy was a worker cadre, Ferenc Havasi. The scientific elites, leading economists, and sociologists did not only participate in the professional preparatory phase, but also politically supported the reform intentions of the party. Hungarian society was expecting progress, while the party and the government could still solidly preserve its authority. Last but not least, in spite of the fact that Soviet leaders were still reluctant toward the Hungarian reform and opening experiments, they could not deny its certain achievements. Moreover, perhaps even more importantly: the CPSU could not offer either economic or political alternatives. After the Polish crisis of 1980–81, official ideology was forced into a defensive stand. Therefore, Moscow become interested in the success of the Hungarian model, as long as it testified to the regenerative capacity of socialism.

In 1982, intensive reform preparations were in progress. One of the most talented representatives of the new generation of economists, Tamás Bauer, also joined the debate partly from the inside, partly from the outside. He proposed more than improvement on the reform of the second half of the 1960s

and suggested rethinking the cornerstones of the system.[39] The article caused violent storms and forced the leaders of the reform operations to come out from their shelters.[40] They were the members of the consultative body summoned by the party and led by Havasi. The theoretical journal of the party called them for statements under the title "About the further development of the 15-year-old reform." It is worth citing two answers. Rezső Nyers pinned down that there was no need for a second reform. But he reminded his audience that the concept accepted in 1966 was more radical than the reform finally implemented in 1968; furthermore, no reform measures were introduced between 1972 and 1978. In the future, he suggested more courageous steps. All in all, the former secretary of the Central Committee did not demand less than the acceptance of the reform philosophy as a socialist theory.[41]

József Bognár agreed with Nyers in the following: reform is the expedient method of the operation of the socialist economy and society. The academician defended the reforms of 1968 from its critics, stating that those rebuking its half-hearted nature did not understand the relations and the international circumstances of that age. He went along with those who held the preservation of socialist values and national unity as the basic conditions of the reform. However, for Bognár this led to making a protagonist of the reform. He reminded the party leaders: "only such leadership that can vindicate solid and enduring authority is able to initiate and act in decisive moments." In the 1980s, the circumstances and the relations of the world economy were different, and without a radical shift, he added, Hungary would lag behind not only compared to developed countries, but also compared to the developing

---

[39] Tamás Bauer, "A második gazdasági reform és a tulajdonviszonyok [The Second Economic Reform and the Relations of Ownership]," *Mozgó Világ* 11 (1982): 17–42.

[40] This issue was a central topic of the ideological conference in January 1983.

[41] Rezső Nyers, "Az alapelveket jobban érvényre juttatva folytatni kell a reformfolyamatot [The Reform Process Must Be Continued with Better Enforcement of the Basic Principles]," *Társadalmi Szemle* 2 (1983): 68–72.

industrial countries, because they had reacted to the crisis of the capitalist economy with unprecedented technological progress and the extension of international trade. He sensed that Hungarian public opinion expected reforms and if those fell away, it would prove that "the system and the nation in its current structure was unable to renew". Bognár did not stop here. He summarized his thoughts the following way: "It would be a colossal mistake to think that we can survive and develop without sacrificing any of our previous ideas. [...] Massive reform without any delay is the precondition of keeping the sacrifice of the society within tolerable frames and that the future would bring improvement and not cataclysm.[42] It is surprising that these harsh, well-targeted sentences could be published in the party journal.

Two month later, at the plenum of the Central Committee, evaluating the tendencies of the previous three years, János Kádár also expressed his views. He reminded the plenum members that, in the West, Hungarian measures serving as incentives of economic activity—from household plots through part-time second jobs and small enterprises to the reform introduced in 1968—were often interpreted as the adoption of capitalist tools. The party leader added that such voices were aired inside the party and the country as well. But those steps did not change the nature of the system, they served building socialism. In Hungary, economic planning prevailed by utilizing market laws, because it was in fact commodity production which went hand in hand with the operation of the market, money, prices, and that this would continue for a long time. Kádár acknowledged that the existing system of economic governance should be improved and developed, but stressed that there was no need for "a reform of the reform," for a shift that would go beyond the principles and direction of the reforms of 1966–68. He made it clear that the state would not give up its role in

---

[42] József Bognár, "A gazdasági reform szerepe a szocialista társadalom fejlődésében [The Role of the Economic Reform in the Development of Socialist society]," *Társadalmi Szemle* 2 (1983): 55–60.

economic governance and the party would not lay down the determination of economic policy.[43]

The Hungarian party leader called for the improvement of theoretical and ideological work on the centenary of the death of Karl Marx. However, he did not refer to the growing uncertainty in society, the complicated situation, or the reform debates, but rather to the demands of building socialism "in general" and the sharpening international situation and systems debate. Kádár pointed out that there were harder times to realize socialist ideas, but if "we try to exert the principles of Marxism-Leninism in harmony with our own reality; we walk on the straight, safe road of socialist development."[44]

A year later, in April 1984, the MSzMP Central Committee made a decision about the radical transformation of the economic mechanism. The planned reforms pointed towards the extension of market elements, the liberalization of the flow of capital and work force, the strengthening of the elements of corporate ownership and self-governance. A decision in principle brought about the introduction of the dual banking system, setting prices to the market, as well as the implementation of a tax system that would better serve the requirements of the transformation of the structure of economic production and growing differences in incomes. These were radical plans paving the way to the establishment of a socialist market economy. In this model, central planning would have resorted to strategic investments and the elaboration of the conditions of balance, and it would have been supplemented with the tools of budgetary and monetary policy.

---

[43] János Kádár, *A békéért, népünk boldogulásáért* [For Peace, For the Prosperity of Our Nation] (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1985), 81–84. The first secretary of the party also answered criticism relating to the economic performance of the party and the government by "persons for or against this position, but definitely in panic." (The latter was presumably addressed to József Bognár.) According to his interpretation, in the previous three years, the leadership of the country took the necessary measures—and under very complicated circumstances. Ibid., 85.

[44] Ibid., 87.

However, it was obvious that rolling back loss-making production, the liberalization of enterprises, and the predictable broadening income gap would generate serious social conflicts. These endangered both the political stability and the social acceptance of the reforms. This is why János Kádár stuck to the dynamization of economic growth parallel with the introduction of the above reforms. In other words, he was trying to treat one risk by taking another. The party and the government complied with his will. Thus, at least in principle, they could meet several requirements at the same time: the ideological superstructure was not cracked from any side; the reform preserved its socialist nature. Also, the majority of the society, both as producer (as enterprise, cooperative, entrepreneur, employee) and as consumer, passively or actively, consented to this will to change. The dual expectations seemed to have been met, the political leadership sprang to the attack from defence, the reforms were launched, and the preservation of social consensus (that is, national unity) looked realistic.

One year was necessary to realize that the effort to break out badly failed. By the end of 1986, it had to be confessed publicly.[45] But this time, there was no way back any more, the leadership of the country lost its authority, the Marxist-Leninist ideology lost its influence. There was nowhere to return, nowhere to look back.[46] Opening up—externally and internally—remained the only and final option.

[45] The Central Committee admitted it in November 1986. The resolution: Henrik Vass, ed., *A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt határozatai és dokumentumai 1985–1989* [Resolutions and Documents of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party 1985–1989] (Budapest: Interart Stúdió, 1994), 264–271.

[46] For an excellent analysis of the dependence relations of Hungarian economics and politics, see József Böröcz ...: József Böröcz, *Hasított fa. A világrendszer-elmélettől a globális struktúraváltásokig*, [Split Wood. From World System Theory to Global Structural Changes] (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2017)

MELINDA KALMÁR

The Decades of Détente

Cold War resilience: coexistence and Helsinki as twin ideas

The notion of détente appears as a constant topic of discussion in contemporary history writing on the Cold War. There are several theories on its periodization, and even more definitions of the phenomenon. The Helsinki Final Act is one of those significant examples that can prove quite clearly that most of the spectacular Cold War turning points are embedded deeply in the course of a long preceding process of a particular Cold War resilience. By this, I mean that both sides, East and West, wanted to adjust themselves to the *permanent* feature of a prolonged Cold War. That is, they began to fit themselves into a long-term rivalry emerging between the two great political-civilizational galaxies from the mid-1950s onward. Beginning in that period, the ideological emphasis by each side lay much more on the non-hot features of this East-West rivalry rather than on the "war" itself, which—as we now know—never became hot in the direct spheres of influence of these superpower blocs. Thus, we can say that the Helsinki Final Act has no unique status in the Cold War constellation; it was not the result of the dynamization of East-West relations in the early 1970s, but rather it was, in reality, a necessary consequence of a long-term process that began in the mid-1950s. During the intervening decades of East-West interaction, intentions and even institutions on one side frequently strengthened and motivated the other's, slowly developing into a new type of interdependency. In these

flows, however, there were particularly decisive factors in these constellations. First, there was the nuclear balance of power and the consequent partial-peace coordinate system, called the Cold War. As part of this shifting context, different practices and strategies of resilience by the two blocs can be counted. Second, one ought to point out the ongoing scientific and technical revolution (STR) of the time as an ultimate motivation for intensive cooperation, but also for internal reforms.

On the Soviet side, the main ideological framework for a more flexible strategy was the announcement of the doctrine of peaceful coexistence, which became a twin idea of the future Helsinki process. In 1953, the main ideological question was formulated by the Soviet leadership in the following way: What shall we do with our strategies without war? From then on, the Khrushchev leadership presented itself on the international ideological stage as the *ambassador of peace.* The Soviets took into consideration that the public everywhere wished for disarmament and a ban on nuclear testing, therefore it presented the Soviet bloc as the main advocate of world peace. To support this idea, they tried to use modern mass communications effectively, giving a new meaning to pre-medial propaganda. This aimed to influence the masses, and mainly the public opinion, of the opposite camp. Like Lenin, Khrushchev should be seen as an ideological forerunner of the age of media: they both experimented with means of attaining mass influence far beyond the borders of empire.

After launching their policy of peaceful competition and the doctrine of coexistence. Moscow put less emphasis on encouraging class struggle, conflict between nations, and direct revolt against the West. It no longer wanted to use unavoidable violence to urge the decisive global world-revolution. It tolerated various paths leading to peaceful expansion and began to see transformations (all around the world) from rather an evolutionary than revolutionary perspective.[1] With

[1] On the offensive nature of coexistence, see Adam Ulam, *Expansion and coexistence: Soviet Foreign Policy 1917–1973* (New York: Praeger, 1974); In his *Failed Empire*, Vladislav Zubok argues that Khrushchev did not particularly

this ideological and strategic turn, Soviet policy undoubtedly modified key elements of Leninist propaganda and generally the discourse of the Cold War, too.

No doubt, with the ideological support for peace, Moscow first wanted to gain time to enter a new accumulation phase that would lead to at least a military balance, if not a relative advantage,[2] and this strategy seemed to bring results quickly. In the second half of the 1950s, the Soviet Union had moved closer to its desired balance of power, and this success encouraged it to act as an initiator. Accordingly, the Soviet leadership was reactive and proactive—or even offensive—at the same time. Its ideological line propagated the belief that science and technology had fundamentally changed the nature of war, because the threat of nuclear conflict discouraged the two world-systems from launching military actions in areas of their direct influence. It officially accepted that the two opposing systems had been forced to coexist alongside one another peacefully, because the struggle between them would be prolonged and de-intensified, which also meant that the notion of "war" shifted from direct violence and military solutions to the spheres of diplomacy, economy, ideology, culture, and propaganda.[3]

---

prefer the policy of coexistence either, but later embraced the recommendations of his colleagues in the leadership. Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire. The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 94–99.

[2] István Kende, *Forró béke, hidegháború: A diplomáciai kapcsolatok törté-nete 1945–1956* [Hot Peace, Cold War: The History of Diplomatic Relations, 1945–1956] (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 1970), 61. There are some analysts who believe that the Soviet leadership, and particularly Brezhnev, were honestly committed to détente, and did not primarily work toward the accumulation of power to increase influence. See Vladislav M. Zubok, op. cit., 223.

[3] Csaba Békés stresses that both sides realized, not only later, but already between 1953 and 1956, that in the interest of avoiding a third World War that would result in total annihilation, the two world systems were forced to coexist. This triggered decisive changes in the relationship between East and West, and opened a new era in the history of the Cold War. Csaba Békés, "The Long Détente and the Soviet Bloc, 1953–1983," in *The Long Détente. Changing concepts of security and cooperation in Europe, 1950s–1980s*, edited by Oliver Bange and Poul Villaume (Budapest–New York, Central European University Press, 2017), 31–34.

In the Khrushchev period, party congresses (the twentieth in 1956, the twenty-first in 1959, and the twenty-second in 1961) taken together formed a coherent strategy confirming theoretically that the most significant parameters of the age would be the special co-relations of the arms race, the scientific-technical revolution with a wide range of its impacts and the transformation of the world economic system. The official recognition of these factors inevitably projected a more complex and differentiated worldview on the horizon of Soviet ideology. Moscow emphasized that there was a close relationship between coexistence and economic and technological competition-adaptation, because a lower level of international tension would provide more opportunity for "peaceful construction" and a favourable situation could prove to be an advantage—without giving up on offensive plans for Europe and the so called Third World.

Toward a security system in Europe

Coexistence seemed to be a flexible political doctrine, most appropriate for these peaceful competition goals. For this reason, from 1953 onward it remained a definitive thread in Soviet foreign policy. It became the central element of Moscow's interpretation that the new, friendlier political environment would successfully prepare the ground for the idea of European cooperation too. At the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956, Khrushchev declared that, in parallel to the peaceful coexistence doctrine, there was an urgent need for a security system in Europe, which lay among the top priorities of Soviet strategic goals.[4] Then, in 1957, the parties of the Soviet bloc released a joint statement of peace,[5] which was accompanied

---

[4] N. S. Khrushchev, *Report of the Central Committee, Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, February 4, 1956* (London: Soviet News Booklet no. 4, February 1956), 21–24.

[5] Declaration of Communist and Workers' Parties of the Socialist Countries, Meeting in Moscow, USSR, November 17–16, 1957. See Sino-Soviet Split Document Archive, https://www.marxists.org/history/international/

by offensive diplomatic and ideological campaigns, followed by similar ideological messages. At the same time, the number of diplomatic contacts and personal meetings multiplied. The Soviet Union strived to settle its relations in every region with every possible diplomatic partner, and tourism also improved to a limited degree, first mainly among the countries of the bloc.[6]

The Khrushchev leadership also encouraged theoretical examinations of questions related to European security. Under the cover of scientific work, a Permanent Committee was established with representatives of Soviet, East German, Polish, and Czechoslovak scientific institutes, which organized scientific conferences first in Prague in 1961, and then in East Berlin in 1964 and 1965. Hungarians could only join this initiative later due to diplomatic isolation following 1956. Using all means possible, they sought contacts with Western social-democratic parties in the interest of influencing the development of European interstate relations through them,[7] and they also

---

comintern/sino-soviet-split/other/1957declaration.htm (retrieved on May 10, 2019); Stalin also had experimented with "peace policy," which to him was equivalent to conquest. See the slogan: "Lasting Peace! For People's Democracy!" See also Michel Heller and Aleksandr Nekrich, *Utopia in Power: The History of the Soviet Union from 1917 to the Present* (London: Hutchinson, 1986), 504; 630–631.

[6] On Soviet foreign policy, see, among others, Vladislav M. Zubok, op. cit.; Csaba Békés, "The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and World Politics," CWIHP Working Paper no. 16, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C., September 1996, 2–4; Ferenc Fischer, *A kétpólusú világ 1945–1989* [The Bipolar World, 1945–1989] (Budapest–Pécs: Dialóg Campus, 2005); Geoffrey Roberts, "A Chance for Peace? The Soviet Campaign to End the Cold War, 1953–1955," CWIHP Working Paper no. 57, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C., 2008. On the rise of tourism, see Vilmos Gál and Attila Szilárd Tar, *Dokumentumok a XX. század történetéhez* [Documents on the History of the Twentieth Century] (Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 2001), 344–345.

[7] For a brief review of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party's (MSzMP) initial party relations, see The Central Committee (Henceforward: MSzMP CC) Foreign Affairs Department report on our relations with socialist and social-democratic parties. Recommendations for further tasks, May 1974. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/637. ő. e. On the entire period, see István Simon, *Bal-kísértés, a kádári külpolitika és a nyugati szociáldemokrácia* [Kadarist Foreign Policy and Western Social Democracy] (Budapest: Digitalbooks, 2012).

called for convening a congress of the peoples of Europe or a convention of the leaders of its states.[8]

Beyond the direct political factors, coexistence, and later the European security manoeuvre, had different motivations (among them economic) as well. Moscow's immediate goal was an expansion of economic relations and the lifting of restrictions by Western states. The decision to abandon the Asian type autarkic model resulted in the need for European Soviet-type systems to adjust themselves continually with respect to their opponents' parameters of economic competition. So, the principles of coexistence were soon translated into practice: relations between the two blocs moved from individualism to interdependence and the outlines of an emerging cooperation were based on mutual interests. In spite of prevailing restrictive regulations, this switched to the path of East-West economic cooperation. The period of isolation began to be replaced with a loose collaboration, which was not yet a true interdependence. Still, it had strong, mutual, and irreversible effects. Industrial relations, all in all, covered not only short-term contracts and the exchange of finished products, but also more stable cooperation and commitments over the long term. Western Europe, with some extra input and capital investments, gained newer capacities, while Eastern Europe received modern technology.[9]

Nevertheless, the bloc mainly expected that the gradual connection of the two parts of Europe would mean not only a new phase of economic relations, but also that they would be able to eventually neutralize the Western half of the continent. At the same time, the call for a security system in Europe contained the most practical political goal of all: to confirm the western

[8] Recommendation of the MSzMP CC Foreign Affairs Committee to the MSzMP Political Committee (henceforward PC), September 17, 1975. MSzMP PC, October 12, 1965. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/377. ő. e.

[9] For a recent synthesis on the Soviet bloc's role in shaping East-West relations, see Csaba Békés, *Enyhülés és emancipáció. Magyarország, a szovjet blokk és a nemzetközi politika, 1944–1991* [Détente and Emancipation. Hungary, the Soviet Bloc, and International Politics, 1944–1991] (Budapest: Osiris–MTA TK, 2019).

borders of the Soviet empire, and additionally to accomplish the ambitious Eurasia concept along with it. In this sense, détente was, in Moscow's eyes, in fact a new type of challenge, a new approach in the struggle.

Recognizing the importance of the Soviet intention to reorganize the Cold War security structure, Western leaders soon felt that the Soviets had not only gained a head start in rocket technology, but by promoting coexistence, in propaganda too. It was obvious that it had gained an advantage in the development of ideology as well, since it was difficult to question the rationality of the doctrine of peace, thus it really had the potential to confuse the public in the developed world. It was a new phase of argumentation-competition. British Prime Minister Anthony Eden, among others, was rather anxious about this Europe-neutralizing policy. He realized that Western propaganda was having difficulty responding to new Soviet approaches because these Soviet methods differed to a significant degree from those of Stalin: they were more flexible and more difficult to defeat, even by newer means. Eden emphasized that all this would test European and American policy.[10]

From these considerations, it is understandable that in the beginning many Western politicians were reluctant to join the coexistence paradigm, and this was the case with the European security project, too. The West suspected that a more overarching political vision and strategy lay behind the new Soviet ideological initiative, and for a while they were rather mistrustful of the Soviet proposals.

And indeed, coexistence was not merely a quickly absorbed tactical element for Moscow, but part of a more general, carefully thought-out multi-factor concept, and the Helsinki project was the necessary result of that. It also means that there was an apparent continuity between the Khrushchev and the Brezhnev periods' interpretation of security goals. The former's initiative for Europe was improved by the latter from the mid-1960s onward. In both political eras, the strategy of coexistence and

---

[10] Anthony Eden, *The Memoirs of Sir Anthony Eden* (London: Cassel, 1960), 362–363.

the permanent effort for a European security system had multi-layered, diversified security goals:

1. the strengthening of Soviet and continental security;
2. diverting the German threat; in close connection to the first two,
3. securing the western borders of the Soviet empire through special treaties;
4. the pacification of Europe (especially in the shadow of Chinese-Soviet tensions); and
5. the reduction of American influence while expanding Soviet presence in the world.

Concrete negotiation proposals were first articulated at the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee (WP PCC) session in Bucharest in July 1966, then at the Karlovy Vary meeting of European Communist and Workers' Parties in 1967, and at the WP PCC's Budapest meeting in March 1969. The key points included: the German question, disarmament, peaceful conflict resolution, neutrality, lifting embargoes, production and scientific cooperation between the two halves of Europe, dismantling the blocs, a European security conference and a meeting of all European parliamentary representatives.[11] Then, the 1969 conference of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow was in many regards an outstanding event in the

---

[11] The consultations of CC Secretaries of Fraternal Parties in Moscow in December 1973. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/628. ő. e. On other exchange values, see Record of the Main Content of Gromyko's Conversation with the US President J. Carter, September 23, 1977. National Security Archive, Washington DC, Carter-Brezhnev Project; see also For European Peace and Security. Statement by the Conference of European Communist and Workers' Parties, Karlovy Vary, April 26, 1967, https://www.cvce.eu/obj/statement_by_the_european_communist_and_workers_parties_on_security_in_europe_karlovy_vary_26_april_1967-en-e8fe5ae4-27cc-4e0f-a48a-c8c82cb548e6.html (retrieved on June 10, 2019). Later, these same principles were supplemented and re-formulated. See Documents Adopted by the International Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties, Moscow, June 5–17, 1969, https://web.archive.org/web/20110706145416/http://leninist.biz/en/1969/IMCWP679/ (retrieved on June 10, 2019).

history of the Soviet system. It projected the key foreign and domestic policy trends for the coming decades, and outlined the accompanying ideology in detail. Its goals were strongly supported by the fact that by the end of the 1960s the earlier asymmetric military power balance between the two superpowers had developed into a "symmetric bipolarity."[12] (Later that year, ő. beginning of the SALT I negotiations essentially codified the shift in the balance of power, signalling Soviet advantage. Moscow insisted that the USA accept that the Soviet leadership would not give up on developing its fleet, including nuclear submarines, claiming that this was the only way it could counter-balance the USA's advantageous strategic position.)

The conference of the international Communist parties made clear that Moscow's key ideological and diplomatic goal was to have both halves of the continent accept the historic necessity of the Soviet Union's European policy and a new type of Eastern integration as well. The key goal of the more open Eastern ideological teambuilding was to confirm that the Euro-Atlantic region's realistic political partner was a Ural-Europe, and that closer relations between these two equally ranked integrations were inevitable. Thus, at the beginning of the 1970s, the Soviet

[12] See Ferenc Fischer, op. cit., 241–247. Also see The Agitation and Propaganda Committee's (APC) material for debate about international agitation and tasks for further development, May 5, 1970. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/138. ő. e.; János Kádár's oral report on the meeting of Fraternal Parties' First Secretaries in the Crimea, MSzMP PC, August 2, 1972. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/587. ő. e. On the maneuvers in the Helsinki process, see Csaba Békés, "Hungary, the Soviet Bloc, the German question and the CSCE Process, 1965–1975," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 3 (2016): 95–138. On institutionalization, see Pál Dunay and Ferenc Gazdag, eds., *A Helsinki folyamat: az első húsz év. Tanulmányok és dokumentumok,* [The Helsinki Process: The First Twenty Years. Studies and Documents] (Budapest: Stratégiai és Védelmi Kutató Intézet–Magyar Külügyi Intézet–Zrínyi Kiadó, 1995); On the most recent international research, see Oliver Niedhart and Gottfried Bange, eds., *The CSCE 1975 and the Transformation of Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008); Wilfried Loth and Georges-Henri Soutou, eds., *The Making of Détente. Eastern and Western Europe in the Cold War, 1965–75* (London–New York: Routledge, 2008); Andreas Wenger, Wojtech Mastny, and Christian Nuenlist, eds., *Origins of the European Security System. The Helsinki Process Revisited, 1965–1975* (London: Routledge, 2008).

leadership considered the political-ideological constellation favourable. A new phase of ideological struggle was started by the Helsinki process.

Moscow held that it was in the position to take initiatives, that the ball was in its court, and that the prospects for a wide supportive social alliance based on effective peace propaganda were good. The Vietnam War in which the US committed military aggression while the Soviets avoided direct intervention, and then the American defeat, as well as the Arab-Israeli conflict, appeared to create a context suitable for developing an intensive propaganda program in Europe. Given the temporary ideological disadvantage of the USA, Western public opinion could be receptive to an Eastern peace campaign.[13] Therefore Brezhnev announced an "offensive peace policy" (as a more intense variant of coexistence), exploiting fears of war and growing dissatisfaction with American influence. His ideology (even if he was not serious about it) from the mid-1960s proposed that since the NATO treatywould expire in 1969, it would be a good opportunity to envisage a Europe without military blocs (instead of renewing the treaty), and to create a collective security system in which Europe would not be threatened by any potential German military force and, correspondingly, the role of the USA on the continent would decrease. Moscow refused the accusation that the convergence of the two halves of the continent served Soviet interests, and claimed that the West had just as great a need for the advantages of an international division of labour and for the other half of European markets.

Khrushchev's coexistence principle became offensive during the Brezhnev era in different ways, and it was increasingly a practice directed toward European space. Words of peace, European security, and a converging continental identity together promised to be an effective tool in winning over public opinion in the West. The initiative to reallocate military funds for peaceful goals, including social, health, and public education development, as well as offering aid to developing

---

[13] Brezhnev's remarks at the July 31, 1972, meeting of Fraternal Parties in the Crimea. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/587. ő. e.

countries, sounded particularly appealing. Peace and security arising from disarmament, social profit, and environmentalism were topics that offered attractive solutions for many.

Nonetheless, during the long preparatory period leading up to the European security conference, the West, and especially the United States, was—understandably—reluctant to accept a new manoeuvre meant to neutralize Europe. At the same time, it took into consideration the opportunities of an opening to the East in economic, scientific, and cultural relations, and eventually tuned itself to a unique European détente policy. As a counterbalance, Western states pushed for freedom of information, the flow of ideas and information, and the free movement of people, which was translated into the concrete goal of the liberalization of visa practices. As part of their human rights agenda, it urged a quick solution to the issue of reuniting families, the authorization of the emigration of Jewish populations,[14] lifting restrictions on the work and movement of foreign journalists, an improvement in work conditions for businesspersons, an increased inward flow of press products, and guarantees for at least a few civic rights. Regarding the western parties' political preferences, there were, however, some differences. The Americans considered the free movement of diplomats and technical experts as particularly important, while the Federal Republic of Germany prioritized the development of industrial relations, joint ventures, and information centres. The British and the French were interested in improving primarily cultural relations and saw opportunities in the distribution of press products. During the intensive bargaining process, they attempted to take stock of the Soviet side's weaknesses, and,

---

[14] The Soviet Andrei Sakharov initiated the establishment of a committee on the protection of human rights, and encouraged allowing a portion of Soviet Jewry to settle in Israel. Certain experts hold that due to Western pressure, 40% of post-graduates with Jewish heritage left the Soviet Union in this period. Ben Fowkes, "The National Question in the Soviet Union under Leonid Brezhnev Policy and Response," in *Brezhnev Reconsidered*, edited by Edwin Bacon and Sandle Mark (New York: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2002), 68–90; 72; see also, Record of the Main Content of Gromyko's Conversation with the US President J. Carter, September 23, 1977, National Security Archive, Washington DC, Carter-Brezhnev Project.

thus, they sought contacts with opposition groups within the Eastern bloc. For example, when, in January 1972, American Congresspersons visited the Soviet Union, they organized a meeting with liberal intellectuals, which was later condemned by *Izvestia* in a statement. The Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs protested at the US Embassy in Moscow and a member of the American delegation was expelled from the country.[15]

Ideologies around security: the clash of future visions

On the road to the security conference, it became clear that both East and West were preparing thorough, refashioned indoctrination campaigns: the exchange values of security negotiations entered into ideological warfare on the main issues: European status quo versus human liberties and rights. Reconstructed goals, themes and organizations emerged in the battle, and the emergence of new, up-to-date tools brought a visible change to the ideological struggle. In the first half of the decade, opponents strengthened their propaganda potential, increased their budgets, revised their earlier principles, and reorganized their institutions.

The heightened ideological manoeuvres demonstrated that both camps perceived the constellation to be favourable and appropriate for argumentative propaganda. They strove to make use of the cracks that appeared thanks to the *relatively* free flow of ideas and people in order to use all possible forums to propagate the advantages of their systems in a seemingly apolitical and ideology-free manner. The propaganda role of diplomatic institutions abroad was supplemented by press offices, trade companies, offices, and chambers, and by mass information tools, scientific research centres, cultural organizations, and outstanding public figures. Increasingly

---

[15] Current Sovietology and convergence theory. Constructed by Tibor Görög, research fellow. HSA Archive F-76/1973; Supplement to the summary titled "Imperialist propaganda aimed against the Hungarian People's Republic," January 15, 1972. IV. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 22/1972/35. ő. e.

large and professional apparatuses worked on winning over the other party's heartland and public opinion, and additionally, the Third World and their populations.

Soviet bloc members regularly discussed Western preparations during ideological coordination meetings. Brezhnev highlighted that the West was creating "an entire system of ideological myths" with massive propaganda machinery and modern tools, and it is particularly efficient in exploiting the appeal of Western mass culture. He claimed that the ideologues, on the payroll of the imperialists, create a unique pseudo-culture, which aims to dumb down the masses and dampen their social consciousness.[16]

Western propaganda organs had also anticipated a "peaceful conquest" policy, and this was not a defensive tactic on their part. The starting points of Western ideology were summarized at the conference on Sovietology held in Hamilton in October 1971, and at the spring 1973 ideological-strategic coordination meeting in Salzburg. Propagandists agreed to avoid open confrontation with Eastern states and parties, i.e., they would refrain from using violent, harsh language vis-à-vis the enemy. They did not threaten armed intervention, but at the same time they offensively worked to pluralize the Eastern bloc, to instigate national communisms and to liberalize domestic politics. They also agreed to continuously remind the residents of the Soviet camp of the positive, latently market oriented features of necessary economic reforms, stressing the liberal characteristics of a modest scale of "democratization," hoping to radicalize political-economic-social movements.[17] They agreed

---

[16] "Speech by Leonid Brezhnev at the 1969 Moscow meeting," https://web.archive.org/web/20120608044725/http://leninist.biz/en/1969/IMCWP679/2S.15.2-Leonid.Brezhnev,Some movement.-problems (retrieved on June 10, 2019). The Soviet bloc's intelligence claimed to know that in July 1973, the American Congress approved additional funding of $50 million for Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. See Bulgarian comments at the December 1973 Moscow meeting of Central Committee Foreign Affairs Secretaries. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/628. ő. e.

[17] Soviet comments at the 1973 Moscow ideological meeting. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/628. ő. e.

that, in order to erode the Soviet system, they would utilize financial credit, cultural exchange, and diplomatic manoeuvres.

The pre-Helsinki propaganda: global and welfare ideas

An important change in the discourse of both parties was that an increasing number of global issues entered the points of debate which were relevant to their rivalry. The Soviets, however, were especially active in gaining the support of the Western public for the *de jure* recognition of the European *de facto* status quo. Beyond questions of disarmament, they initiated solutions on important global issues like rational raw materials and fuel extraction, transportation, eradicating the most dangerous and widespread diseases, conquering space, utilizing the natural resources of the world's oceans, and environmental protection. It was a unique aspect of the ideological struggle that principles and theories could not remain exclusively the elements of a global discourse. They had consequences for consciousness and, even if slowly, they reformed practice. For example, in 1971–72, in the framework of a complex Comecon plan, several multilateral environmental protection agreements were signed in the region. Environmental protection research was launched, earlier laws and decrees were unified, and political leaders indicated on several occasions that the economic point of view needs to be supplemented by environmental considerations. (A proposal was passed in Hungary in 1974 on establishing, next to the government, a National Environmental Protection Council, which would prepare laws on environmental protection and then coordinate its execution.) At the same time, the Soviet bloc had to take into account that the two halves of Europe were not synchronous in this regard. The West already focused on protection from noise and vibration pollution, while the East still concentrated primarily on hygienic correlations, the secure management of industrial and household waste, and the protection of landscapes, but above all catching up with Western growth levels, which often compromised environmental

protection. Damaging accompanying elements—partly as an effect of Western movements—were criticized by local environmentalists.[18]

Beyond those listed above, the debated issues also included the exploitation of the world's oceanic resources, demographic explosion, mass famine, and the problem of dangerous diseases. Propaganda could not ignore these real problems, as they were direct sources of political tension: they strengthened opposition in the East, non-conformist civic movements in the West, and destabilizing riots in the South.[19]

With its modified "agenda," Moscow for its part strove to open a new era in the age of ideologies and labelled it as the peaceful offensive of socialist countries, being inspired by the European cooperation and security conference.[20] There was less focus on class struggle and world revolution, and it instead advocated for a more realistic—and for many, more acceptable—idea of European security. The ideologues of the Soviet bloc viewed as potentially independent social factors all those in the West who were sensitive and receptive to both social equality and the ideals of peace. Propaganda, therefore, spoke to all potential Western audiences: socialists, social democrats, the believers, intellectuals, urban and village middle classes, non-conformist youth organizations active in student and civil rights movements, and women. The latter were counted on for their feminist affiliations, although at other times they were perceived as depreciators of modern revolutionary ideas.

The tone of Soviet-led propaganda became more peaceful, and it acknowledged the significant progress made by Western countries in science and technology, its economic growth, and

[18] The situation of environmental protection and guiding principles for further tasks. Proposal. March 12, 1974. MSzMP PC. March 26, 1974. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/633.

[19] At the July 31, 1972, Crimea meeting, this was all brought up openly by Nicolae Ceausescu. The July 31, 1972 meeting of First Secretaries of Fraternal Parties in the Crimea. MSzMP PC. August 2, 1972. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/587. ő. e.

[20] Ibidem. L. I. Brezhnev's comments; The December 1973 Moscow meeting of the Parties' Central Committee Secretaries dealing with ideological and foreign affairs issues. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/628. ő. e.

the high standard of living, and thus, it modified its theses on the general crisis and decline of capitalism. After the exhibitions of kitchens in the 1950s, the struggle over lifestyle gained new momentum on both sides: fresh *topoi* and styles, but mostly more efficient technology emerged. Following the lead, the Soviet camp also adjusted its propaganda to be more indirect. It took into consideration that the trend of "sociological propaganda" has been introduced everywhere, which meant that instead of direct advertising of theories, propaganda would focus on the export of lifestyle. It would fill information with commercial and mainly technical advances, culture, fashion, accommodation, leisure, tourism, and hobby topics. Surveys showed that the targeted youth, intellectual, and petite-bourgeois (middle class) groups were most receptive to such lifestyle propaganda, along with keeping alive ideas of nationalism.[21] As a response, the Soviet bloc developed its own refashioned ideology. Its main claim was that it did not want to catch up with capitalism in all areas—in their view, consumer society would not bring an end to inequalities precisely because it prioritized the pursuit of profit to the satisfaction of needs, and it transformed individuals into mere market consumers. Artificial supply and demand, parasitic consumption, too much focus on luxury items, and pseudo-culture could by no means be among the competitive goals that the Soviet bloc would have liked to reach.

Though it may be surprising to those familiar with everyday life in the Soviet sphere, the Eastern bloc had its own welfare image in contrast to the Western one, and a target audience. Its propaganda discourse was adjusted mostly to the worldview of those Western middle- and working-class strata that sympathized with leftist movements and opposed state-monopoly capitalism, to the wishes of immigrants,[22] and also counted on the spread of national liberation movements. It

[21] Ibid., Bulgarian comments.

[22] Report to the APC on Hungarian Radio's foreign transmissions. September 19, 1967. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/83. ő. e. For a brief analysis of the spatial distribution of transmissions aimed abroad and presumed audience attitudes, see: Report to the APC about foreign transmissions, recommendation for further tasks. October 20, 1979. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/334. ő. e.

interpreted national and racial conflicts in a uniquely socialist manner, with a special focus on masses of foreign workers migrating to Western Europe. Emphasis was put on communal spirit, social security (e.g., the basic right to health care service, public education, the right to employment), equal opportunities, and mass access to quality culture. There were also references to the insecure social situation of the other side's workers, to racial and religious discrimination, and the intervention of security services in the private lives of citizens. The mutual accusations were not especially shy.

One part of Soviet expansion strategy was, for the sake of attracting more sympathy, to propagate a virtual people's front policy, which had worked out in early Sovietization periods. It still subscribed to the idea that evolutionary, influence-building Sovietization processes could be induced in the West. From an Eastern point of view, Western civic and leftist movements were an especially promising sign of crisis, as were demonstrations against racial discrimination and assassinations in the USA. American and European strikes were sources of great hope, as were struggles for civic equality and national liberation struggles.[23] The Soviet leadership felt that religions were also in crisis. It thought it possible that the state monopolistic tendencies inherent in STR might move the intellectual, peasant, urban middle class and workers strata toward socialistic ideas. It identified positive convergence signs in socialist and social-democratic movements, and even in some Christian circles.[24]

Parallel to its almost unbroken optimism, Moscow was aware that in exchange for security in the West and potential gains in influence, it needed to open its doors wider to outside influence. It still accepted the inclusion of statements on human rights

---

[23] At the June 1969 meeting, Brezhnev noted with satisfaction the strikes mobilizing tens of millions of people in the USA, France, and Italy, and spring demonstrations in Japan. Comments at the 1969 Moscow meeting. Speech by Leonid Brezhnev at the 1969 Moscow meeting, https://web.archive.org/web/20120605084004/http://leninist.biz/en/1969/IMCWP679/2S.15.1-LEONID.BREZHNEV-Present.Situation, (retrieved on June 10, 2019).

[24] Ibid. Documents adopted by the International Conference, 27–28. (retrieved on May 10, 2019).

and the improvement of cultural relations during negotiations leading to Helsinki. This more flexible policy, however, further allowed the system-integrity to loosen, although it had already begun to soften in the Khrushchev era. Openness in this period was especially dangerous because the propaganda capacity of the West—in direct proportion to its economy—was significantly greater than that of the East. This, combined with its pluralist democracy and human rights message, made it easier for Western countries to take over the ideological initiative. The Soviet apparatus, therefore, intensely sought those active responses and effective tools which would make possible the "flow in two directions."[25] Its foreign policy and diplomacy— despite actual constraints and Western manoeuvres—tried to make the most of economic, engineering, technical, and scientific cooperations.

Close to the negotiations, the Soviets had two direct goals: the spread of economic contacts and the loosening of constraints dictated by its opponent. In response, the West expected an easing of visa processes, a quick solution to family unification issues, and as a part of the human rights demands, the immediate easing of the Jewish population's general emigration, later the guaranteeing of civil liberties and rights in a broader sense.[26] It also claimed the expansion of the space for work and movement for foreign journalists, an improvement in the work conditions of businesspersons, and a large-scale influx of press products.

The Helsinki Final Act was signed on August 1, 1975, by the leaders of 33 European states as well as the United States and Canada. In the Soviet Bloc, it was celebrated as a great political success as was regarded as a guarantee for the legalization of the European status quo, including the borders. In fact, the document was the result of a compromise: Basket III contained

[25] Report to the APC on the execution of the MSzMP PC's May 22, 1973, resolution: On the experiences and strengthening of the struggle against imperialist propaganda, recommendation for further tasks. October 18, 1976. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/314. ő. e.

[26] Record of the main content of Gromyko's conversation with the US President J. Carter. September 23, 1977. National Security Archive, Washington DC, Carter-Brezhnev Project; Heller and Nekrich, op. cit., 681–685.

a promise that freer movements of people, information, and ideas would be ensured by Soviet bloc states as well. This seemed a reasonable price for the Soviet bloc countries to pay, especially as they believed that their regimes would successfully thwart any possible Western attempts at using this obligation to destabilize their systems.[27] Indeed, the Decalogue of the Final Act also contained the principle of non-interference with regard to the internal affairs of other states, which could be used for refusing any unwanted intervention.

Geopolitical ways of thinking

After Helsinki, the two competing worlds were connected by many threads in economics, culture, tourism, emigration, and church relations. Consequently, people had easier access to Western press products, broadcast times for Hungarian-language radio programs expanded, many watched Austrian and Yugoslav television, and the use of direct program-broadcasting satellites was on the agenda.

After the agreement, both sides tried to make maximal use of the more flexible manoeuvring space for agitation, hoping to convince the world of the advantages of its own system. In the post-Helsinki constellation, the development of propaganda capacities did not decrease; on the contrary, the pace of the competition accelerated: an intense race started for information sources and the division of the global media space. Propaganda discourses on both sides strove to keep up with the changes, favourite topics included futurology, the prognostication of global history, and the articulation of grand, comprehensive perspectives, a renaissance of geopolitical ways of thinking.[28]

[27] On the Soviet bloc's policy concerning the CSCE process, see Svetlana Savranskaya, "The logic of 1989: The Soviet peaceful withdrawal from Eastern Europe," in *Masterpieces of History. The Peaceful End of the Cold War in Europe, 1989*, edited by Svetlana Savranskaya, Tom Blanton and Vladislav Zubok (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010).

[28] Report to the PC on the execution of the resolution concerning the experiences of the fight against imperialist propaganda and its strengthening;

It was generally thought that it was more effective to inform the informed, i.e., leaders in politics, mass communications, economic life, science, and culture, along with the intelligentsia, university students, and pupils. The period was characterized by an international struggle for influence over the masses: both sides sought to acquire all the up-to-date, effective communications equipment, tools, and institutions through which it could carve out an advantage over its adversary. The world was characterized by a drastic increase in media potential, and the strengthening of the defensive mechanism of the Third World and new civic movements, e.g., women and environmentalists.

The target audience was at this time expanded and somewhat differentiated: the classic youth, intelligentsia, and artist target groups were now accompanied by religious groups, ethnic groups, peace activists, and environmentalists as well as by, rather significantly, women's groups. The latter were targeted because of the appearance of radio and television in the home; in the private sphere, the practice of politics had outgrown the limitations of men's clubs, and from this point on, in the struggle between worlds, the rivals viewed women as a new ideological target group. Women were discovered as a potential voter basis and as opinion formers within the family. There was fierce competition in particular in the Third World, where both sides tried to show ever more positive images about the lives and perspectives of women. Both sides celebrated the International Year of Women, connecting it to the topic of children at the same time. The UN announced the Decade of Women,[29] to which the Soviet bloc responded by republishing August Bebel's

---

recommendations on further tasks. October 18, 1978. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/314. ő. e.; The report of the Foreign Affairs Department to the MSzMP PC on the closed meetings of the Central Committee Secretaries of the Fraternal Parties of eight socialist countries. March 1978. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/739. ő. e.; On the re-emergence of geopolitical thought, see Ferenc Fischer, op. cit., 30–51; 92–98.

[29] In 1979–80, UNESCO issued a statement on eliminating discrimination against women: Against discrimination: UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Woman and Socialism (on the hundredth anniversary of its first publication), and put together some propaganda material for the Third World discussing the position and rights of women in the Soviet system.

Certain countries in the region had no choice but to move forward. The MSzMP therefore expanded the list of those who could receive confidential publications and thus these materials appeared in the offices of the directors and Party secretaries of book publishing companies, theatres, museums, film studios, and research institutes. They could reach urban and county public administration leaders, Party and state managers of universities and colleges, the editorial offices of newspapers and magazines, as well as radio and television departments.[30] News editing saw the increasing participation of foreign correspondents, who not only put together political and economic bulletins but compiled education policy, agricultural, urban development, legal and other publications that were deemed confidential from the international press. Their primary role was gathering economic information and informing Hungarian economic leaders. From the early 1980s, they had access to reports prepared for party organizations at Hungarian diplomatic missions after they had complained that they were not informed of regime-critical Polish and Soviet press articles through inaccessible confidential materials.[31]

---

[30] The Agitation and Propaganda Department's (APD) recommendation on modifying the system of distributing and publishing MTI's confidential publications. February 2, 1982. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/381. ő. e.; Recommendation of the secretariat: modifying the system of distributing and publishing MTI's confidential publications. March 8, 1982. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 7/646. ő. e.

[31] Report on the meeting of foreign correspondents. July 7, 1980. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/349. ő. e.; The APD's recommendation on modifying the system of distributing and publishing MTI's confidential publications. February 2, 1982. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/381. ő. e.; The APD's recommendation on the MTI's confidential distribution system. January 20, 1987. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/481. ő. e.

Following negotiation paths

After the Helsinki agreement, the Soviet leadership continued to feel it had an interest in convergence on the continent, thus it did not remove rapprochement with Europe from the agenda. The Eastern bloc continued to do everything it could to evoke feelings of community and to call for newer rounds of coordination meetings. It put pressure on its Western partners with recurring proposals and urged another Pan-European conference to resume discussions on those questions that remained unsolved and to initiate a new round of negotiations on European military détente and disarmament. It encouraged further meetings, most notably the CSCE follow up meetings in Belgrade (1977–78) and Madrid (1980–83). However, in the last phase—partly because of the presidential election planned for November 1980—the USA was reluctant to accept the proposal.

Western Europe, on the other hand, was less repudiating and more inclined toward peaceful continental coexistence, disarmament, and the enlivening of relations; its vigilance vis-à-vis the Soviet threat seemed to have waned. It did not reject the Eastern bloc's recommendations out of hand, and was not opposed to building interstate relations: in fact, it encouraged such construction. In this moment of conciliation, Moscow hoped to achieve the establishment of forums, disguised as being depoliticized, to negotiate unresolved issues. It considered cultural cooperation to be particularly promising, since its diversionary ideologies masked real political efforts and potentiating forces: depoliticized topics made confrontational points of view avoidable or meaningless.

As a result of these efforts, the Madrid statement of 1983, formulated by the states that had signed the Helsinki Final Act, accepted the plan for a separate cultural forum, which also signalled that the significance of indoctrination packaged in culture had once again gained in value in this period.[32]

---

[32] The proposal of the Foreign Affairs Minister and the Education Minister to the APC on the further work on the recommendations submitted to the Cultural Forum. April 21, 1986. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/466. ő. e.

In 1985, the six-week-long European Cultural Forum in Budapest was the first pan-European meeting to be held in a Warsaw Pact member state. Preparations for the in-camp forum took place at the meeting of cultural ministers of socialist countries in 1984 in Balatonőszöd, then at the 1985 Moscow consultation. The main goal of the meeting was to move forward interstate and personal relations, with two-thirds of the participants being artists and experts working in the cultural field. In plenary sessions and panels, they discussed three key topics: cultural creativity activity, opportunities for distribution, and for cooperation. They aimed to attain a positive joint agreement for the Helsinki follow-up conference to be held in Vienna in 1986. The meeting drew diplomats, writers, artists, and cultural experts.

The West, and foremost the USA, wanted to bring in so-called monitoring groups, especially right-wing émigrés and minority rights activists. Based on the practice used in Madrid, they requested travel documents, rental office space, free contacts with delegates, exhibit and publishing opportunities, press conferences, seminars, and authorization for protests. The United States made the renewal of "the most favoured nation" principle contingent on the granting of the above requests, while the Soviet bloc resolutely campaigned against them.

In this (dual) vice the Hungarian party leadership tried to find a solution based on its usual tactical principles: referring to earlier rules, it allowed in everyone who was not banned from receiving tourist visas, representatives of non-governmental organizations were accepted if they could provide proof of a Hungarian host institution, and in some exceptional cases those who had been sponsored by their states.[33] They refrained, however, from allowing non-conformist writers, Czechoslovak or Yugoslav émigrés, or members of the Hungarian opposition

[33] Preparations for the Cultural Forum. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. April 16, 1984. 288. f. 41/425. ő. e.; August 6, 1985. 288. f. 41/450. ő. e.; The joint report of the Scientific, Public Education and Cultural Department and Foreign Affairs Department to the PC on issues concerning preparations and execution of the upcoming European Cultural Forum. September 18, 1985. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/949. ő. e.

from attending the forum. These people were left with the option of a counter forum and an alternative memorandum.[34]

Cultural Forum and a common European identity

The Forum, however, did anticipate integration across all Europe. Aside from discussing continental security, the participants at the meetings dealt with European heritage, cultural roots, and common European identity. Recommendations were made on harmonized East-West programs and organizations, and—perhaps not by coincidence—Günter Grass[35] recommended a joint cultural foundation to be headquartered in Budapest with subsidiary offices in Vienna and Amsterdam. Plans were discussed for a European cultural studies society, the translation and publication of works in less common languages, an international folklore centre to be named after Béla Bartók to collect and publish folk art heritage, a symposium on cultural heritage, artists' meetings, art education, catalogue exchanges, enhanced cooperation in theatre, film, and design, as well as a common youth symphony workshop and orchestra. None of this was a surprise for the Soviet bloc: from the early 1970s, it had been consciously preparing for integration initiated by the East. At that time, Austrian recommendations for forming a joint Pannonia Research Institute or the Monarchy Historical Research Society were perceived as attempts to loosen structures. By the 1980s, it systematically looked for

---

[34] The Hungarian democratic opposition's statement to the European Cultural Forum. October 14, 1985. In: Sándor Szilágyi et al, eds., *Beszélő Összkiadás II.* [The Complete Edition of Beszélő] (Budapest: AB-Beszélő Kiadó, 1992), 335–338; On the alternative forum, see Ervin Csizmadia, *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék (1968–1988)* [The Hungarian Democratic Opposition, 1968–1988] (Budapest: T-Twins Kiadó, 1995), 324–325.

[35] It is proved that Günter Grass was in contact with the East German secret police, therefore, we cannot rule out the possibility that he encouraged European harmonization on the direct or more likely indirect urging of the Soviets. He later was an avid supporter of Finlandization ideas too. See Ágnes Heller and Ferenc Fehér, *From Yalta to Glasnost: The Dismantling the Stalin Empire* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 192.

comprehensive European topics in the framework of coordinated projects.[36]

During the Forum, the host Hungarian government had two aims. Adjusting to Soviet trends, it attempted to appear as an initiator of promoting common cultural values. For example, it supported a European Contemporary Arts exhibit, but was firmly against having the embassies of Western countries organize similar monumental exhibits of their own. At the same time, it strove to use the event to present Hungarian culture; organizers adjusted the program of the Budapest Arts Week accordingly, including film, opera, and ballet shows, and concerts featuring foreign soloists.

The organization of communication was a unique, new, structure-forming task, as according to the Helsinki rules all delegations had the right to hold a press conference at any time. It was at this time that the idea of a permanent press centre—operating partly on entrepreneurial principles—was first articulated.[37]

Binding and separating factors

With the Cultural Forum, East-West ideological coordination entered a new phase: true cooperation between foreign affairs and cultural experts began in the complex European integration process. The consensual search for a common historical identity at the same time did not cover up debated points, especially in areas like human rights, pluralism, and dilemmas pertaining to national and nationality issues. In the end one of the fundamental questions

---

[36] The proposal of the Foreign Affairs Minister and the Education Minister to the APC on the further work on the recommendations submitted to the Cultural Forum. April 21, 1986. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/466. ő. e.; The 4th quarterly report of the APD: imperialist propaganda aimed against the People's Republic of Hungary. January 15, 1973. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 22/1972/35. ő. e.

[37] Recommendation to the APC [on the establishment of a high-capacity, continuously operating press center]. July 1, 1986. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/470. ő. e.

of the discussions was whether common or separating factors dominated. Western participants insisted that the Soviet system by default could not guarantee human rights, therefore, for the sake of cooperation, they had to accept the Western interpretation of principles on the free flow of ideas, creative work, expression of opinion, and the free movement of writers and artists. In contrast, the Soviets pointed out a double standard, claiming that the Westerners saw right-wing dictatorships as less problematic than left-wing versions. (They were disapproving, for instance, of the fact that Western delegations did not condemn the South African regime.[38]) Referring to this, they argued that (in theory) equality-based social, cultural, and ideological perceptions were superior to liberal-pluralist human rights, as their system did not base itself solely on consumerist culture, but took political values into consideration as well. They also stressed the essential role of the *state* in distribution, planning, and the defence of national interests and values. This argument at the time was not seen by everyone as provocative or dismissible, as the Soviet system had begun distancing itself from strict autarchic centralization and was approaching a more differentiated corporatism, which made such statements somewhat more acceptable. Further, state intervention was not alien to neoconservative ideology and among Western intellectuals, although theirs was not a Soviet-based approach. The French, for example, spoke publicly about their own state culture policy, while others were concerned about the spread of unlimited free-competition consumption models.

The consensus points forming among the participants did not cover up divergences at the levels of development or culture, and could not solve issues of regional, federal, or national integration, or tensions among national and ethnic groups. The majority of participants at the Forum, for example, did not support nationality aspirations reaching beyond the framework of the state, did not respond to the memorandum written by Hungarian émigrés on nationality and ethnic conflicts, and

---

[38] Report on the experiences of the Cultural Forum for use in the international ideological struggle. January 13, 1986. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/466. ő. e.

similarly neglected Turkish, Bulgarian, and Greek debates or the memorandum of the Hungarian opposition. On the other hand, they supported the theory strengthening the status quo—on the bridging role of ethnic minorities—which put an emphasis on maintaining national cultures, in a sense blocking autonomy movements and other similar political tensions. The Polish, Soviet, Hungarian, and East German delegations drafted in this spirit a recommendation on these issues, out of different motivations and sometimes as a last resort. They were joined by Ireland, Great Britain, the USA, Spain, West Germany, and Canada. Czechoslovakia, however, adamantly opposed even the mention of the bridging principle in the final act.

The final act draft prepared by neutral countries was accepted by the Soviets. The USA and Luxembourg, however, remained particularly offensive, and contested issues blocked agreement in the end. Consensus was not reached in the following areas: disruption of radio broadcasts, the free flow of information, censorship, liberties, freedom of expression and association, the rights of national and religious minorities, and recommendations on the roles of non-governmental organizations. Despite this, the majority agreed with the Hungarian statement that deemed the Forum to be an opening of a new chapter in the history of cultural relations among the thirty-five countries.[39]

European security: The Eurasia concept as a risky project

The Soviets did consider the Helsinki Accords to have similar significance as that of the Vienna Congress in 1815 (which solidified the European status quo) on the continent, viewing themselves as successors of the Czars.[40]

---

[39] The Scientific, Public Education and Cultural Department and Foreign Affairs Committee report to the PC on the work of the Cultural Forum. November 28, 1985. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/957. ő. e.; National consciousness in Hungary, the national-nationality issue in our days. January 21, 1986. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/459. ő. e.

[40] Vladislav M. Zubok, op. cit., 237.

Nonetheless, it had two imminent consequences. It did not eliminate the arms race or tensions between the two superpowers; and it even strengthened stubborn American offensive policy. Meanwhile it pushed the Soviet-type system toward unavoidable disintegration.

In the second half of the 1970s, an intensive armaments race, in which each side aimed to gain an advantage, was coupled with disarmament negotiations. At the same time, the neutralizing Soviet offensive continued, which triggered a strong American political and ideological response. The post-Helsinki period's most serious—and possibly unexpected—challenge for the Soviets was the intense American reaction to the situation. Its rival superpower, and especially its post-Nixon administration, clearly considered both the Helsinki process's efforts to neutralize Europe and the double integration of the two halves of the European continent under Soviet pressure as leading to a Soviet expansion of influence in the region. Consequently, Washington did not hesitate to remind its enemy of its trans-Eurasian interests and external sphere of interests by deploying missiles in Europe.

The USA similarly wanted to obstruct the possibility of an Asia-neutralization manoeuvre, i.e., the spread of Soviet "coexistence" in the East. China itself felt that the Soviet plan for spreading collective security to Asia was clearly aimed at isolating the country. The Moscow leadership denied this, and it did not give up on its plan, even urging a world conference on disarmament. It also emphasized that it did not want Asia to be ruled by three countries, by Chinese raw material and Japanese potential under US supervision.[41] After Helsinki, the increasing tension between the two Communist great powers

---

[41] The problems of harmonizing ideological work and foreign policy propaganda. Thesis for the 1973 Moscow ideological meeting, as well as Soviet comments. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/628. ő. e.; Discussion between János Kádár and L. I. Brezhnev at the July 1977 Crimean meeting. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/723. ő. e.

was felt worldwide, even the Hungarian Party feared a Soviet-Sino war.[42]

Worries were heightened by a visibly revived West-East ideological offensive. Apart from maintaining diplomatic relations, the USA settled for exerting more concentrated pressure than ever in armament, economy, and ideology. Among its tools, the armament race was the most conspicuous, but the ideological offensive was also visible; its inflexibility forced its enemy into a defensive position up until its collapse in 1989. The Soviet leadership was struggling with the effects of changes in the world economy, and, on the one hand, it was pushed into excessive expenditures by fast-paced American military development. At the same time, its ideological potentiality had relatively weakened too. Washington had in ten years twice strengthened its propaganda apparatus, and its discourse had been given new momentum. The United States characterized itself as the melting pot of peoples, while everywhere else in the world it saw itself as having an interest in the strengthening of ethnic, national, minority, and religious identities and organizations, and naturally supporting opposition to the Soviet system. As a response, the Eastern bloc's counter-balancing ideology emphasized that Western states were feeding the wave of Eurocommunism, a rival leftist approach,[43] and that they were also responsible for religious and ethnic potentiality processes when dormant ideologies were awoken, fundamentalism was

[42] Report on Budapest experiences of agitation and propaganda work related to the international situation; recommendation on further content and methods tasks. June 1979. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/306. ő. e.

[43] The Soviets viewed Eurocommunism theories as de-Leninization, and urged Western Communist parties to refrain from supporting these orientations. See The February 27, 1978, Budapest meeting of ideological and foreign affairs secretaries. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/301. ő. e.; The Foreign Affairs Department's report to the PC on the closed meeting of central committee secretaries of eight Fraternal Parties. March 1978. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/739. ő. e.; Report to the PC on the Berlin meeting of ideological and foreign affairs secretaries of central committees of Communist and workers' parties of socialist countries for the July 24, 1979, PC meeting. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/777. ő. e.; Report on the execution of the agreements of the July 1979 Berlin ideological and foreign affairs meeting. July 24, 1979. 41/329. ő. e.

encouraged, and churches were urged to (re)form themselves and emerge as independent political forces.[44] Given the above, the European agreements were a double-edged victory for Moscow: the American political reaction to the (potential) Soviet expansion of influence eventually accelerated and catalysed the USSR's collapse, and as such the Helsinki results were one step forward and two steps back.

The same can be said concerning the identity of the Soviet-type system. The idea and the praxis of coexistence, together with the project on European security, had some obvious risks. An opening that proceeded too quickly could threaten the integrity of the Soviet and Western variant structures that were designed primarily for defence. Also, accountability in the field of human rights could bring destabilization that would be difficult to defend against.[45]

To sum up, the growing contacts between the two camps made the iron curtain more and more permeable. The Soviet desire to unite Europe (at least virtually, in a way), carried with it the danger that the Soviet system would be gradually entering the Western gravitational sphere. But the Soviet East had no choice, because its adaptation policy originated directly in its Eurasia vision, which meant a peaceful expansion by advancing Soviet influence into the western part of the continent almost all the way. Accordingly, Soviet policy concentrated on expanding relations with Europe, but this strategy contained both opportunities and dangers. Coexistence and STR implied from the outset that their impacts would not leave untouched the integrity of the Soviet sphere. The empire, which earlier tried to isolate itself almost hermetically, now cooperated more flexibly, and opened narrow gates between the opposing camps. The new external impulses loosened the isolation of the European

---

[44] Oral supplement on the execution of the PC's April 26, 1966, resolution. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 22/1972/35. ő. e; Addition to the summary titled "Imperialist propaganda aimed against the Hungarian People's Republic, 1972, IV. January 15, 1972. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 22/1972/35. ő. e.

[45] The Budapest meeting of ideological and foreign affairs secretaries of February 27, 1978. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/301. ő. e. On human rights issues in American diplomacy, see Vladislav M. Zubok, op. cit., 254–257.

Soviet zone. It brought unanticipated effects into its economic, cultural, and finally its political system. The more efficiency the Soviet bloc states built into their own mechanisms, the more they became dependent on other external actors. At the same time, these countries' economic autonomy decreased, and they became more vulnerable. Even cautious and partial cooperation made them more unprotected, especially in some export-dependent states of the camp like Hungary.

With the systematic development of East-West relations (and the applied practice of détente), the Soviet leadership partially dismantled its own autarchy for the sake of advancement. But by doing so, it also risked having the permanent and fast integration of foreign elements into its own system, which would eventually loosen the precious identity-integrity balance of it, and finally weaken the iron curtain.

RÓBERT TAKÁCS

Hungarian Foreign Policy and Basket III in the Cold War Confrontation from Helsinki to Madrid*

Introduction

According to widespread belief, the so-called Basket III of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act was the price that state socialist countries had to pay for the mutual acknowledgement of the post-1945 territorial integrity of participating states.[1] In other words, in order to maintain the geopolitical status quo, state socialist countries had to sacrifice their ideological integrity, which in turn contributed to their decay after 1975. It is not only 'public memory' that sees the question of human rights as the most effective ideological weapon of the West against the 'communist world', but historical works also stress that the Final Act provided an important tool to exercise pressure on Soviet bloc countries and support dissent groups from the outside.[2]

[1] See László Borhi, *Nagyhatalmi érdekek hálójában. Az Egyesült Államok és Magyarország kapcsolata a második világháborútól a rendszerváltásig* [In the Net of the Great Powers' Interests. US-Hungarian Relations from Warld War II to the Regime Change] (Budapest: MTA BTK TTI–Osiris, 2015), 328.; György Földes, *Kádár János külpolitikája és nemzetközi tárgyalásai* [The Foreign Policy and Negotiations of János Kádár], vol. 1 (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2015), 189.

[2] See Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War:*

Indeed, NATO member states as well as European Common Market countries could utilize the acknowledgement of human rights for their own ends; however, this question formally belonged to Basket I, namely the Principles Guiding Relations between Participating States. While Western diplomacy kept pushing the issue of human rights (Principle VII), the Soviet bloc repeatedly answered with emphasizing Principle VI, namely non-intervention in internal affairs, and, furthermore, attempted to redefine the notion of human rights. Beyond doubt, this was the central ideological struggle between the opposing world systems in these years. In addition, ideological confrontation and "information war" between the superpowers intensified after 1975.[3] Basket III could also be interpreted similarly to human rights: Western culture and ideas—thanks especially to radio broadcasts—became more widespread behind the so-called Iron Curtain, which significantly contributed to the fermentation of these societies.[4] Furthermore, Basket III also touched upon the principle of human rights by concentrating on rights to travel, changing one's country, keeping familial, friendly and professional contacts, unobstructed access to information of all kinds, and the practice of one's faith. However, Basket III itself was a broader selection of issues ranging from family (re)unification questions, free travel, and consular affairs,

A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); "Unlocking New Histories of Human Rights in State Socialist Europe: The Role of the COURAGE Collections," in *The Handbook of Courage: Cultural Opposition and its Heritage in Eastern Europe*, edited by Balázs Apor, Péter Apor, Sándor Horváth (Budapest: Institute of History HAS, 2018), 493–522. Also, the first Hungarian volume on the history of the Helsinki process—based on Western literature—highlights the importance of human rights and interprets the frames created in Helsinki as tools to raise the standards of human rights in Eastern Europe. See Gábor Kardos, "A harmadik kosár: a humanitárius együttműködés [The Third Basket: Humanitarian Cooperation]," in *A Helsinki folyamat: az első húsz év* [The Helsinki Process: the First Twenty Years], edited by Pál Dunay and Ferenc Gazdag (Budapest, Zrínyi Kiadó, 2005), 149–168.

[3] Melinda Kalmár, *Történelmi galaxisok vonzásában. Magyarország és a szovjetrendszer 1945–1990,* [In the Pull of Historical Galaxies: Hungary and the Soviet System 1945–1990] (Budapest: Osiris, 2014), 431–432.

[4] See Nicholas J. Cull, "Reading, viewing, and tuning in to the Cold War," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge), 438–459.

through the problem of the free flow of information to matters of cultural and educational exchange. In such questions, state socialist countries also had their specific interests and cards to play. In addition, and in spite of the fact that ideological debates centred on such problems, Csaba Békés argues that Basket III in its real effect on the general Cold War process is overvalued and actually can be regarded as marginal on the whole, while economic issues—which belonged to Basket II—were more significant.[5]

This study aims to follow and analyse the diplomatic struggles between state socialist and capitalist countries regarding questions that related to the ominous Basket III, reflected through the glasses of Hungarian diplomacy. What kinds of efforts could a state socialist country make in such a field? Were Soviet bloc countries condemned to a defensive position, or could they find questions that encouraged successful action? Was the situation and policy of Hungary different from its allies regarding issues of openness in Basket III? And if yes, could non-Soviet interests be pursued by a state socialist country? We examine these questions by displaying Hungarian diplomatic efforts before and during the CSCE follow-up meetings in Belgrade (1977–1978) and Madrid (1980–1983).

I will argue that the Hungarian Foreign Ministry ran an innovative and offensive campaign after 1975 that surprised Western governments. However, it was not a genuinely "post-1975" policy, since it had its roots from the reform agenda of the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party (*Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt*, MSzMP), already in place since 1968, and its external economic policy. The Hungarian economy was under the compulsion of capital investments, and was therefore interested in the advantages of opening. Thus, the Hungarian government laid emphasis on complying with the Helsinki recommendations, but also could find fields where Western countries underperformed compared to the Helsinki

---

[5] Csaba Békés, "Détente and the Soviet bloc," in *The 'Long 1970s'. Human Rights, East–West Détente, and Transnational Relations*, edited by Rasmus Mariager, Helle Porsdam, and Poul Villaume (London: Routledge, 2016), 165–183.

recommendations. At the same time, Hungary was less vulnerable to typical Western argumentation than some of the other states from the Soviet bloc due to its relatively liberal cultural, information, passport, and travel policies.

Nevertheless, Western thematization proved more effective, and capitalist countries could take up more flexible and permissive tactics on Hungarian topics than Soviet bloc countries in general could on Western topics. Also, changing Western tactics after the Belgrade follow-up meeting—and the mutual Eastern and Western European interest in preserving the East-West dialogue despite deteriorating Soviet-American relations—resulted in a more fruitful meeting in Madrid with important compromises. Regarding Basket III, Soviet bloc countries were forced into concessions. However, this scarcely influenced Hungarian practice.

The Way to Belgrade—A Hungarian Initiative (1975–1977)

The Helsinki Final Act was in fact a great success of Hungarian diplomacy. János Kádár drew international attention to Hungary by mentioning Hungarian minorities living in neighbouring socialist countries, but reaching the zenith of détente also justified the efforts of the Hungarian reform agenda pursued from the mid-1960s.[6] As part of this strategy, in 1971 the MSzMP decided to finance the enormous needs of the country's economy from foreign credits.[7] In the early 1970s, Hungary tried to spill the reforms over the borders within the socialist Comecon community, albeit with little success.[8] At the meeting of the

[6] About the entangled relation of reforms and opening see the study of György Földes in this volume. György Földes, Economic Reform, Ideology, and Opening, 1965–1985, *Múltunk* 2019 Special Issue, 4-27.

[7] See György Földes, *Az eladósodás politikatörténete, 1957–1986* [The Political History of Indebtedness, 1956–1987], (Budapest: Maecenas, 1995), 64–66.

[8] István Feitl, *Talányos játszmák. Magyarország a KGST erőterében 1949–1974*, [Mysterious Games. Hungary in the Force Field of Comecon, 1949–1974], (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2016)

leaders of the Warsaw Pact member states in Prague in January 1972—and three and a half years before the Helsinki Final Act—János Kádár argued for a real and comprehensive concept of détente. He stated that widening and diverse relations—including questions on the exchange of ideas and information, tourism, cultural contacts, environment protection, etc., that is, what became "hardcore" Basket III topics—were beneficial for the socialist world. Brezhnev and the Soviet leadership were of a different opinion, and rather saw the achievements of the Hungarian reform and the Hungarian efforts within the Soviet bloc as a danger and not as a desirable common direction.[9] Soon the Hungarian party had to make a partial reversal of its 1968 reforms and, in 1974, a more definite break followed. Thus, ironically, by the time the treaty was signed, the MSzMP had left the reform path that had motivated its pre-Helsinki commitment to openness in a broader sense.

The Helsinki Final Act enumerated several recommendations in "humanitarian and other" fields. Despite general assumptions, compliance with these did not demand a radical shift in Hungarian internal politics (practically all Soviet bloc countries were somewhat shielded by "escaping clauses" inserted in the text) and therefore in foreign policy and cultural diplomacy as well, due in part to a process that was even older than the economic reforms. After the death of Stalin, the new Soviet leadership initiated a different foreign and internal policy—the modernization of the Soviet galaxy switched to a new strategy that required more openness, more exchange, more contacts, more understanding and more debates.[10] This new policy received the label "peaceful coexistence"—while communist politicians were striving most of all for economic inputs, they hoped, however, that the ideological battle could be won on cultural and humanitarian ground as well. Soon it rearranged the structure of cultural imports to Hungary[11]

[9] György Földes, *Kádár János külpolitikája*, vol. 2, 129–132.
[10] Melinda Kalmár, op. cit., 89–105.
[11] Róbert Takács, "Szovjet és magyar nyitás a kultúrában Nyugat felé 1953–1964, [Soviet and Hungarian Cultural Openings to the West, 1953–1964],"

and—to a different extent in each state—other Soviet bloc countries. Opening the borders were seen as means of promising country and socialism propaganda—and it proved more or less right. "It became clear that tightening contacts unveiled a deliberately biased picture spread by Western propaganda, and life itself refutes it. There is nothing we should feel ashamed of about our social development, social atmosphere, the level of our qualifications, scientific or cultural life and many other. In capitalist countries the practice of peaceful coexistence overthrows decade-old idols carved from lies and distortion."[12]

What had started as a cautious opening of borders, demonstration of cultural achievements, a return to cultural imports (though preserving ideological filters), and the restoration of contacts between artists and scientists from the 1950s[13] had resulted in a significant level of physical and cultural openness in Hungary by the 1970s. To some extent, all countries of the bloc became more receptive and permeable after 1953. In that regard, Helsinki was not a "threat" to the integrity of socialist Hungarian culture, travel or information policies, as it had already been threatened for a long time.

Based on analyses made by the General Department for Press at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the MSzMP Agitation and Propaganda Department, Hungarian foreign official bodies first perceived that Western propaganda was trying to "silence" Helsinki and degrade its significance after August 1975. This reflected the notion that the Soviet bloc benefited more from the multilateral forum and made successful headway into Europe.[14] However, by late autumn, Western countries seemed to have defined Basket III as a weak point and pursued questions about the free traffic of people and ideas, and condemned the ideological struggle of the Marxist-Leninist parties as violation of the Final Act. These tactics also appeared during

[12] Draft of the speech of the minister of foreign affairs at the conference about Hungarian foreign propaganda, 1976. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j, box 13.

[13] See Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997), 87–119.

[14] Melinda Kalmár, op. cit., 429.

the negotiations of bilateral cultural work plans in 1975. For example, the British Foreign Office emphasized the importance of personal contacts without state control and demanded that every student and teacher in Hungary receive unrestricted access to the library of the British Embassy and commit in writing that the British cultural attaché can make contacts without any limitations.[15] The Italian partner asked for special fellowships to Italy designed for the teachers and students at the Italian Cultural Institute in Budapest.[16]

In the spring and summer of 1976, Hungarian officials registered that the Western press had graded the countries of the Soviet bloc negatively for their (lack of) compliance with the Helsinki Accords.[17] This was the period when the first "Helsinki Watch Groups" appeared east of the Elbe—and by the end of the year, the issue of human rights had become more promising than free traffic for Western governments.

On the other hand, after Helsinki, the Political Committee of the MSzMP saw Hungarian positions favourable enough for offensive foreign policies.[18] As part of this more comprehensive strategy from the MSzMP, Hungary took an effort to take the initiative on the way to Belgrade. Between June and December 1976, ambassadors and Foreign Ministry officials handed over written proposals for the realization of the recommendations of the Final Act to governments of nineteen participating Western states.[19] The Department of International Security of the Ministry was in charge of policy related to the Helsinki Final Act, they coordinated the work between the different ministries, departments and national governmental organizations. As such, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture, the

---

[15] Information on Hungarian-British cultural and scientific relations, October 11, 1976. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j, box 21.

[16] Summary of the cultural negotiations with Western partners after the Helsinki conference, January 12, 1976. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j, box 12.

[17] Quarterly reports on Western imperialist propaganda. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j, box 13.

[18] György Földes, *Kádár János külpolitikája*, vol. 1., op. cit. 191.

[19] See also Csaba Békés, *Enyhülés és emancipáció* [Détente and Emancipation] (Budapest: Osiris, 2019), 291–292.

Institute of Foreign Cultural Relations, the Information Office of the Cabinet, and the General Department of Press of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were the relevant bodies that worked on Basket III proposals. The proposals followed the structure of the Helsinki Final Act and the lengthy documents listed several concrete suggestions for all baskets. This was a unique action of Hungarian foreign policy; no other countries "bombed" their partners with such comprehensive materials, and there is no sign of any reconciliation between the Hungarian and Soviet leadership on these points, either.

The Hungarian Foreign Ministry could prove its commitment to fulfil the Helsinki pledges in all possible fields and, in addition, could govern the dialogue reflecting attention to those fields where Hungarian interests were deeper and the achievements and advantages were clearer. This was also true for Basket III, where each partner received at least a dozen proposals. As a typical example, the memorandum presented to Knut Frydenlund, Norwegian minister of foreign affairs, listed fourteen separate proposals in the "humanitarian and other" field during his visit to Budapest in September 1976. Three points dealt with visas and travelling: Hungary proposed a consular agreement (C1), visa waivers for tourists (C2), and the cancellation of visas for diplomats and official passports (C3). Only one touched upon family (re)unification cases, suggesting that both governments help solving repatriation claims (C4). The Hungarian document proposed bilateral agreements for the commerce of artefacts (C5) and mutual recognition of degrees and diplomas (C6). Five proposals targeted information and journalism. Newspapers and media were involved in two of them: Hungary suggested that the accreditation of correspondents working in nearby countries should be extended (C7), and promoted bilateral agreements between radio and television channels. The three remaining approached information about each other's countries: an offer of mutual exchange of texts in publications for tourists (C8), schoolbooks (C10), and lexicons and encyclopaedias (C11). In addition, three proposals touched upon cultural exchange—travels of writers' delegations (C12),

promotion of literary translations (C9), and agreements on theatrical cooperation (C14).[20]

The tendencies were clear. In general, Budapest underlined its commitment to the Helsinki recommendations by offering talks and bilateral agreements in several fields, from consular affairs through customs to exchanges in culture. Aside from securing written proof of advancement, it would have strengthened the role of the states and official bodies in cultural and humanitarian fields, which had been the long game between East and West. State socialist countries had been trying to preserve control over any movement since the early de-Stalinization period, while Western efforts concentrated on bypassing such limitations—for example, by organizing events at embassies or giving personal invitations to intellectuals. Hungary listed several topics that had already had their official frame—for example, the annual cultural work plans covered exchanges of artists, writers, and scientists, exchanges of schoolbooks, cooperation between television and radio channels, and existing joint committees could discuss several additional topics. Furthermore, the proposals concentrated on questions where Hungary could demonstrate its openness—like visas, where the Hungarian practice was seemingly more liberal. Nevertheless, it could offer further easing visa requirements because they were more concerned about people travelling from than travelling to Hungary. It is tangible that the Hungarian proposals also tried to utilize recommendations on the flow of information, better understanding of nations for "positive country-propaganda" by expunging written materials (schoolbooks, travelogues, lexicons) and promoting Hungarian cultural products (through media exchange, translations and theatre plays).

There was one more intention that did not show itself in the Norwegian relation: and it was the question of disproportionality in cultural exchanges. Regarding countries of the same size, this was not an appropriate argument, but in the case of large countries with significant cultural influence—like France,

---

[20] The proposals of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry to Norway. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1977, box 142.

Britain, Italy, West Germany, and the USA—the Hungarian partnerships showed that the flow along the cultural slope is much steeper than would be justifiable by its size.

In the Hungarian-British relation, it literally meant that 175 books from British authors were published in Hungary between 1973 and 1975, compared to 13 Hungarian books in Britain over the same period. From these 13, only 4 books represented literature. Western politicians and publicists often criticised the Hungarian practice of using ideological criteria in selecting Western cultural goods, but we can hardly admit that the 4 Hungarian volumes represented contemporary Hungarian "socialist" culture. Besides two classics (Géza Gárdonyi's *Invisible Man* and the *Selected Poems and Texts* of Attila József), English publishers picked *Confrontation* from the Gulag-survivor József Lengyel in 1973 and *Visitor* from György Konrád. The former was played in 1948 in the Stalinist period in Moscow and Alexandrov, and could only be published in restricted copies in manuscript form in Hungary,[21] while the latter was written by a sociologist and revealed deep contradictions in Hungarian society from the perspective of a youth welfare worker. By the time it was printed in English, the author had already been put on a black list and monitored by secret police in Hungary as the subsequent author of the "adversarial" *Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, written with sociologist Iván Szelényi.

In addition, in three years, 44 British theatre plays were staged in Hungary contrary to 3 Hungarian in Britain. Actually, a late drama of an entertainer-classic, Jenő Heltai (*One Penny*) was not shown, only the rights were purchased. The other two belonged to the not easily tamed genre of grotesque theatre and was written by István Örkény (*Catsplay*, *Welcoming the Major*). In the 1970s, Örkény was the most successful export item of Hungarian theatre, something that rather reflected Western

---

[21] Tamás Szőnyei, *Titkos írás. Állambiztonsági szolgálat és irodalmi élet 1956–1990* [Secret Writing. State Security Services and Literary Life, 1956–1990], vol. 1 (Budapest: Noran Könyvesház, 2012), 268–272.

tendencies and not ingenious socialist theatre.[22] The data on movies are not surprising in spite of the fact that from the mid-1960s Hungarian cinema was highly acknowledged: this was one of the most commercialized cultural domains, where films from the Soviet bloc offered no profitability and were usually only shown in artistic cinemas, film clubs, and other special facilities. Therefore, while Hungarian cinemagoers could see 29 new British releases between 1973 and 1975, only one Hungarian children's film (*Hi, Junior*) and 3 short films were purchased.[23]

The Norwegian answers to the Hungarian proposals showed general Western attitudes as well. The Hungarian proposals could not be left without any response; however, in several cases it took months until Western partners could compile answers—in some cases in written form, in some others during bilateral meetings of foreign ministers, deputy ministers or heads of departments. Nevertheless, these 19 Western governments—among them 14 NATO states—had to play the game of the Hungarian foreign politics this time, and receive the proposals positively. No doubt that de facto they tried to decline the most important Hungarian efforts. Firstly, they almost universally fenced off Hungarian initiatives for the extension of the net of bilateral agreements. The reactions referred to existing multilateral forums. For example, they held consular agreements unnecessary and irreconcilable with the 1961 Vienna Convention, or in the case of textbooks, pointed at UNESCO.

In visa affairs, Western reactions were preventive. Here Hungary could find an aspect in which numbers were on its side. They issued visas in 48 hours and offered immediate visas at border crossings, including at the Ferihegy International

[22] Róbert Takács, "Az abszurd dráma Magyarországon az 1960-as és az 1970-es években [Absurd Drama in Hungary in the 1960s and 1970s]," in *Homoklapátolás nemesércért* [Shoveling Sand for Precious Metals], edited by Eszter Balázs, Gábor Koltai, and Róbert Takács (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2018), 224.

[23] Information on Hungarian-British cultural and scientific relations, October 11, 1976. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j, box 21.

Airport and Danube harbours, while Western partners usually answered visa claims only in one—even two—weeks (some, like Norway, in 96 hours) and offered no visas at border checkpoints. Regarding this point, the Hungarian Foreign Ministry achieved what it wanted: discussions went around consular affairs and visas, where Western governments were not willing to make significant changes to decrease the waiting periods. At least the questions of travel restrictions and passport policy was not on the agenda. Nevertheless, Hungary was judged as "liberal" in travelling. Its passport regulations had been public since 1970 and in spite of the fact that 4–5% of passport claims were still refused, millions of Hungarians crossed the borders in the 1970s every year (in 1975, 3.5 million; in 1978, 1979 and 1980, more than 5 million each year), still only a minority of them (7– 9%, 252,000 to 470,000) visited the West. Still it meant border traffic almost doubled towards Austria in the five years after Helsinki.[24]

When it came to the topic of exchanges of textual materials about and from Hungary, urged by Budapest in the first round before the Belgrade follow-up, Western reactions were defensive, denying even the competence of their governments. Practically all of them pronounced a lack of competence in the fields of translation, lexicons, tourist guides and even schoolbooks and early electronic media. When it was about printed materials, they emphasized the inviolability of private enterprise in publishing, declining any action to affect content or promote the reception of literary volumes. When it was about topics where national institutions—radios, televisions, tourist boards, academies—were operating, they insisted on not violating their independence. The American reaction meant another lesson: the State Department did not bother answering Hungarian proposals point-by-point: they handed over a counter-proposal that mostly neglected the cultural topics of Basket III. During bilateral negotiations, the American press and cultural attaché,

---

[24] Péter Bencsik and György Nagy, *A magyar úti okmányok története 1945– 1989* [The History of Hungarian Travel Documents, 1945–1989] (Budapest: Tipico Design, 2005), 70–72; 238.

S. F. Dachi, emphasized the responsibility of Hungarian agents: "Hungarian corporations have to diffuse Hungarian culture with American methods in the USA." He referred to the Individual Visitors Program of the State Department and underlined the necessity of intensive marketing research in the cultural field.[25] This attitude was different from the concept sketched by Leonard Marx, who visited several Eastern European countries directly after signing the Helsinki Final Act. At that time, the chairperson of the International Advisory Committee on Education and Culture—noticing that all Soviet bloc partners complained about the disproportionality of cultural exchange with detailed data—found that raising the attention of American private corporations to this question would not curtail freedom of enterprise. He also stressed that NATO countries should be able to prove their superiority in all topics of Basket III including cultural aspects.[26]

Hungary did surprise the Western participants of the Helsinki process, but did not achieve many decisive outcomes with the written proposals at that point. "The best defence is a good offense"—Hungarian foreign policy makers followed the old rule, and Western negotiators had to admit their diplomatic creativity. As Albert Weitnauer, Secretary General of the Swiss Federal Political Department, put it about his Hungarian partners: "Your consistency in foreign policy is compelling … The witty method, how you can always distil some positive elements from the international situation is part of this consistency. It makes it possible to draw attention to all that is important not only for a small state, but for the whole of European and world politics."[27] To a limited scope, some Western countries tried to "copy" the Hungarian method: for example, French diplomats

---

[25] Memorandum on the Hungarian-American CSCE-consultation, April 1, 1977. MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-1977, box 77.

[26] The extract of the report of Leonard Marx. MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-1977, box 77.

[27] Records of the February 22–25, 1977, consultation in Switzerland. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1977, box 142.

handed over a memorandum to Poland, limited to the crucial issues of information and human relations.[28]

But all participants were aware that there were three different stages to fulfil in the Helsinki recommendations, and a bilateral agreement was only one of them: the medium range one between multilateral forums and individual efforts. The Hungarian government also put emphasis on making palpable advancement on its own terms. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs compiled a list of positive measures taken by Hungarian official bodies in the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act.[29] In the field of personal contacts and movement, the following achievements—although in reality minor modifications—were listed: a new border crossing point was opened with Austria (at Bucsu), and the existing ones had been improved; customs regulations were eased (raising custom-free limits, decreasing control and administrative burdens), and foreign currency limits were raised. The necessary modifications were on the agenda of the Political Committee in November 1976,[30] but new statutory rules were only brought in 1978 after the Belgrade Meeting. As for family reunification, which was one of the issues where Western governments—first of all the Unites States—could attack Soviet bloc countries with exact data, Hungary performed fair enough. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that 92% of emigration applications ended positively and mentioned 20 pending cases, suggesting to solve as many as possible before Belgrade. In the question of visa affairs, the ministry could refer to its written proposals for consular and legal aid agreements and for the abolishment of visas for diplomatic and ministerial passports. There was one significant breakthrough, though: Hungary and Austria were on the way to abolish visa duties, which encouraged the Hungarian side to make similar proposals—independently from its actual chances—to other participants.

---

[28] Memorandum on the appointment of attaché Zielinksi, March 25, 1977. MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-1977, box 77.

[29] Report on the Implementation of the Helsinki Final Act and the Directives for the Hungarian Delegation in Belgrade, May 9, 1977, MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1977, box 142.

[30] MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 5/704. ő. e.

Another neutral country that could serve as good example for cooperation between countries of different social systems was Finland. Hungary and Finland signed state protocols on cooperation in youth tourism and contacts, as youth mobility was also enlisted in the Helsinki recommendations.

In the field of press relations and the exchange of information, the ministry highlighted the quick visa administration for foreign correspondents and the technical help provided for radio and television crews. Actually—though not only in relation to Hungary—such measures as obligatory drivers and translators were seen as restrictions on the free movement of journalists. Hungary also emphasized its efforts to promote radio and television contacts and the exchange of programmes—to demonstrate openness toward exchanges of this kind, the Hungarian ministry of foreign affairs urged exchanges of data on programs and broadcast minutes. Hungarian bodies in charge of press administration also tried to demonstrate Hungarian commitments to the free flow of information by pointing out that Western periodicals were available at 44 newsstands (though mostly in hotels visited by Western tourists) and that some libraries had several Western magazines in public reading rooms. Furthermore, the Information Office examined the circle of Western periodicals allowed for subscription by individuals and cautiously broadened the opportunities.[31]

The Hungarian material also mentioned that Hungary had welcomed prominent church leaders after 1975. The largest news coverage followed the trip of Baptist evangelist Billy Graham, who arrived to Hungary soon before the Belgrade meeting in September 1977[32]—and next year also visited Poland, but that event was overshadowed by the visit of the newly elected pope of Polish origin John Paul II.

Culture and education were favoured fields in state socialist countries. Hungarian readiness for cultural exchange was

---

[31] Letter from János Regős to Rezső Bányász, March 12, 1977. MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-1977, box 77.

[32] Imperialist propaganda about Hungary from the third quarter of 1977, October 4, 1977. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1977, box 14.

therefore easy to document. Not only by numbers of publications, foreign plays, released movies, etc., but since these sectors were all either national institutes or nationalized branches, state contributions for the translation, promotion, and publication of Western cultural products were incommensurable with Western efforts going the other direction. Among the achievements, textbook exchanges, steps for the harmonization of diplomas, and inserting references to Helsinki in cultural work plans were also mentioned.

Different attitudes of Hungarian policy regarding Basket III on the way to Belgrade could also be sensed within Soviet bloc relations. The Soviet Union used the CSCE process to build a tighter system of political consultations to handle centripetal interests of bloc members. As one of these, Eastern countries held a conference—organized by the Institute for the Present Problems of Capitalism—in Warsaw in April 1977. On the program of the conference dedicated to the questions of Basket III, the first three presentations by the Polish hosts dealt with Western human rights campaigns, violations and narrowing of individuals' rights and freedoms in the USA, Britain, and Italy, and the institutional and tactical features of Western propaganda. The Soviet presenter, N. Keyzerov from the Soviet Academy of Sciences, outlined the reasons for the sharpening ideological struggle, while the Czechoslovak experts talked about the activity of 1968 emigrants.[33] The Hungarian participant, Tamás Mikecz, researcher at the Social Scientific Institute of the MSzMP Central Committee, represented a different approach with a different topic. He was the only one who examined the ideological consequences of cultural exchange. He evaluated cultural contacts and exchange as a basically positive and inevitable phenomenon—in line with the official cultural and foreign policy of the MSzMP. However, he also added a defensive moment: "The exchange of cultural products must be accompanied by the formation of a selective, critical public opinion that creates the opportunity for the critical analysis of

---

[33] Report on the visit of the Polish cultural attaché at the Institute of Cultural Relations, April 20, 1977. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1977, box 142.

the ideological content in the given cultural products. We must implement a cultural critical practice that makes the recipient able to form a critical attitude to such works on the basis of Marxist values with the tools of Marxism."[34]

We must add that before the Belgrade meeting the MSzMP approved a shift in Hungarian foreign policy based on the new external economic strategy accepted in October 1977 by the Central Committee. This meant a crucial step towards opening to the West in the economic sphere; Hungarian leadership undertook the challenge of meeting the requirements of the world market.[35] The intensifying negotiations at the highest levels of Hungarian party and state leaders also served this aim.

Sharp Confrontation and Minimal Compromise: Basket III in Belgrade

Hungarian foreign policy prepared for Belgrade actively, and worked to forego any possible attacks relating to Basket III. The preliminary conference held also in Belgrade in the summer of 1977 clearly showed that sharp political and ideological confrontation was to be expected. This meeting had to agree upon the organizational structure and the exact schedule of the conference. The Soviet Union and the state socialist countries favoured a forum for parallel monologues: where all countries could report their achievements in two years and point out further opportunities, without examining or even criticizing other countries' practice. Furthermore, they strived to minimalize publicity and restrict it to fundamentally ceremonial opening speeches. They refused any reinterpretation or enhancement of the Helsinki Final Act, so they insisted

---

[34] Tamás Mikecz, "A helsinki záróokmány harmadik fejezetének végrehajtásáról (Nemzetközi elméleti konferencia) [On the Implementation of Basket III of the Helsinki Final Act]," *Társadalomtudományi Közlemények* 4 (1977): 134–136.

[35] Földes, *Kádár János külpolitikája*, vol. 1, op. cit. 228–231.

strictly on its words. Western efforts were the opposite: securing the greatest possible publicity with fora for evaluation and debate over the fulfilment of the recommendations of the Final Act. This effort was perceived by the Soviet bloc as the USA and its allies trying to create a forum for the impeachment of the "socialist world," using the catchphrase "human rights". Finally, after an unexpectedly long debate, a compromise was born: the Belgrade Meeting should consist of two phases: the public plenary session with opening speeches and debate, and a non-public committee session with four working committees—one for each basket plus the Mediterranean cooperation.[36]

In August, the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe of the US Congress, led by Dante B. Fascell, published its report, which also adumbrated that human rights issues would be targeted by NATO countries in Belgrade.[37] As predictable, the Belgrade Meeting became the scene of an intensifying Cold War confrontation. The USA—with the new Carter administration—lead a confrontative strategy with a human rights campaign at the centre. The USA and some other NATO countries—especially the United Kingdom, Belgium, and the Netherlands—enumerated several examples of violations of Principle VII both during the plenary session and in the working committees. Western governments had prepared with exact cases, and repeatedly mentioned concrete examples. This was an effective argument to push the Soviet bloc into defence stances and determine the schedule of the meeting, but also because this topic enabled them to embrace Helsinki watch groups in the Soviet Union and support other dissident or opposition campaigns in Eastern Europe. It was more than bad timing that the trial of the Czechoslovak Charter 77 leaders in Prague coincided with the plenary session. Aside from this core topic, Western participants also disapproved of cases that prevented family reunifications, thwarted wedding permissions,

---

[36] Reports from the Belgrade preliminary meeting. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1977, box 143.

[37] Record on the visit of the first secretary of the US Embassy in Budapest, August 8, 1977. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1977, box 143.

travel restrictions, and non-public travel and passport regulations, dual passport systems, refused emigration claims and retaliations (like loss of jobs) against claimants, obstacles for the dissemination of Western journals, censorship of information (including jamming Western radio broadcasts), and the distortion of youth contacts (for example sending groomed youth leaders instead of ordinary students and youngsters).

The state socialist delegations could not have entered into this detailed debate with the hope of success: the cases were documented and even though they had also collected incriminatory facts from Western countries (e.g., a leftist person losing his job due to his political opinion), it was not their interest to let this debate expand. They rather universally rejected interventions in internal affairs, contrasting Principle VI to Principle VII—so a more general debate went on about the application of these principles. The Soviet bloc countries emphasized that the 10 principles must be interpreted as a whole, no single principle can be heightened. The Western participants lead by the USA exactly did this: appointed Principle VII as the core feature of the Final Act and insisted that several state socialist countries violated the Final Act. They added that performance in human rights must be the criterion of détente and any advancement in other fields crucially important for the Soviet Union and state socialist countries, namely disarmament and the development of trade contacts.

So, state socialist countries opted for a different, less confrontative strategy and filed several proposals that offered a different interpretation of human rights. These ranged from including economic rights with right to work on the first place to the codification of gender equality. The first one was submitted by the Hungarian delegation. However, these were only tactical proposals to be withdrawn for recanting Western proposals.

Proposals could be submitted for the working committees in the second phase of the Meeting. The distribution of proposals between the four working committees reveals that the sharpest ideological confrontation concentrated in working committee H (humanitarian and other), which was competent regarding

Basket III. There were around one hundred proposals—and most of them (79) had been submitted by November 23, 1977. By that time, working committee S (security) received 16 (10 state socialist, 2 NATO, 4 neutral) proposals which reveals the interest of the Soviet Union in disarmament and partly the efforts of neutral countries in confidence building measures. To the E (economy) working committee, 25 proposals were submitted, and quite balanced in ratio (9 state socialist, 9 NATO, 7 neutral). Here, state socialist countries pursued the question of trade discrimination, industrial cooperation and scientific-technological exchange, while Western efforts were concentrated around problems similar to Basket III: flow of statistical and trade information, free travel of scientific experts, etc. The M (Mediterranean) working committee received only 1 proposal—this field was of special interest of Malta.

The H working committee had to deal with the most proposals, 37, according to the Hungarian summary in late November, and a few others were added later. 15 from the 37 were drafted by state socialist countries, 17 by NATO countries, and 5 by neutral countries.[38] Among the proposals of the NATO countries, the following were the most characteristic:

> A. Regarding relations between people, Western countries proposed the reduction of obligatory currency exchange quotas and the abolishment of preliminary hotel reservations in case of family visits; cutting down the administrative waiting period in family reunification matters and marriages, including guarantees against disadvantages for claimants; limiting the costs of travel documents (should not be higher than average weekly wages); clearer and quicker passport administration (all procedures and rules should be public and claims should be answered within 1–3 weeks); easier exit visa administration (passports should be issued for 5 years without limitation on the number of entries or exits).

---

[38] Report by André Erdős on the distribution of the proposals to the Belgrade Meeting, November 23, 1977. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1977, box 143.

B. Plenty of proposals touched upon the question of information. Five proposals promoted the availability of (Western) press in the Soviet bloc (cancelling limitations on the import and sale of foreign press; assuring newspaper sales at larger newsstands in an agreement; expansion of dissemination channels, reducing shipping time and fees, harmonizing home and foreign prices; promoting subscription opportunities; wording basic principles for public reading rooms with the newspapers of all 35 participants). Three proposals emphasized improvement for the working conditions of journalists (guarantees for journalists to carry their personal documentation and necessary equipment across borders; ban on expulsion of journalists because of their reports; and one for an all-European convention on any relating questions); one further proposal promoted the exchange of articles and commentaries between publishing houses.

C. Limited interest could be registered in cultural exchange—this topic was embraced by neutral Austria: they proposed wider dissemination of books by establishing bookstores in larger cities where books from participating countries are available both in original languages and translated. In addition, Austria recommended the extension of cultural agreements between participating states. In the field of education, a Western proposal about the availability of educational materials stressed that libraries and research institutes should offer catalogues for students, teachers, and researchers.[39] France also raised the issue of competitions for foreign language learners combined with travels and the promotion of reconciliation of textbooks under the frames of UNESCO.[40]

[39] Memorandum about the proposals submitted in Humanitarian and other fields to the Belgrade Meeting, November 9, 1977. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1977, box 143.

[40] Summary report on the Belgrade Meeting, March 9, 1978. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1978, box 145.

Western participants concentrated on issues to which they deemed the Soviet bloc vulnerable. These fields were connected to the free flow of information (primarily newspapers and books) and people. Western countries could be sure that such recommendations were not acceptable for the Soviet Union and its allies. The only field where state socialist countries submitted more proposals than capitalist delegations was culture. Poland proposed compiling a European cultural databank, the Soviet Union raised the idea of an international seminar for restaurateurs, Romania envisioned an all-European cooperation relating to festivals and other events. The formally neutral Yugoslavia suggested a year of cultural cooperation. So contrary to the ideologically loaded Western proposals that targeted the access of Western experience and interpretation of matters in Soviet bloc countries, these proposals favoured multilateral events with national institutions responsible for organizational affairs and limited numbers of participants.

The Hungarian proposal followed the "socialist recipe," in the sense that it relied on the activity of states. However, it was consistent with the Hungarian efforts after 1975, and pursued real Hungarian national interests as it promoted extra efforts for small languages and less studied languages (according to the Soviet interpretation, Russian belonged to the latter category and asked the Hungarian delegation to change the emphasis to less studied from small languages). Besides the positive reception and readiness for discussion, Denmark submitted a modifier to make it more "meaningful," which meant a substantive setting on the Helsinki material. The Hungarian and the Danish delegations worked out a compromise text,[41] but finally the Hungarian proposal was dropped due to tactical reasons. It could have been understood as "improvement" on the Final Act, and the Soviet Union wanted to impede any precedent for that so that they could block Western proposals by sticking to the letter of the Helsinki document and avoid any

[41] Report on the edition of the Hungarian proposal relating to small languages, February 2, 1978. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1978, box 145.

redefinition that would have shifted the accents of the original document.[42]

By the time the Belgrade Meeting reached its second phase, the period of proposals, it had become clear that the event could not contribute to the relief of international political tension, and therefore a new compromise similar to Helsinki was unconceivable. Therefore, the delegations from the Soviet bloc agreed that their prime goal should be limited to the preservation of the chance for further dialogue and the prevention of Western efforts regarding human rights and the free flow of information and people. According to that, numerous proposals were submitted only for tactical reasons to balance Western proposals. For example, the state socialist delegations submitted proposals about gender equality (Bulgaria and the GDR) and the right to work (Hungary). They were *ab ovo* seen as tactical manoeuvres, but Western delegations repelled them without sacrificing any of their earlier cards: they filed modificatory proposals claiming the right to choose ones job (FRG, Norway, Sweden), the right to resign from work (UK, USA, Liechtenstein), and the lawlessness of dismissal as a reaction to emigration claims (USA).[43]

The Belgrade Meeting ended with the minimum of compromise. Most proposals were dropped, and a generally positive message was worded about the continuation of the détente process. About the sharp conflicts over the six months, only a blurred reference was made about different opinions voiced, relating to the extent of the implementation of the Final Act. It also underlined that the realization of the Final Act was essential to promote the process of détente. The Final Document of Belgrade determined the next steps of this process: three expert meetings and the next follow-up meeting. Among the expert meetings, the Scientific Forum was related to Basket III.

[42] Report by André Erdős on the advancement of the editing group for political questions, February 2, 1978. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1978, box 145.
[43] Report by Pál Berényi on the advancement of the editing group for humanitarian and other questions, January 25, 1978. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1978, box 145.

The other topics were peaceful settlement of disputes and Mediterranean cooperation. The participants also consented to hold the next CSCE meeting in Madrid.

The Soviet Union and its allies could still evaluate it as a partial success to preserve the continuity of the Helsinki process and to decline all American and Western efforts to modify the original compromise.[44] They—especially the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia—had to stand harsh criticism of their practice, but the storm of profoundly documented cases was not reflected in the Final Document. On the other hand, Western states were also divided by this result. The USA had to reconsider if these belligerent tactics could be remunerative in the future, while several European capitalist countries were doubtful if such an offensive manner was worth it and would not endanger the positive aspects of détente. Such considerations had their mark on the way to Madrid.

From Belgrade to Madrid—Hungarian Offensive Reloaded (1978–1980)

Evaluation of the situation after Belgrade

The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not see the limited results of the Belgrade Meeting in too dark a hue. As its main achievements, they concluded that the US-led human rights campaign ended without actual success, and the attempts to reinterpret and reword the Helsinki Final Act had failed. However, the analysis registered that the political efforts to turn back the détente process—the so called "imperialist forces"— had amplified. Therefore, the Ministry set the preservation and reinforcement of détente—in cooperation with moderate political actors in the West—as the main goal of Hungarian foreign policy. Within this, in line with Soviet policy, they gave top priority to restraining the arms race and engaging in further disarmament talks. Besides that, Hungarian priorities included

---

[44] See the Hungarian evaluation on the Belgrade Meeting, March 17, 1978. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1978, box 145.

the continuation of the CSCE dialogue, the reinforcement of the 10 principles guiding the relationships between states, the development of economic and trade cooperation with Western partners (especially breaking down trade discrimination measures), and repelling human rights campaigns and intervention of internal affairs. Basket III was only mentioned in negative content as a potential threat: all efforts to overstate the importance of human contacts as a precondition of détente and for widening the scope of Basket III must be rebutted.

The field of humanitarian and other questions also highlighted the strategical struggle about the question of who the actors should be. While Western governments pushed the direct contacts of people in all possible fields of Basket III, from travelling through science to culture and education, the state socialist participants opposed that to the role of the state. As the Hungarian evaluation described: "The Final Act prevails in the relation between states, and the implementation of the recommendations is primarily the duty of the signatory states. The development of the already existing cooperation of the states in the political, economic, cultural, and other fields brings along—thanks to deepening trust—the development and fulfilment of relations and contacts among individuals and people."[45] Therefore, in the Hungarian interpretation, the logical line is the opposite, and so are the priorities between the baskets: Budapest could only accept advancement in Basket III if it consorted with advancement in Basket I (disarmament) and Basket II (trade discrimination), while the emphasis on the role of the state reflected the insistence on controlling human contacts.

The document also outlined the Hungarian strategy for the period before the Madrid meeting. The foreign policy makers decided to continue their offensive strategy that had relied on the 19 written proposals of 1976. However—having lost the advantage of surprise—the leaders of the Ministry presumed that the new proposals should be more specialized by partner

---

[45] Evaluation of the Belgrade Meeting and further tasks in the CSCE process, October 30, 1978. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1978, box 146.

states, which demanded the analysis of achievements, advancements, and hopeless issues in each relation. They also deemed it remunerative to put the Hungarian initiatives down in writing again.[46] In bilateral negotiations, the Hungarian priorities were corresponding with the goals of the Soviet bloc: however, Hungary put progress in economic cooperation and trade (Basket II) ahead of disarmament and the three all-European conference proposals (environment protection, transport and traffic, energetics) of the Warsaw Pact. As Hungary received minimal criticism in Belgrade, moreover, it was rather mentioned as good example; Budapest assessed that they could lead an offensive campaign even in Basket III before Madrid. Of course, the main issue was cultural exchange: "we should strive to improve and correct the picture of the socialist countries in Western states, among other things by reducing the existing imbalance of the exchange of cultural values."[47] As part of the offensive attitude, the document recommended self-confidence in propaganda to foreign countries, promoting existing and planned measures, like the reform of the penal code, the modification of passport regulations, the abolition of visas to Austria, and of course data on cultural imports.

In the last months of 1978, Hungarian embassies sent their reports on the advancement in bilateral relations in the light of the Final Act and the earlier Hungarian proposals. Of course, the balance sheets were diverse. In several relations, medium range success could be registered. For example, France accepted or made steps in 23 points out of 46. Germany, Austria and some Nordic countries were among the more open; Hungarian–American relations were on the rise, while Italy and the United Kingdom proved more rigid. Belgium, Greece, Spain,

---

[46] The Hungarian ambassador to London pointed at a possible drawback of the Hungarian written proposals: the British partner used some of its points with some modifications in their talks with other Soviet bloc countries and grasped initiative. Report of the Hungarian Embassy in London, November 23, 1978. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1978, box 146.

[47] Evaluation of the Belgrade Meeting and further tasks in the CSCE process, October 30, 1978. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1978, box 146.

and Canada could have performed better, and little progress was found with Portugal.[48]

Actually, the least progress happened in the two fields that Hungarian foreign policy held its strengths. The argument of the formally more generous Hungarian visa issuance met odd returns: some countries did or promised to shorten waiting times, but even the most flexible could only offer twice as long wait times (96 hours) as Hungary offered. In American-Hungarian relations, the Hungarian embassy stressed that "we might cause the most unpleasant moments for the American partner in the topic of the ominous Basket III." The ambassador pre-eminently referred to the "flexible and humane" Hungarian visa practice and reminded that "even those who come for commercial visits with longer stays [to the USA] sometimes have to take a road to Canossa for a so-called L-1 visa."[49] On the French relation, the ambassador emphasized discrimination at border crosses, limitations at the extension of residentials, and even rigidity at mixed marriages (permission bound to one-year residence in France). Besides such practice, the Hungarian proposals for consular agreements were usually repelled.

Cultural exchange was the second chief project of Hungarian foreign policy. One of the most positive receptions arrived from Bonn, where János Kádár took a visit in July 1977.[50] The ambassador reported that several German cities sought contacts to organize cultural events and the number of cultural programs outside diplomatic channels had grown. They underlined that such Hungarian show-up opportunities do not require any reciprocation or anything that would be ideologically risky (like choir visits, painting exhibitions).[51] While the Belgian examples showed another—more typical—Western attitude in this field: concentrating one-sidedly on individual travels and letting the larger scale programs (like exhibitions,

[48] MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1978, box 146.

[49] Report of the Hungarian Embassy in Washington, December 18, 1978. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1978, box 146.

[50] See Földes, *Kádár János külpolitikája*, vol. 2, op. cit. 467–498.

[51] Report of the Hungarian Embassy in Cologne, December 14, 1978. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1978, box 146.

theatre groups, etc.) slip.[52] The Viennese ambassador stressed that even the question of the availability of newspapers—which had been a usual Western point of criticism—could be raised by Hungary: Hungary imported 9 Austrian journals in 1975 in 2750 copies, while Austria only brought in 10 different journals in 348 copies.[53] The reports repeatedly stated that little progress is expected in literary translations or any other matters of publishing houses, because capitalist countries avert from all efforts referring to private ownership and free enterprise.

The Expert Meetings—Bonn, Montreux, La Valetta and Hamburg

The importance of the expert meetings agreed upon in Belgrade lay in the fact that these were palpable signs of the continuation of the Helsinki dialogue. Two of the three multilateral forums had little to do with Basket III. From late October to December in Montreux, Switzerland, participants discussed the peaceful settlement of international disputes. Since the Soviet bloc and Western countries pursued directly opposite goals—promoting bilateral diplomatic talks, voluntary consultation and good office of mediators versus institutionalized arbitrary courts—there was little chance for any advancement. The concept of neutral countries was also far from both camps.[54] La Valetta was of little interest for either Hungarian diplomacy or the Soviet bloc. The main consideration was that the Final Act should not be modified in the Maltese capital to offer precedent for Madrid.[55] However, both Western and Eastern states were disinterested in Maltese efforts and the meeting ended up without significant achievements.[56]

[52] Report of the Hungarian Embassy in Brussels, November 23, 1978. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1978, box 146.

[53] Report of the Hungarian Embassy in Vienna, November 17, 1978. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1978, box 147.

[54] Report on the Montreux Expert Meeting, December 19, 1978. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1978, box 146.

[55] The question of the Mediterranean security and cooperation, September 7, 1978. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1978, box 147.

[56] Report on the La Valetta Expert Meeting, April 7, 1979. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1979, box 140.

The Scientific Forum had direct ideological content. Its significance was reflected not only in the more comprehensive preparation in the responsible national ministries, committees and institutes, the bi- and multilateral Soviet bloc coordinating talks, but also in the fact that similarly to the CSCE follow-up meeting in Belgrade, a preliminary meeting was held to determine the procedures and the schedule. The agreed-upon socialist concept promoted one-time (not institutionalized) conference of state delegations with non-ideological topics. Sticking to the letter of the Final Act, it indicated that the schedule should be composed of scientific issues already mentioned in the 1975 document. State socialist elites were not only interested in tranquil dialogue to ease international tensions, but also to promote East-West scientific cooperation and possible technological transfers. This was also a prime priority of Hungarian cultural foreign policy.[57] Western countries favoured a meeting of independent scientists or a separate political and a more informal scientific circle of discussion with human relations, free travel and contacts of scientists in the spotlight.

In Bonn, the Soviet Union and its allies successfully enforced their interests; however, at the opening phase, bad timing again gave an opportunity for severe criticism of the Moscow trials against Helsinki Watch Group activists. In the consensual document, there was satisfactory reference to states, the procedure was similar to Belgrade with opening and closing speeches and non-public working committees. The topics were set—all from the Helsinki recommendations, and two out of three reflected state socialist interests. Exact and natural sciences—more concretely the field of alternative energy sources—was in line with the Warsaw Pact efforts of an all-European conference in the field of energy. The other assigned topic was food production. Medical research— namely in cardiovascular, tumour and virus diseases—was of prominent Hungarian interest, too. Humanities and social

---

[57] Report on the consultation of socialist countries about the Bonn Meeting, June 12, 1978. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1978, box 145.

sciences are usually seen as weak points in state socialist countries; however, the chosen topic of human environment and urban development was ideologically less disputed.[58]

The Scientific Forum was held between February 18 and March 3, 1980, in Hamburg. The conference proceeded in a calm atmosphere and its final document welcomed the growing international cooperation in research and training after 1975. State socialist countries could show a peaceful exchange of views in different scientific fields, which demonstrated their readiness for international dialogue and cooperation. Western countries could mention imbalanced advancement in research, communication, and travels for scientific reasons, and even more importantly include a reference to the importance of human rights and basic rights and freedoms in the final document.[59]

Written Proposals Reloaded

After Belgrade, the NATO members made a significant tactical shift: they emphasized the importance of bilateral negotiations and urged such occasions. However, they still regarded human rights as a prior question, and they followed—and promised for Madrid—a less confrontative attitude. The Spanish organizers themselves stressed that they wished to avoid hosting a forum of harsh confrontation, and rather strived for a more concrete and clear schedule.[60] The neutral countries favoured the question of confidence building from Basket I instead of the topic of human rights—which also could soften tension.[61] The Swiss partner even suggested that they could harmonize their efforts within

---

[58] Report on the preliminary expert meeting in Bonn, August 8, 1978. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1978, box 145.

[59] Report on the Scientific Forum of CSCE, April 2, 1980. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1980, box 145.

[60] Report on the meeting of the Hungarian and Spanish heads of departments, April 6, 1979. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1979, box 141.

[61] Encrypted telegram of the Hungarian Ambassador in Belgrade, October 19, 1979. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1979, box 141.

their bloc of countries to reach consent: they might successfully form proposals in a way no one would find it "too square."[62]

Western negotiators also repeatedly emphasized that they were interested in showing results, and the bilateral talks might serve to find topics that offered chances for consent. In addition, the efforts for a higher level of delegations served this aim: NATO countries suggested that ministers should lead the delegations. The British partner also underlined that fewer proposals would be more fruitful, but balance must be found between the baskets. However, this included warming up the Western proposals in Basket III in Belgrade.[63] American diplomats mentioned two Eastern proposals that might be accepted: the Hungarian proposal relating to small languages and the Bulgarian proposal about the protection of historical monuments.[64]

The Hungarian opinion was that these Western efforts did not promise sincere cooperation, but should be welcomed as opportunities to shepherd Western countries towards a more consensual path in Madrid and avoid direct ideological confrontation. As possible consensual topics, the material mentioned the problems of less-known cultures, teaching of foreign languages, norms of journalists' work, multilateral cultural initiatives like databanks, film catalogues, book exhibitions, and registers of television films, and in general mutual information on cultural imports.[65] However, the emphasis of Hungarian—and state socialist—foreign politics was the opposite: Basket III was rather the field of concessions, while economic cooperation and disarmament were the priorities. Thus, Deputy Minister János Nagy stated that "We must mention all baskets and recommendations of the Final Act

[62] Swiss proposal on the preparation for Madrid, February 22, 1979. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1979, box 141.

[63] Memorandum on the English stand about the preparation for Madrid, February 8, 1979. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1979, box 141.

[64] Information on the consultation of the American foreign affairs delegation in Bulgaria, March 1, 1979. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1979, box 141.

[65] Memorandum for the conference of ministers, June 4, 1979. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1979, box 141.

together, and we can only proceed in the humanitarian field, if we can step forward in strict observance of the principles guiding the relations of states and concrete measures are taken to unfold easing in military affairs and to broaden economic cooperation."[66]

As Hungarian foreign policy makers saw the written proposals at some points useful, but "on no accounts politically disadvantageous,"[67] in 1979 the ministry prepared the bilateral proposals for the capitalist participants of the CSCE process and conveyed them in the summer and autumn months.[68] Or, as a memorandum of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs put it: "The greater part of these proposals are such that Western partners cannot meet them, but our proposals correspond to the recommendations of the Final Act, therefore they cannot reject them, so they are doomed to explain themselves."[69]

The bilateral written proposals did not reserve much surprise. The Hungarian documents followed a well-tried scheme. Their main emphasis was on cultural exchange. In most relations, they repeated the Hungarian will to reconcile information of national character in lexicons, schoolbooks, and tourist guides—despite earlier Western seclusion. Proposals were made in different cultural spheres for promoting contacts and exchange—like academies, theatre, film, literature, radio, and television. Differently by country, the documents mentioned possible partner institutes or associations. Hungary was also interested in foreign scholarship opportunities and in several cases the proposals mentioned this issue. Such frames were determined in the cultural agreements and work plans; however, by the second half of the 1970s it had become

[66] The lecture of Deputy Minister János Nagy at the session of the CSCE Hungarian National Committee, March 22, 1979. MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-1979, box 24.

[67] Deputy Minister János Nagy on the session of the CSCE inter-ministerial committee, February 7, 1979. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1979, box 140.

[68] A letter from Istvánné Papp to the members of the inter-ministerial committee. MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-1979, box 24.

[69] Memorandum on the preparation for the Madrid Meeting, March 24, 1979. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1979, box 141.

a pressing issue due to inflation and the narrowing of domestic funding opportunities.[70] Furthermore, a general point of the proposals suggested that cultural work plans—where they existed—should be more concrete and enrich bilateral relations.

The main Hungarian project was balancing the disproportionality in cultural exchange and promoting the culture of small languages. The Hungarian phrasing reacted to earlier Western claims, and carefully sought ways in which governments could be included into the implementation without offending private ownership. First, they referred to an existing international cooperation: the initiative of the UNESCO-affiliated International Association of Literary Critics (AICL). AICL complied the Gold Library of European Literature, where novels and poetic works could be found from all participants: so, Hungarian cultural diplomacy suggested publishing volumes in that collection. In addition, this new concept avoided referring to publishing houses, but rather implied subventions for libraries. Writers' associations and PEN Clubs were also seen as channels to promote literary translations. The papers always added that the Hungarian partner appreciated receiving information on measures taken for the translation and publication of Hungarian literary and theatrical works and reports on books translated, films purchased or screened, music broadcast on radio stations, etc. Since Hungarian cultural institutes and ministries kept detailed statistics on such matters, it was not an extra task for the Hungarians to present their data.

The proposals also enumerated earlier questions. They proposed consular conventions (or when it had met, with a check in the "first round"), a narrower scope of cooperation, and also the pursuit of agreements on legal assistance in civil, commercial, and criminal cases. They kept facilitating visa affairs: both in the case of maintaining low processing times and the exemption of diplomatic and service passports. By this time, the visa duty between Hungary and Austria had been abolished. Hungarian foreign policy approached the question

---

[70] Minutes of the Council of Cultural Relations, March 22, 1979. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1979, box 11.

of information through journalists' working conditions and not through the flow of information and periodicals. Visa administration for journalists, the realistic presentation of each other's countries, and radio-television contacts were the key Hungarian catchphrases. Another general reference was usually made to the enhancement of sport and youth contacts.[71]

Approaching Madrid, a new phenomenon unfolded in bilateral negotiations: Western countries raised the opportunity of joint proposals. Being joint-authors of proposals could demonstrate readiness for compromise and ease the way for proposals that could evidence advancement and the détente process itself. Hungary was also involved in two such topics. As a response to Hungarian proposals, the Danish outlined a proposal to enhance youth travel via the Interrail system. Since most East European countries—including the Soviet Union—were not members of Interrail (with the exception of Hungary), Hungary proposed promoting youth tourism with reduced fares after Soviet consultation. Nevertheless, the Hungarian answer took almost a year and came already at the Madrid conference.[72] French and the Polish diplomats also discussed the question of a joint proposal regarding youth travel.[73]

Hungarian foreign policy took its own "child" more seriously. They received a positive answer from Finland in September 1979 to submit a joint proposal, which the Hungarian delegation noted with the demand that it should not be narrower than the original Hungarian proposal. By the next round—in May 1980—it became clear that the Finnish partner would step back on two questions: engagement in the establishment of new university departments and securing state funds for the promotion of the culture of small languages. The diplomatic

[71] See bilateral proposals: MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1979, box 141; MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1980, box 144; MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-1979, box 24.

[72] Memorandum on the joint Danish-Hungarian proposal, September 18, 1980; Memorandum on the Soviet opinion, November 6, 1980; Report on the Danish-Hungarian joint proposal, December 5, 1980. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1980, box 145.

[73] Encrypted telegram from Paris, October 18, 1979. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1979, box 141.

conciliation remained contiguous and Hungary was able to endorse its priorities in a more detailed version.[74]

Hard Bargain in Madrid (1980–1983)

The Madrid Meeting began with a strained atmosphere. Despite the clear intention of the participants to avoid an escalation in tensions, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979—which also forced the Hungarian leadership into a very unpleasant situation[75]—provided the NATO countries with a trump card for to qualify Soviet action as a violation of the Helsinki Final Act. General and concrete criticism regarding human rights was also pervasive throughout the conference. In the debate regarding Basket III, human contacts and information remained the highlighted topics of Western countries; however, Hungarian reports noticed that to some extent they extended their criticism to cultural, educational, and scientific relations as well.[76] For example, the American opening speech addressed the Soviet Union (jamming Radio Liberty, preventing Jewish emigration, prosecution against Helsinki Watch Group activists), Czechoslovakia (harassment of Charter 77 members), and the GDR (raising obligatory currency exchange limits to hold back visitors). If they mentioned Hungary at all, it was usually as a good example. Griffin B. Bell, for example, referred to relative freedom of churches in Hungary, Poland, and also in the GDR.[77]

The US government prepared semi-annual reports on the fulfilment of Helsinki recommendations after 1975. They provided exact statistics on controversial issues in Basket III—like family reunification cases, emigrant visas, travel opportunities, and passport regulations. They also thoroughly surveyed the availability of Western journals and complaints

[74] Reports on the joint Hungarian-Finnish proposal on small and less-studied languages. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1980, box 145.

[75] Békés, *Enyhülés és emancipáció*, op. cit. 295–303.

[76] Report on the first phase of the Madrid Meeting, December 19, 1980. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1980, box 144.

[77] The opening speech of Griffin B. Bell. MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-1980, box 102.

of journalists, while the evaluation of cultural and educational exchanges only reviewed the most significant events like film weeks, exhibitions, visits of orchestras, scholarly delegations, etc. Hungary also qualified well in these reports. In the second part of 1979, the American government reported 1720 pending family reunification cases: 7 of which were Hungarian compared to 1229 Polish, 340 Romanian, and 105 Soviet cases. None of the 88 pending binational marriage claims were waiting for administrative decisions in Hungary, while in Romania there were 69 unresolved claims. Regarding personal travel, Hungary was called a "major exception": the US Embassy in Budapest issued 5869 private visitor visas and 1077 for other reasons (above the 47 immigrant visas and 4876 visas for temporary family visits). The report also noted that the Hungarian government promoted travel to the USA by allowing payment in forints and the possibility to obtain medical travel insurance as well. Church contacts were applied as gauges of religious freedom: the Appeal of Conscience Foundation (ACF) was active in organizing the visits of religious leaders to and from socialist countries. In 1979, the founder rabbi Arthur Schneier visited Hungary and gave the ACF Man of the Year Award to Cardinal Laszló Lékai.

Further, the free flow of information in Hungary was not an outstanding exception in terms of the availability of Western newspapers—rather, they only formally checked off this duty, maintaining limitations and control—but the country was one of the most liberal when it came to the release of television films and movies. The US report highlighted that Hungarian cinemas also screened the science fiction classic *Star Wars* and the crime story *Julia*.[78] They also acknowledged that Hungary

---

[78] Actually by 1979/80, Hollywood became the second-largest film exporter to Hungary after the Soviet Union (more than 20 films annually), and Hollywood movies well outnumbered French and Italian films. About American movies in Hungary, see Róbert Takács, "Hollywood Ascendant: American Films in Hungary in the 1970s," *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 1 (2018): 191–218; on the work of the Hungarian Film Admission Committee, see Mihály Gál, *"A vetítést vita követte": A Filmátvételi Bizottság jegyzőkönyvei*

does not jam Radio Free Europe[79] and Western television broadcasts, furthermore Hungarian television news coverages, sometimes show unadulterated Western views: like 18-minute segment interviews with leading American politicians and experts on SALT and US-Soviet relations.[80] Among cultural exchange projects with Hungary, the USICA-sponsored America Now exhibition was the most important, held in a temporary exhibition hall in Népliget in Budapest. According to *Magyar Nemzet*, it reflected the sentiment of individuals closed into small communities.[81]

Since Hungary was not the target of sharp attacks, the Hungarian delegation pursued moderate tactics in Madrid. In his opening speech, however, Deputy Minister János Nagy disapproved of the Western approach to Basket III: "From time to time it seems as if 'Basket III' consisted of nothing more than human contacts and the flow of information," he noted, adding that it was time to give more attention to cultural, educational, and artistic issues. Hungary stood for more balanced cultural exchange between nations and the study of small and less-studied languages.[82] This attitude was more or less typical among all Warsaw Pact countries in the Spanish capital: almost all of them were able to present respective statistics on Western cultural imports and the promotion of cultural and educational exchange through state-controlled channels.

As in Belgrade, the state socialist—and in particular, as part of the joint efforts, the Hungarian—delegations concentrated on even small achievements, and tried to repulse Western criticism,

---

1968–1989 ["The Screening Was Followed by a Debate." The Minutes of the Film Admission Committee, 1968–1989] (Budapest: Gondolat, 2015).

[79] Hungary finished regular jamming by 1963. Report on the termination of jamming Western radio broadcasts, December 14, 1963. MOL XIX-J-1-k 1945-1964 USA, box 39.

[80] Seventh Semiannual Report by the President to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe on the Implementation of the Helsinki Final Act, June 1–November 30, 1979. MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-1980, box 101.

[81] -th, "Amerika ma [America Now]," *Magyar Nemzet*, June 25, 1980.

[82] The opening speech of the Hungarian delegation in Madrid. MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-1980, box 102.

emphasizing the principle of non-intervention in internal affairs. Most statistics that were aired related to personal contacts, but information—more precisely the availability of Western press and media and limitations on journalistic work in the Soviet bloc—was also a crucial issue. Since hardly any objection was voiced against the Hungarian practice, the Hungarian delegation could be more resolute in its contribution. Besides enumerating positive measures, they also raised the imbalance in taking over media coverage and programs, and of course in cultural exchange.

At the end of the first phase of the Madrid meeting, 87 proposals were submitted, 31 of which (35.6% of the total) targeted Basket III issues and were delegated to the H (humanitarian) working group. Hungary was also active, signing four of these proposals, however it submitted only one independently: the one promoting the contribution of mass media to the mutual recognition of each participants' culture. The most authentic proposal from Hungary also targeted cultural affairs, promoting the culture of small and less-studied languages. It was also the only joint East-West proposal (with Finland and Iceland) with good chances to be included into the final document in Madrid. The other two proposals were joint actions of Soviet bloc countries: the one submitted with the Soviet Union, promoting youth tourism and contacts between youth organizations, was worded to challenge the Danish proposal on the same subject.[83] The other one, submitted by Poland and Hungary on the mutual protection of participants' citizens, belonged under the headline "Personal Contacts," and revealed a different approach from state socialist countries to consular affairs.

Other Warsaw Pact countries submitted 11 proposals to Basket III. Almost all of them targeted general goals in ideologically less strained fields. Regarding personal contacts, there was a Romanian proposal to promote youth contacts, and a Bulgarian one on cultural cooperation of younger generations.

---

[83] This could have been another joint East-West proposal if Hungarian representatives would have entered into negotiations with its Danish partners more intensely.

In the field of cultural cooperation, two further proposals were submitted aside from the Polish-Hungarian one: Bulgaria submitted a proposal on the provision of information on cultural cooperation, the mutual exposition of the participants' historical memories, and anniversaries; Poland added one on the development of cultural cooperation. Poland also proposed better cooperation in the field of education; the GDR and the Soviet Union both promoted the issue of textbook reconciliation in separate proposals. Contrary to these generally worded proposals without verifiable data, the Warsaw Pact proposals on information were set against Western proposals. To counter claims for import liberalizations on Western press, the Soviet Union and GDR submitted a proposal on the responsible distribution of information. According to their arguments, Western media did not meet these criteria. Nevertheless, it could not be applied in Western countries in any case, since most publications and media channels were private enterprises. Romania had a separate proposal to ban war propaganda. The Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia proposed suspending Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe, reacting to the Western proposal to stop jamming these broadcasts.

NATO and European Economic Community (EEC) countries proved more confrontational in their proposals as well. They altogether submitted 17 proposals relating to Basket III. Many of these were well-adjusted joint proposals, and eight—half of the proposals—were dedicated to personal contacts. The Danish were the least challenging with their proposal on the promotion of youth tourism, and another common Nordic one on the training of young scientists, and a proposal on the promotion of historical and artistic heritage. Others targeted the core of East-West confrontations. Two proposals dealt with family reunification and three of them directly with human rights. As a new element in Western tactics, they proposed multilateral conferences similar to the Scientific Forum in these debated topics. France also proposed one such meeting, a Cultural Forum—as did Yugoslavia. One further EEC proposal revived the claim of Western embassies for unimpeded

contacts with citizens in Warsaw Pact states, and the Vatican strived to strengthen the rights of religious communities and church leaders for contacts and religious information. Two joint EEC proposals pursued the free flow of information. The free movement of people and information was also present in the proposal to establish cultural institutes in participating countries and in educational exchanges. The main Western effort in the cultural field was also dedicated to the free flow of people and information: like opening new cultural institutes and bookstores in participating countries, or promoting personal contacts and exchange in education, or issuing public catalogues on archival materials.[84]

In January 1981, Hungarian foreign policy sought out the chance for a possibly quick compromise, and saw the settlement of interests moderately positively. They found a third of the Western proposals easily reconcilable (youth tourism, the Cultural Forum, conservation of national and artistic heritage, exchanges in education, implementation of the recommendations of the Scientific Forum, and the training of young scientists). These were ideologically less loaded topics, and in some of these cases there was an alternative socialist proposal to be matched. Another third of the proposals were assessed as the "price of compromise," that is, the issues in which the Soviet bloc might offer some concessions. These proposals related to human rights (about the vindication of human rights, and a roundtable conference on human rights), and freedom of information and personal exchange (unrestricted distribution of newspapers, improving journalists' working conditions, radio jamming, opening new cultural institutes and reading rooms, access to archival material and compiling archival catalogues). The Hungarian analysis suggested that these issues might be included in the final document if the most objectionable claims were dropped. For example, human rights might be mentioned among the ten principles, but their equal importance must be emphasized. Human rights conferences could only be

[84] Report on the work of the third working committee of the Madrid Meeting, January 6, 1981. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1981, box 153.

reconsidered as a scientific conference. Claims on the flow of information should not transcend the level of the Helsinki Accords, and state socialist countries cannot give legal status to an advocacy body for foreign correspondents. They were also reluctant to promote access to foreign cultural institutes and embassies and compile public archival catalogues. Although the Hungarian practice was more or less in accordance with these proposals, Hungarian analysts could be sure that other Warsaw Pact states would show greater resistance on these topics, and thus Hungary usually fell in line with its allies on such questions.

In addition, there were a few proposals that Hungarian foreign policy saw as unacceptable, and therefore thought that those should be given up in parallel with similar Eastern proposals. Soviet bloc countries steadily opposed incorporating concrete obligations for family reunification and visits, and furthermore the organization of an expert meeting on such issues. They were equally determined to resist a human rights experts' meeting. In addition, the Hungarian material classified contacts with religious organizations, the distribution of religious information, and access to foreign embassies as undesirable developments out of the Helsinki Accords, and therefore stated that these should be remitted to bilateral relations.[85]

In the second phase of the Madrid meeting, when plenary sessions and editing groups convened in each working committee, it quickly became clear that easy compromise would be an illusion. Compromise was within reach in cultural and education proposals rather simply, but the fronts froze relating to information and personal contacts. Western countries rejected the counterproposals of Soviet bloc countries as an offset for their most important claims.[86] Basket II proved to be the least problematic set of issues, with important Hungarian

---

[85] Recommendation for the position of the Hungarian delegation relating to Basket III proposals in Madrid, January 13, 1981. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1981, box 153.

[86] Summary of the debates of the H working committee, February 20, 1981. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1981, box 153.

interests and well-attended Hungarian proposals,[87] but Basket I seemed shipwrecked similarly to Basket III. In this situation—in April 1981—neutral and non-aligned countries stepped up as advocates of compromise and worded an overall proposal for the final document of the Madrid Meeting—the so-called RM-39—which became the negotiating basis from May 1981 onward.

This post-Easter period seemed fruitful in Madrid. The Soviet bloc countries changed their strategy, seeing the neutral draft, which they perceived as a possible basis for a hard compromise, but also as a text absorbing too many of the Western ambitions. Therefore, they concentrated on weeding out unacceptable formulas and inserting escaping clauses—like reference to participants' inner legislation—that would neutralize sensitive passages. Their strength was in the less debated topics of culture and education, and compromise could be built on these issues relatively quickly. The two Hungarian proposals were incorporated in the draft final document. However, the Hungarian delegation re-opened its proposal on small languages successfully, because in bilateral talks they felt that even more could be achieved in the education of small languages—more precisely the promotion of new opportunities for learning, like the encouragement of summer universities, fellowships for translators, and establishing new faculties. The participants could agree even on the proposal for archival research—as the Soviet Union accepted promoting the compilation of archival catalogues instead of prescribing their publication. The question of cultural institutes and public reading rooms remained here the most important pending issues.

---

[87] Hungary was highly interested in Basket II, where the Hungarian delegation submitted four proposals: on the promotion of exchange of information on marketing techniques, on eliminating the technical obstacles of trade by mutual acceptance of quality certificates, on the promotion of industrial cooperation, and on the inclusion of small- and medium-sized businesses into East-West economic cooperation. Report on the reception of Hungarian proposals to Basket II, February 13, 1981. MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-1981, box 99.

On the other hand, regarding personal contacts and information, both Eastern and Western countries strived to modify the text to their favour, while most neutral countries rather consorted to the language of the NATO states. In proposals about free flow of information, the Swiss positions were even sharper. The Soviet Union and its allies had to accept that the document should incorporate principles for the administration of family reunification and passport procedures. Here the Hungarian efforts regarding legal, consular, and medical assistance proved more or less successful, however the United States still severely opposed declaring duties for the host countries. The consensus was much easier in the other "Hungarian topic," youth travel. There was no real progress in some ideologically loaded questions: free access to foreign embassies, the experts meeting on family reunification, and the Vatican proposal on religious contacts. However, it was even harder to make ends meet in the field of information: the delegations devoted 40 sessions to the related 12–15 possible paragraphs, and could only agree on five of them. These five related to journalists' travel, accreditation, and working conditions (like press centres[88]), and the distribution of foreign journals. On some points, interests could not be matched: media access of churches, free encounter between foreign journalists and local citizens, free transportation of journalists' documentation, and the institutionalization of foreign correspondents. While in these questions the opposing sides were trying to find a mutually acceptable formula, the ban on radio jamming and on the expulsion of journalists (for their publications) were categorically repudiated by state socialist countries.[89]

After a longer break, the delegates met in Madrid in late October, but in almost two months they could not find a compromise in any of the remaining proposals of Basket III.

[88] Budapress, as a media service for articles, already existed in the early 1970s as part of the Hungarian Press Agency (MTI). It operated as part of the foreign Hungarian propaganda system.

[89] Report on the drafting work of the Madrid Meeting on humanitarian and other questions, July 30, 1981. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1981, box 153.

The US-led NATO delegations adopted more combative tactics, and pushed their sensitive issues more vehemently. In spite of the fierce clash of interests, the Hungarian delegation deemed it possible to reach a future compromise on several questions with greater or fewer concessions from the side of the Warsaw Pact countries. Among such issues were contacts among religious communities and institutions, access to embassies, the carrying of journalists' documentation,[90] and advocacy bodies of foreign correspondents. However, concessions could only be reached if several Western demands were withdrawn (expert meetings on family reunification, media distribution of religious information, bans on the expulsion of journalists, radio jamming and public reading rooms). Nevertheless, they feared that two points might cripple the whole process: the recognition of an individuals' right to subscribe to foreign journals and the declaration of journalists' right to contact any citizen in their host countries.[91]

The Madrid negotiation deadlocked in autumn 1981. Basket III bargains were in a "bundle deal," with the most important goal of the Soviet Union, the organization of a European disarmament conference, for which the United States wanted to poach a huge price in Basket III. This "static warfare" was reinforced by the proclamation of martial law in Poland by Wojciech Jaruzelski.[92] The suppression of the Solidarity movement thematised the session of early 1982. Western countries interpreted the Polish events as the brutal violation of the Helsinki Final Act—just like the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan at the beginning of the meeting. Therefore, they adhered to the improvement of the Polish situation as a precondition for any substantive dialogue

[90] Here the debated part was if journalists were also allowed to take printed materials with them, as these could have been otherwise forbidden periodicals or publications.

[91] Report on the negotiations about Humanitarian and other questions, December 19, 1981. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1981, box 153.

[92] See Miklós Mitrovits, *A remény hónapjai: a lengyel Szolidaritás és a szovjet politika, 1980–1981* [Months of Hope: Polish Solidarity and Soviet Politics, 1980–1981] (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó. 2010).

over the final document of the Madrid Meeting.[93] Hungarian foreign policy evaluated the situation as a potential danger of a failed compromise in Madrid, and strived to preserve it as the only wide and operable multilateral forum for East-West dialogue. In addition, in spite of perceived US efforts to conclude the meeting with a short final communique, the report suggested that time—and the interest of Western European and neutral states—might bring an agreement.[94]

In April, the participants agreed to a longer intermission of the conference as the debates over the introduction of the martial law in Poland pervaded the spring sessions.[95] From late November, the meeting continued, and in the H working group, delegations discussed pending issues. Soviet bloc countries submitted corrective proposals to Western text variants to evirate them. However, the USA and the Soviet Union were both reluctant to make concessions first,[96] and weeks passed without a chance of breakthrough.[97] Nevertheless, the atmosphere was dispassionate enough to negotiate over text variants, sometimes words. Like in the passage referring to citizens' access to foreign embassies, where the Soviet Union accepted to declare an endeavour to ease admission, but then insisted on deleting the term "public" from the text. On several other points, the Warsaw Pact members resisted inserting the phrase "accordance with internal legislation", while on some remaining points (e.g., radio jamming, expert meeting on family

[93] Weekly reports on the proceedings of the Madrid Meeting, February/March 1982. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1982, box 143.

[94] The evaluation of the foregoing stages of the Madrid Meeting, January 13, 1982. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1982, box 144.

[95] Hungarian standpoint about the Madrid Meeting, April 20 1982. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1982, box 143.

[96] The Hungarian representatives in Madrid noted in late November that some symbolic steps from the Soviet Union regarding Basket III—gestures toward Jewish emigrants and prosecuted intellectuals like Andrei Sakharov (and Natan Scharansky), or later toward the members of the Pentecostal congregation—could help to stimulate progress. Encrypted telegram from Madrid, November 25, 1982. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1982, box 143.

[97] Weekly reports of the Hungarian delegation in Madrid. MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-1982, box 109.

reunification and emigration, expulsion of journalists) Eastern delegations were not willing to give ground.[98]

The time for breakthrough came in 1983. In March, after a few uneasy weeks, the neutral and non-aligned countries compiled a modified proposal for the final document. It still contained the points related to Basket III that the Soviet bloc countries turned down cold, but the US State Department held the organization of the disarmament conference as a major Soviet success, therefore it adhered to major American achievements in Basket III—including the experts' meetings in this field. Still, development only came in June-July after a Spanish effort to reconcile open questions: on one hand, the Soviet delegation finally approved of the expert meeting on human contacts and human rights; on the other hand, this was not published as part of the final document, but rather as a statement of the president of the meeting.[99]

The new neutral proposal also provided the Hungarians with an opportunity to show off a significant diplomatic success, as Budapest emerged as a possible venue for one of the conferences scheduled in the final document, the Cultural Forum, which had already been accepted by all participants based on the French and Yugoslav proposals. However, it caused tension within the Warsaw Pact countries, since Romania had aspired to host the next follow-up meeting, and stuck to its demand.[100] The Cultural Forum—to be held in Budapest in 1985—become one of the 11 all-European multilateral events to which the participants consented. It was the first meeting within the Helsinki process that was held in a state socialist country.[101]

---

[98] Humanitarian and information issues in Madrid, December 20, 1982. MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-1982, box 109.

[99] Encrypted telegram from Madrid, July 11, 1983. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1983, box 129.

[100] Encrypted telegram from Madrid, May 5, 1983; June 3, 1983. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1983, box 129.

[101] Report on the Madrid Meeting, 1980–1983, August 9, 1983. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-1983, box 129.

Summary

The Madrid meeting concluded with the acceptance of a final document the participants used to call "meaningful." Contrary to the "minimalist" final document of Belgrade that was almost confined to the enumeration of future stages of the Helsinki process, the Madrid Meeting survived inimical conflicts to reach compromise in the most controversial fields as well. This also revealed that the European allies of the two superpowers—and neutral states—were heavily concerned in preserving the achievements of détente even if Soviet-American relations bottomed out. As part of the thick fabric of compromises, the multilateral possibilities for East-West dialogue significantly broadened.

Budapest was among those who were solidly committed to the preservation of the Helsinki process, as it corresponded to its more open nature and foreign policy strategy. It paid attention—in internal and foreign politics—to prove its (even if small, but) clear progress in all issues relating to the Final Act, and also targeted Western participants with foreign policy actions to be able to define the agenda in its favour. Hungarian foreign policy was among those that strived for compromise, however as a disciplined ally of the Soviet Union it went by Soviet policy—as opposed to Romanian foreign policy, which frequently challenged Warsaw Pact coordination. Nevertheless, Budapest pursued its own priorities successfully. The Madrid meeting lasted for almost three years, and by the time it ended, Hungary had already become a member of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The long deadlock was a consequence of the freezing relations between the Soviet Union and the USA, and as such it did not depend on Hungary. All Hungarian proposals had chances for approval and—sometimes with some correction—were incorporated into the drafts by mid-1981. Hungary was the "good pupil" in Western speeches—and remained alone from late 1981 due to the Polish crisis—but stuck by the side of those state socialist countries

that were severely criticized and were less ready for concessions (i.e., the Soviet Union, GDR, and Czechoslovakia).

Yet, Hungary's main interests lay in Basket II—in accordance with its economic reform, need for technological inputs, and export opportunities—and it was where Hungarian foreign policy could have its most meaningful proposals passed. However, it also pursued active policy regarding Basket III, where its strength lay in cultural and educational affairs, and where it was less vulnerable in the "hot fields" of human contacts and information. It can be regarded as a major diplomatic success that the efforts of Hungarian foreign policy to strengthen the position of (socialist) Hungarian culture in the world could find its appropriate form in the promotion of small languages that could win the support of several Western states. The Hungarian proposal—also incorporated in the final document—in the field of information pursued the same goal by promoting the recognition of participants' culture in the press and media. These were fields where Hungarian diplomacy could rely on a two-decade-long process of relatively open cultural policy that eventuated an imbalance in Hungarian and Western cultural exchange.

In addition, in terms of human contacts, Hungary could prove its commitment to the Helsinki process with two ideologically less loaded proposals (relating to consular, legal, and medical assistance, and youth travel). This engagement was also acknowledged by the fact that Budapest was selected as the venue for the multilateral Cultural Forum. Ironically, by the time it was organized, dissident groups staking their claims based on the provisions in the Helsinki Final Act became visible in Hungary as well.[102]

---

[102] See Rolf Müller, ed., *Európai Kulturális Fórum és ellenfórum: Budapest, 1985* [European Cultural Forum and Counter Forum: Budapest, 1985] (Budapest: ÁBTL, 2005).

SZABOLCS LÁSZLÓ

Promoting the Kodály Method during the Cold War: Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy and the Transnational Network of Music Educators in the 1960s and 1970s*

"As you perhaps are aware of, American music educators have become very much interested in developments of music instruction in the Hungarian schools. We feel that we can learn much from your experiences in organizing an integrated music program from the nursery school to institutions for higher education."[1] This comes from a 1966 letter by the well-known American musicologist Bjornar Bergethon, sent to the Hungarian Institute for Cultural Relations, asking for permission to visit Hungarian elementary schools and to observe the educational program that everyone was raving about in the U.S. at that time: the Kodály method. A handwritten note scribbled on the letter gave the following verdict: "His interest in Hungary is genuine, no political agenda behind the intended visit." Consequently, the American professor received the necessary permission, and he managed to visit five schools during his stay in Budapest, dropping by the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music as well. Bergethon's newfound interest was far from unique. Hundreds of music educators in the U.S. and

[1] Letter from Bjornar Bergethon to Gábor Vígh, November 22, 1966, MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 214. Bergethon established his reputation with a textbook cowritten with Eunice Boardman, entitled *Musical Growth in the Elementary School* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963).

around the world were discovering the Kodály method during the 1960s and 1970s and were traveling to Hungary to learn about it. Moreover, they were also thinking of ways in which the method could be transplanted and institutionalized within their home countries. With the help of Hungarian pedagogues, they developed several centres and programs inspired by Kodály's conception of teaching music and his vision for universalizing musical literacy. These multiplying professional interactions and energetic plans produced a still-existing transnational network of music educators dedicated to the international dissemination of the Kodály method.

The exchanges and collaborations at the heart of spreading the Kodály method in different countries and continents were happening against the backdrop of the Cold War: a period determined by a global geopolitical and cultural rivalry. How did a transnational network emerge amidst overarching forces directed towards maintaining divisions and antagonisms? How could American and Hungarian pedagogues follow the principles of reciprocity and equivalence within the context of a systemic confrontation that weaponized culture to win prestige and demonstrate superiority? The story of the Kodály method illustrates the simultaneity and interdependence of these two dimensions. As such, its examination brings together two paths of analysis: one focusing on the role and agency of non-state actors in the U.S. and Hungary, and the other examining the Cold War cultural diplomacy goals of the Hungarian authorities. A close inspection reveals how the ideas and the work of a transnational network of music educators were accommodated and eventually exploited by the institutions in charge of Hungarian cultural diplomacy, illustrating the conflict and interdependence at the heart of the cultural Cold War.

Cultural Diplomacy and Transnational Connections during the Cold War

There are two distinct and conceptually significant approaches to constructing a narrative about the period of the Cold War. One, adopting a top-down perspective that focuses on states, diplomatic relations, and policy, tells a story of geopolitical struggle and of a competition in cultural diplomacy efforts to "win the hearts and minds" of the opposing side.[2] Another approach, focusing on institutions, non-state actors, networks, ideas, and material culture, aims to give shape to a narrative of international collaboration, transnational flows and exchanges, and increasing global integration.[3] While the former follows the outcome of a systemic confrontation, and the latter outlines the emergence of an interconnected world, both approaches deal with simultaneous and highly co-dependent postwar phenomena that should be studied together.

The past decades saw increasing attention in scholarship to the "cultural Cold War," emphasizing the importance of cultural diplomacy in the rivalry between the two superpowers. Such works conceptualized the Cold War as a global ideological and cultural contest to convince populations at home and abroad of the superiority of a given side's worldview.[4] A wide array

[2] See for example Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991); Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945–1961* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); or Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A World History* (New York: Basic Books, 2017).

[3] See for example, Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

[4] For comprehensive overviews, see Robert Griffith, "The Cultural Turn in Cold War Studies," *Reviews in American History* 29, no. 1 (March 2001): 150–157; Gordon Johnston, "Revisiting the Cultural Cold War," *Social History* 35, no. 3 (2010): 290–307; Jessica Gienow-Hecht, "Culture and the Cold War in Europe" in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010),

of overt and covert operations was devised and implemented with this purpose in mind, ranging from various channels of media broadcasting to efforts of musical diplomacy, traveling exhibitions, and the distribution of newspapers, journals, pamphlets, and books.[5] Internationally oriented projects of cultural diplomacy constituted significant frames through which the Cold War was interpreted and experienced. Both in a direct or indirect way, such practices aimed to reinforce the foreign policy goals of the superpowers, contributing to the international legitimization of their forms of power and political culture.

The origins of this cultural contest reach back to the interwar period. As Michael David-Fox shows, the young Soviet state—politically and economically isolated after 1917—created a cultural diplomacy apparatus of a "new type."[6] Aiming for a totalizing form of propaganda, special both in scope and nature, the Soviets "developed an unprecedented system for receiving foreign visitors and influencing the image of the Soviet Union abroad."[7] The Bolsheviks "aspired to alter not merely the views but also the worldviews of visitors," to effectively convert them, or at least teach them to "see the Soviet system through different eyes."[8] This comprehensive and uncompromising approach to cultural diplomacy foreshadowed the mutually exclusive ideological positions of both superpowers throughout the entirety of the Cold War. Most certainly, it was the propaganda

---

398–419; Federico Romero "Cold War Historiography at the Crossroads," *Cold War History* 14, no. 4 (2014): 685–703.

[5] See: Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: New Press, 1999); Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004); Alfred Reisch, *Hot Books in the Cold War: the CIA-funded Secret Book Distribution Program Behind the Iron Curtain* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013); Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015).

[6] Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to Soviet Union, 1921–1941* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[7] Ibid., 16.

[8] Ibid.

apparatus that the Soviet Union brought to its post-WWII rivalry with the U.S. and which became the foundation upon which Khrushchev built his project of interacting with the West after Stalin's death in 1953.

Since Soviet cultural diplomacy sprung from the ideological core of the Soviet experiment, it was necessarily and inevitably anti-American. In the formative years of the Cold War, the Soviets exploited worldwide anti-American discourses and sentiments to the full and perpetuated them ad nauseam until the fall of communism. It is hardly surprising that the distinctly Cold War version of American cultural diplomacy was forged in the crucible of emerging postwar U.S. military and economic dominance and the bitter ideological rivalry with the Soviet Union. Starting in the early 1950s, the U.S. embarked on a worldwide campaign of promoting its own political and social values through cultural products and events.[9] American cultural diplomacy projects were mostly coordinated by the United States Information Agency (USIA) and were funded from a dynamic mixture of state and private sources.[10] Their upsurge and strength was the result of a proactive as well as a reactive measure, aimed at completely transforming long-standing negative perceptions of America's supposed cultural inferiority and at addressing—or, ideally, dismissing—widespread accusations that racism was prevalent in postwar America.[11] Furthermore, the leaders of a newly self-conscious superpower

---

[9] See Laura A. Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

[10] On the USIA see Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945–1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[11] For the interconnectedness of the Cold War and the internationalization of the civil rights movement, see Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000). For a discussion on how the global perception of U.S. race relations influenced American musical diplomacy, see Penny von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

were aiming to complement America's global military and economic hegemony with a corresponding cultural hegemony.[12]

This global ideological rivalry notwithstanding, after the immediate postwar years, Cold War cultural diplomacy became inherently Janus-faced: geopolitical competition cohabited with transnational exchanges and collaborations initiated by both state and non-state actors. Embodying the intentions behind the slogan of "peaceful coexistence," the U.S. and the Soviet Union signed the "Agreement on Exchanges in Cultural, Technical and Educational Fields" in 1958.[13] The details of the agreement were renegotiated and ratified every two years, yet open communication channels remained stable despite the subsequent antagonisms on the level of high diplomacy. Between 1958 and 1988, an estimated five thousand American and a similar number of Soviet graduate students, scholars, and teachers were exchanged through the IUCTG (Inter-University Council on Travel Grants) and later IREX (International Research & Exchanges Board) programs.[14]

The engagement of the Soviet bloc with the West and the Global South fragmented the rigid geopolitical idea of mutually exclusive "worlds" both conceptually and practically. The short initial phase of the Cold War morphed into a longer phase in which combative rhetoric and global rivalry was complemented by increased cross-systemic relations. The expansion of such practices de-centred the zero-sum logic predicated on lack of

[12] For discussion on U.S. expansionism, Americanization, and cultural imperialism see Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Richard Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht, "Shame on US? Academics, cultural transfer, and the Cold War: A Critical Review," *Diplomatic History* 24 (2000): 465–494; or Mary Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890–2010* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[13] Usually known as the Lacy-Zarubin agreement after the negotiators, William S. B. Lacy, President Eisenhower's Special Assistant on East-West Exchanges, and Georgi Z. Zarubin, Soviet ambassador to the United States.

[14] Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain* (Penn State University Press, 2004), 24.

contact and the "total Cold War" was replaced by an interactive détente.[15] Historiography assessing this transformation reconceptualized the Iron Curtain as a transparent "Nylon Curtain" or a "semi-permeable membrane," which "yielded to strong osmotic tendencies that were globalizing knowledge across the systemic divide about culture, goods, and services."[16] Scholars like Akira Iriye overturn the historical lens to examine the Cold War from the perspective of global history. He warns that to "assign the central role to the Cold War in periodizing post-Second World War history is to consider geopolitics the key to recent history," and claims that "it makes just as much sense to periodize the post-1945 years in terms of the history of decolonization, internationalism, human rights, economic globalization, or environmentalism."[17] This approach de-emphasizes the role of foreign policy and the top-down designs for cultural diplomacy in order to examine the activity of non-state actors, non-governmental organizations, transnational networks, the transfer of ideas and practices, and professional, scientific, or artistic communities.[18]

[15] See Oliver Bange and Poul Villaume, *The Long Détente: Changing Concepts of Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1950s–1980s* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2017).

[16] György Péteri, "Nylon Curtain: Transnational and Transsystemic Tendencies in The Cultural Life of State-Socialist Russia And East-Central Europe," *Slavonica* 10, no. 2 (2004): 115. See also Michael David-Fox, "The Iron Curtain as Semi-Permeable Membrane: The Origins and Demise of the Stalinist Superiority Complex," in *Cold War Crossings: International Travel and Exchange Across the Soviet Bloc, 1940s–1960s* edited by Patryk Babiracki and Kenyon Zimmer (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014), 14–39.

[17] Akira Iriye, "Historicizing the Cold War," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, edited by Richard H. Immerman and Petra Goedde (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 16.

[18] See Johanna Bockman and Gil Eyal, "Eastern Europe as a Laboratory for Economic Knowledge: The Transnational Roots of Neoliberalism," *American Journal of Sociology* (2002): 310–52; Maxine Berg, "East-West Dialogues: Economic Historians, the Cold War, and Détente," *The Journal of Modern History* 87 (March 2015): 36–71; Stephen Macekura, *Of Limits and Growth: The Rise of Global 'Sustainable Development' in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Sarah B. Snyder, *From Selma to Moscow: How Human Rights Activists Transformed U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018); Giles Scott-Smith and Ludovic Tournès,

Despite the different scholarly agendas behind the two approaches, what becomes apparent is the simultaneity of the phenomena under examination and the interdependency of the state and supra- or sub-state forces being analysed. Government-run cultural diplomacy projects, like IREX scholarships, enabled cultural and scientific exchanges which went far beyond the strict foreign policy goals of superpowers by initiating intellectual transfers and helping establish professional networks that defied and outlasted the Cold War. State officials on both sides wanted to use scholarly and artistic exchanges as Cold War weapons while the scholars and artists themselves used the Cold War as a tool for professional development and institution building.[19] Within this dynamic, the pursuit of competition, security, and superiority combined, coexisted, and conflicted with the intentions of cooperation, transfers, joint goals, and reciprocity. Consequently, it is useful in analysing the interactions of the period to distinguish conceptually between the Cold War logic of geopolitical struggle and the logic of transnational connections—not only to better understand the processes that shaped the postwar era, but also to avoid unduly favouring one explicatory narrative over the other.

The Transnational Embeddedness of Cultural Propaganda in Cold War Hungary

The history of post-1956 Hungary in the Cold War showcases the intertwined nature of competitive cultural diplomacy and the cooperative intentions of transnational ties. Initially, due to the ramifications of the 1956 revolution, the new regime of János Kádár lacked legitimacy domestically and abroad. However, the next decades saw significant consolidation on both fronts. The

---

eds., *Global Exchanges: Scholarships and Transnational Circulations in the Modern World* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2018).

[19] See David Engerman, *The Price of Aid: The Economic Cold War in India* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018), 9.

first major international recognition of Kádár's regime came in 1963 in the form of a compromise: the Hungarian mandate was renewed at the UN in exchange for the declaration of a political amnesty aimed to liberate those persecuted for participating in the revolution.[20] Like neighbouring states in the Soviet bloc, Hungary was caught between the economically and culturally driven centripetal need to become more open toward the West and the outside world in general, and the centrifugal forces aiming to enforce totalizing social control, homogeneity, and a distinct systemic-ideological identity. The local Hungarian tendencies favouring an opening and those imposing a closure should be understood in the context of larger regional and global phenomena which created a "dual dependency" for the country: a primary one of military-economic nature from the Soviet Union and a secondary one of an economic and cultural nature from Western countries.[21] The agency—or lack thereof—of small, semi-peripheral East European countries thus consisted in the way they used and incrementally transformed their "scope-of-action" and diversified their tools within the constraints of such dependencies.[22] While the tension between striving for more openness on all levels and the paranoid autocratic reflexes reverting to closedness were not resolved until the fall of the regime, starting with the 1960s the emphasis gradually shifted towards the centripetal tendencies that transformed Hungary's Iron Curtain into one of the most transparent and permeable

[20] Anikó Macher, "Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy, 1957–1963: Echoes of Western Cultural Activity in a Communist Country," in *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*, edited by Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 75–108.

[21] See József Böröcz, "Dual Dependency and the Informalization of External Linkages: The Case of Hungary," *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change* 4 (1992): 189–209.

[22] The concept of small states' "scope-of-action" within geopolitical force-fields comes from the work of historian György Ránki. For more, see Péter Hanák, "'Range' and 'Constraint': Scope of Action and Fixed Course in György Ránki's Historical Approach," *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 34 (1988): 359–373.

barriers in the entire Communist bloc.[23] The country's gradual (re)integration into the Western-dominated world capitalist system and the state's skyrocketing indebtedness at the end of the 1970s greatly determined this shift.[24] Knowledge of and access to the West was neither universal nor easy, being determined by privilege, social status, professional position, geographical location, and gender. Nonetheless, contrasted with the relatively strong isolation of the Soviet Union (and Romania in the 1980s), Hungarian citizens were well informed about both high and popular culture in the West through newspapers, periodicals, and highly frequented cinema theatres.

As a consequence, the period of the 1960s and 1970s should not be seen as defined by "Western cultural penetration" or, conversely, by "imperialist subversion," as the propaganda of the two superpowers would have it.[25] Instead, it was a period when Hungary's international connections and collaborations multiplied, prospered, and became resilient despite constant interference by geopolitical power-struggles, the secret police, and bureaucratic inertia. The late Cold War was defined by complex processes of negotiating cultural and institutional ties, the leveraging of locally embedded privilege and internationally

[23] For a detailed analysis of openness toward the West in Hungarian cultural policy and cultural production and consumption, see Róbert Takács, "Szovjet és magyar nyitás a kultúrában Nyugat felé 1953–1964" [Soviet and Hungarian openness toward the West between 1953–64], *Múltunk* 60, no. 3 (2015): 30–68; and "A magyar kultúra nyitottsága az 1970-es években" [The openness of Hungarian culture in the 1970s] *Múltunk* 61, no. 4 (2016): 24–56.

[24] For an analysis of Hungary's indebtedness see Földes György, *Az eladósodás politikatörténete, 1957–1986* [The political history of indebtedness, 1957–1986] (Budapest: Maecenas, 1995); or Attila Mong, *Kádár hitele: A magyar államadósság története 1956–1990* [Kádár's Credit: The history of the Hungarian state's indebtedness, 1956–1990] (Budapest: Libri, 2012). For an analysis of Hungarian political economy from a world-systems theory approach, see Tamás Gerőcs and András Pinkasz, "Debt-ridden development on Europe's Eastern Periphery," in *Global Inequalities in World-Systems Perspective: Theoretical Debates and Methodological Innovations*, edited by Manuela Boatcă, Andrea Komlosy and Hans-Heinrich Nolte (New York: Routlegde, 2018), 131–153.

[25] For a rather triumphalist take on the impact of American culture in Eastern Europe, see Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945–1961* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

accumulated prestige, and the increasing agency of artists, scholars, scientists, and athletes. The geopolitically and ideologically framed agendas of the Hungarian communist establishment were in a dynamic push-and-pull interplay with the transnational tendencies that motivated and guided many of the leaders and employees of the state's own institutions, from universities to theatres, research facilities, and even ministries.

Cultural diplomacy had an oversized role for the international presence of small, semi-peripheral countries like Hungary that lacked significant economic or military power of their own and, subsequently, had little to no independence in devising their foreign policy. Engaging in cultural diplomacy offered a relatively autonomous field of action, the possibility of expressing cultural uniqueness and of building international prestige without major financial investments.[26] Following the Soviet model, Hungarian authorities wanted to simultaneously improve the international image of the Hungarian People's Republic and to closely supervise the cross-systemic mobility of information, goods, and people. Tasked with this significant—and gradually overwhelming—task was the Institute for Cultural Relations (Kulturális Kapcsolatok Intézete), the Hungarian equivalent of the Soviet All-Union Society for Cultural Ties Abroad, or VOKS (and its later reincarnation, the State Committee for Cultural Ties or GKKS).

The Institute was founded in 1949, yet it became the main administrative hub for cultural diplomacy and official travels to and from Hungary only in the early 1960s.[27] Reacting to the country's improving international presence, in 1962 the Political Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSzMP) decided on the expansion of the Institute, transforming it into a nationally competent organ functioning on the level

---

[26] For a discussion of Bulgarian cultural diplomacy during the Cold War, see Theodora Dragostinova, "The East in the West: Bulgarian Culture in the United States of America during the Global 1970s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 53 (2018): 212–239.

[27] Anna Kosztricz, "A Kulturális Kapcsolatok Intézete" Archivnet.hu, 4th issue (2015). Available at: http://archivnet.hu/politika/a_kulturalis_kapcso-latok_intezete.html?oldal=5 (retrieved September 5, 2019).

of ministries.[28] Covertly, the ICR also had strong ties to the Hungarian State Security (Állambiztonság) that placed its officers in key positions and ran an entire network of informants within the institution. The ICR hosted the Hungarian National Commission for UNESCO from 1963, the National Council of Scholarships (Országos Ösztöndíj Tanács) from 1968, and supervised the Hungarian cultural institutions located in the West (Vienna, Rome, Paris, and Helsinki), the communist bloc (Sofia, Warsaw, Prague, and East-Berlin), and the "developing world" (Cairo and Delhi).[29]

The ICR was charged with coordinating the propagation of Hungarian culture abroad; initiating cultural and scientific relations with other countries; preparing cultural agreements with a selection of these countries; facilitating the presentation of foreign cultures in Hungary; managing all official cultural delegations to and from Hungary; and perhaps most difficult of all, overseeing the international cultural activities of all Hungarian official organs. It was divided into territorial sections (területi főosztályok) according to the prevalent symbolic geography of the Cold War: the First Section was handling relations with "friendly" socialist countries, the Third Section dealt with "developing" countries (mostly in the Global South), while the Second and Fourth Sections addressed contacts with the capitalist countries of Western Europe and North America. Accordingly, the activities of the sections were specifically tailored to address the three geopolitically defined areas. Building cultural relations with socialist countries had the purpose of strengthening the socialist world community, whereas contacts with capitalist countries were intended to

---

[28] "A Magyar Forradalmi Munkás-Paraszt Kormány 3184/1962. sz. határozata a KKI irányításával és szervezetével kapcsolatos egyes kérdésekről [Decree nr. 3184/1962 of the Hungarian Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Government about certain questions related to the control and organization of the Institute for Cultural Relations]," MNL OL, XIX-A-33-b, box 195.

[29] See Katalin Somlai, "Ösztöndíjjal Nyugatra a hatvanas években: Az Országos Ösztöndíj Tanács felállítása [To the West with a scholarship: The establishment of the National Council of Scholarships]," in *Kádárizmus: Mélyfúrások*, edited by János Tischler (Budapest, 2009), 273–314.

increase the international prestige of Hungary. Towards the countries "recently freed from colonial yoke," the Institute promised assistance in scientific and professional education, in the organization of their administrative, economic and scientific life, and the distribution of cultural and technological knowledge. Finally, the "needs of the loyal Hungarian émigré communities abroad" were also to be taken into account when devising the ICR's cultural policy.[30]

In a 1963 article, János Pataki, chief secretary of the ICR, outlined the official principles of Hungarian cultural diplomacy.[31] According to Pataki, the goal of propagating Hungarian culture abroad was to dispel previous "faux romantic" conceptions about the country and to showcase the new, socialist way of life. The article confidently declared: "Today it is widely accepted as common sense that while foreign cultural and scientific achievements cannot be imported without the proper critique, all that is useful in them must be adopted."[32] Pataki presented this position as a sign of significant evolution from previous approaches to cultural relations described as either "provincial" or "cosmopolite." Most likely these two fallacies referred to the isolationism of the Stalinist Rákosi regime on the one hand and the supposedly unprincipled openness of "bourgeois" attitudes on the other—both of which were, by implication, surpassed by the current Kádár regime. As a result, it was the duty of the Party and of the paternalist State to find and navigate a measured middle ground for openness and cultural relations, guaranteeing the "consistent ideological offensive of socialism against the decadent and reactionary currents of bourgeois culture."[33]

More than a decade later, in 1974, a working paper submitted to the Ministry of Culture entitled "On Our Cultural Work Abroad" reconfirmed the same goals for Hungarian cultural

---

[30] József Bognár's memo on September 13, 1962. MNL OL, XIX-I-4-jjj, box 21.

[31] János Pataki, "Magyarország kulturális kapcsolatai [Hungary's cultural relations]," *Pártélet* 11 (1963): 52-57.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

diplomacy.[34] Its author was Lívia Bíró, a long-time member of the Party and a midlevel functionary who regularly articulated the authoritative position regarding cultural policy. She explained the totality of scope and the geopolitical intentions surrounding the role of culture in the global confrontation that was the Cold War:

> The international presence and impact of Hungarian culture is not merely a cultural issue because it is perceived as a message from a socialist country, and its reception is the same as the reception of a Hungary that is building a living and existing socialism. As such, every representation of our culture abroad is in the service of cultural propaganda.[35]

According to Bíró, cultural diplomacy was framed by high expectations that called for consistency, homogeneity, and precise coordination in developing cultural and scientific relations and calculating their ultimate impact. Despite such maximalist expectations, officials on all sides of the Cold War divide gradually discovered that cultural matters were by their very nature heterogeneous, informal, free flowing, self-willed, and their reception unpredictable. Nonetheless, the ICR mobilized its sizable bureaucratic and professional arsenal to facilitate the centrally condoned dissemination of Hungarian culture abroad and to channel foreign culture into Hungary.

To start, it organized and helped organize hundreds of exhibitions on Hungarian and international art, design, architecture, and photography. For example, the Institute initiated commemorative exhibitions for famous Hungarian personalities in several countries, like in 1955 for the tenth anniversary of Béla Bartók's death, and in 1962 for the eightieth birthday of Zoltán Kodály.[36] In the case of U.S.-Hungarian

---

[34] Lívia Bíró, "A külföldre irányuló kulturális munkáról [On Our Cultural Work Abroad]," November 25, 1974. MNL OL, XIX-I-7-aa, box 4.

[35] Ibid.

[36] "Celebrations honoring Zoltán Kodály's 80th birthday abroad," 1963. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 1.

cultural relations, there was an exchange of exhibitions which went from minor events to large-scale projects. The initial steps included exhibitions on Hungarian folk art or music education at U.S. universities, or a 1968 exhibit dedicated to American photographer Edward Steichen in Budapest. This bilateral practice eventually produced a multi-city traveling exhibition about Hungarian Art Nouveau touring the U.S. between 1976–79, and the organization of major American exhibitions in Hungary: "Images of America" (1977), "America Now" (1980), "American Theater Today" (1982), "The World of American Cinema" (1984), etc.[37] The ICR was charged with finding new touring destinations for Hungarian artists and ensembles—and making sure that invitations for them were included in future cultural agreements. Modelled on the cultural diplomatic role assigned by Soviet authorities to the Bolshoi Ballet, the flagship act for Hungarian musical diplomacy was the State Folk Ensemble (Magyar Állami Népi Együttes) which started touring in Western Europe already in the 1950s and performed successfully throughout South America in 1965 and North America in 1966.[38]

Additionally, the Institute had a hand in distributing various kinds of publications for foreign readerships, like the newspapers *Daily News* and *Hungary*, the literary and scholarly journal *The New Hungarian Quarterly*, and various books on Hungary produced by the Corvina publishing house.[39] Furthermore, it provided support and censorial oversight to translation projects which aimed to present Hungarian literature to the world, for example the representative anthology of post-1945 Hungarian verse, edited by Miklós Vajda and published jointly by Columbia

[37] For the Hungarian Art Nouveau exhibition tour see "An Enlightening Collection from Budapest," *The New York Times*, March 12, 1978.

[38] The ensemble caught the attention of Walt Disney, who apparently made a 65-minute short film about the U.S. performance of the dance group. For an analysis of the Bolsoi Ballet's tours in the West, see Christina Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012).

[39] For example, Zoltán Halász, *Hungary* (Budapest: Corvina, 1960); or *Hungary*, text by Gyula Fekete, with 146 black-and-white and 7 colour photos by Balla Demeter, Dobos Lajos, Kónya Kálmán (Budapest: Corvina, 1974).

University Press and Corvina in 1977.[40] Finally, for those in charge of improving the international image and prestige of the country, no audience was too small or too young. Starting with the 1960s, Hungarian officials received dozens of letters from American elementary schools in which pupils or their teachers were asking for informational materials about Hungary for their social studies classes. Amazingly, the employees of the ICR found time and resources to reply to each of these letters and to send each sixth- or seventh-grader brochures, postcards, and dolls dressed in folk costumes.[41]

Despite the strong ideological framing, projects of cultural diplomacy during the Cold War were not unilateral efforts in one-way communication. The implementation, interpretation, and impact of projects that were built on the premise of exchange and reciprocity—like cooperation in international non-governmental organizations, scholarships schemes, participation at summer universities and joint education programs—escaped the conceptual framework of Cold War. In many cases concerning Hungary's international presence, the intention to propagate a positive image of the Hungarian Peoples' Republic was accompanied by the often stronger institutional and professional agendas of the privileged figures animating the cross-systemic interactions.

Conforming to a global trend, starting in the 1960s renowned Hungarian scientists, educators, and artists became members in the world organizations linked to their respective fields, occupying high-ranking positions and hosting one of these organization's world congresses in Budapest. In 1963, János Pataki informed his readers about Hungary's membership in 364 international non-governmental organizations—by 1979, an internal report of the Ministry of Culture talked

---

[40] *Modern Hungarian Poetry*, edited and with an introduction by Miklós Vajda. (New York and Budapest: Columbia University Press and Corvina Press, 1977).

[41] For example, an elementary school teacher from the state of New York, Laura Genuth, wrote a letter to János Kádár on January 1, 1963. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 205.

about involvement in 900 such organizations.[42] Notable examples in the musical field were the International Society for Music Education, holding one of its yearly conferences in Budapest in 1964, and the Federation Internationales des Jeunesses Musicales (today known as Jeunesses Musicales International) bringing its congress to Hungary in 1969. Budapest hosted several other world congresses, e.g. the Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art (1969), the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (1972), the International Comparative Literature Association (1976), and the International Economic History Association (1982). The World Esperanto Congress was organized twice during this period (1966 and 1983) in Budapest—which also gave home to the World Hunting Expo in 1971. The governmental intention in permitting Hungarian scholars and artists to join such organizations and bring such highly mediatized conferences to Hungary was wholly instrumental, aiming to influence the activity of an independent non-state entity and hopefully using it in the geopolitical struggle against capitalist and "bourgeois" countries. Yet, as the example of the International Economic History Association shows, both the Hungarian historians involved (György Ránki and Iván T. Berend) and the professional community itself was highly resistant to attempts at de-railing the association for Cold War purposes.[43]

Much like world congresses and international conferences, the summer university courses organized in Debrecen, Esztergom, or Pécs (by the 1970s up to eleven Hungarian cities hosted such courses with participants from 27 countries) were borderline events that mixed the logic of cultural diplomacy with that of transnational scientific and educational collaboration. However, the most significant relationships in the cultural and artistic fields during the Cold War era were forged through

[42] Pataki, "Magyarország kulturális kapcsolatai," 53; "A nem-kormányközi kulturális nemzetközi szervezetekben végzett munkánk [Our work in non-governmental international cultural organizations]," 1979. MNL OL, XIX-I-7-dd, box 61.

[43] For an extensive analysis of the activity of the IEHA, see Berg, "East-West Dialogues," op. cit.

participation in the various scholarship schemes set up between the geopolitical rivals. During the 1960s and 1970s, Hungary signed a series of agreements on scientific and cultural exchanges with countries in Western Europe, culminating in the one finalized with the U.S. in 1976.[44] As the country became more open and its institutions more integrated into transnational networks, the scholarship opportunities multiplied. To take the example of the exchanges between the U.S. and Hungary: while initially scholars could only go to America through either the small Inter-University Committee exchange (from 1963) or get a highly prestigious Ford Scholarship (from 1964), the start of IREX in Hungary from 1968 onward significantly increased the cross-systemic mobility of academics. This was complemented by a variety of UNESCO scholarships, the agreement for joint scientific projects between the ICR and the National Science Foundation, invitations to the State Department's International Visitor Program and multi-regional programs, and finally, the introduction of the Eisenhower and Fulbright Scholarships. There were also scholarships that were less high-profile and more independent from official oversight, like the participation of Hungarian writers at the International Writing Program at Iowa City (since 1970) or receiving the István Gombocz scholarship set up by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions for young Hungarian librarians at Kent State University, Ohio, in 1975.[45] Finally, some of the most complex cases for Cold War interaction and institutional collaboration came in the form of establishing lectureships or chairs for Hungarian Studies at North American universities, like the lecturing position set up by professor Denis Sinor at Indiana University, Bloomington, in 1963 and turned into a

---

[44] On U.S.-Hungarian relations, see László Borhi, *Dealing with Dictators: The United States, Hungary, and East Central Europe, 1942–1989* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016).

[45] On the participation of East European writers at the IWP, see Szabolcs László, "Performing for the Capitalists: Cold War Cultural Diplomacy Experienced by Hungarian and Romanian Writers at the Iowa International Writing Program (1967-1989)," *Prisms: Perspectives on South East European History* (Spring 2020).

full-blown endowed Chair in 1979; or the lecturing position created by professor Albert Tezla in 1973 at the University of Minnesota.[46]

Promoting the Kodály Method: Transnational Network and Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy

Although most projects categorized as Cold War cultural diplomacy reveal to varying degrees the inextricable and dynamic mixture of the geopolitical and transnational logics that shaped postwar history, the international dissemination of the music education system labelled as the "Kodály method"— and especially its adaptation in the U.S.—offers an instructive case study.

The life and work of composer, music educator, and ethnomusicologist Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) and the development of what came to be known as the "Kodály method" has been studied extensively.[47] However, the international success of the method has been taken for granted with no analysis of the mechanisms which made its appeal and dissemination possible in the middle of the Cold War.

Most accounts of Kodály's efforts from the 1920s until the 1960s to transform Hungarian music education have a teleological narrative leading up to the emergence of a well-rounded concept that was first put into practice on a national scale and then disseminated internationally.[48] To summarize:

[46] On the establishment of the Hungarian Chair at Indiana University, see Denis Sinor, "A Peaceful Interlude in the Cold War," *Hungarian Studies* 19, no. 2 (2005): 243–253. During this period, smaller centres for Hungarian studies were also established at Rutgers University, Columbia University, University of Nebraska, University of California, Santa Barbara, University of Toronto, and Carleton University.

[47] For an overview, see Michael Houlahan and Philip Tacka, *Zoltán Kodály: A Guide to Research* (New York: Garland Pub., 1998).

[48] For example, Lois Choksy, *The Kodály Method: Comprehensive Music Education from Infant to Adult* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974), or Michael Houlahan and Philip Tacka, *Kodály Today: A Cognitive Approach to Elementary Music Education* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Kodály turned his attention to the musical education of children around 1925, publishing his first works on the topic shortly after.[49] Following the war, his conceptualization of music pedagogy was broadly institutionalized through the activities of his disciples. With the oft-repeated slogan "Music should be for everyone! (Legyen a zene mindenkié!)," Kodály's vision was to democratize musical culture by making the reading and writing of music a part of general education throughout the Hungarian school system—a plan that was integrated into the general framework of Soviet-type social engineering schemes of the Rákosi era.[50] In 1950, the first special music primary school was started in Kecskemét, in which children studied music and choral singing daily, alongside the regular curriculum. Since the universalizing rhetoric of Kodály's ideas and the pedagogical results were judged positively by the communist establishment, similar music schools (or "singing schools") were opened across the country. By 1969, there were 86 such schools across Hungary, while in 1990 their number reached 500.[51] Kodály himself developed a love-hate relationship with the communist Hungarian authorities—and was turned both domestically and internationally into an ambiguous cultural icon that could equally represent the alliance of (non-Party member) artists and intellectuals with the Communist Party, and simultaneously, their relative independence from it. Finally, the culmination of the method's history came with its worldwide dissemination

[49] Kodály published the first volume of *Bicinia Hungarica* in 1937. English translation: Zoltán Kodály, *Bicinia Hungarica,* translated by Percy M. Young (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1962).

[50] Péteri Lóránt, "Zene, oktatás, tudomány, politika (Kodály és az államszocializmus művelődéspolitikája, 1948–1967 [Music, educations, science, politics: Kodály and the politics of culture during state socialism, 1948–1967]," *Forrás* 39 (2007): 45–63.

[51] See Lynn Hooker, "The Kodály and Rajkó Methods: Voices, Instruments, Ethnicity, and the Globalization of Hungarian Music Education in the Twentieth Century," *Hungarian Cultural Studies* 6 (2014): 130–147; and Catherine Pierce Sennyey, "The Kodály Method in Post-Communist Hungary: A Decade of Change," *Kodály Envoy* 2 (2001): 15–16.

starting with the 1960s, being adapted on a large-scale in the U.S., Canada, Australia, Denmark, Finland, Japan, etc.[52]

This linear narrative was a central part of the creation of the "Kodály method" in the early 1960s as a viable model that could be isolated, defined, compared (e.g. with the Orff method), and eventually exported and adapted to foreign contexts. Models are a form of selective forgetting through which the messiness of history is displaced by a capsule narrative, designed to convey a formula for the desired transformation: in this case, improving the musical literacy of children and the musical culture of a nation.[53] Once the model fell into place, its coherent identity papered over the various experimental stages through which the main tools of the method were chosen: the use of folk songs, the tonic solfège singing, the iconic hand signs to indicate scale degrees, and the rhythm duration syllables.[54] Furthermore, the model was built around the figure of Kodály, giving it a seamless and unitary aspect and obscuring the collective work done by his disciples (Ádám Jenő, György Kerényi, Erzsébet Szőnyi, etc.). Finally, and most crucially for my case study, the retroactive construction of a clearly identifiable model silenced the fundamentally transnational and collaborative nature of how the Kodály method came into existence.

Hungary's presence in the international canon of twentieth century modern music rested primarily on the worldwide acclaim for the works of Béla Bartók, and to a lesser extent on the recognition of Kodály's compositions. Yet, due to Bartók's emigration to the U.S. in 1940 and the Zhdanovian attacks on his music in Stalinist Hungary, the interpretation of his legacy was controversial and contentious on both sides of the

---

[52] In 2016, the Kodály method was included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

[53] Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 45.

[54] Lois Choksy, Robert M. Abramson, Avon E. Gillespie, David Woods, and Frank York, *Teaching Music in the Twenty-First Century* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall., 2001), 84–88.

Iron Curtain.[55] Kodály, on the other hand, due to his choice of remaining in Hungary and his ambivalent relationship with the communist regime, could be celebrated domestically and internationally as a truly "autochthonous"—meaning both national and socialist—cultural icon. However, such official propagation by the Hungarian authorities instrumentalized Kodály's figure and largely ignored his and his disciples' efforts in reforming music education. Consequently, it was only in the middle of the 1960s that the system of music education inspired by Kodály was elevated from a domestic policy into becoming an international issue.

As late as 1963, János Pataki failed to make any reference to the educational method when listing the Hungarian cultural products or events of international interest, nor was the method mentioned in the worldwide celebrations held to honour Kodály's eightieth birthday.[56] The year 1964, however, proved to be pivotal by bringing two events to Budapest that would kickstart the process through which the "Hungarian system of music education" became the globally acclaimed "Kodály method." The primary event was the conference of the International Society for Music Education (ISME), which had Kodály as its honorary president, and during which Hungarian music educators gave several highly acclaimed and memorable presentations of the "Hungarian system" to pedagogues from around the world. The smaller event was the meeting of the International Folk Music Council, also presided over by the Hungarian composer who personally took the participants on a tour of the "singing school" in Kecskemét.[57]

Afterwards, Kodály and his disciples were flooded with invitations to give further presentations and with requests to receive in Hungary educators and students interested in the

[55] For an in-depth analysis of the debates over Bartók's work, see Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music Divided: Bartók's Legacy in Cold War Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

[56] Pataki, "Magyarország kulturális kapcsolatai," op. cit., 54.

[57] Deeply impressing figures like professor Alexander Ringer of the University of Illinois, who would become a key figure in the transplantation of the Kodály method to the U.S. See Chosky, *The Kodály Method*, 6–7.

method. The composer's 1965 and 1966 visits to the U.S. had a key role in further popularizing the educational method in America, especially through the participation of the Hungarian delegation at the ISME conference at Interlochen, Michigan.[58] Moreover, it was at a lecture for music educators held at Stanford in the summer of 1966 that many of Kodály's future American "followers" (Denise Bacon, Sister Mary Alice Hein, Sister Lorna Zemke, Lois Choksy, etc.) had the chance to meet the iconic figure at the centre of a brewing international enthusiasm for a new approach to teaching music. The 1960s also saw Hungarian educators, especially Erzsébet Szőnyi, travel from conference to workshop to summer university throughout the U.S. and Canada and tirelessly give demonstrations on the "Hungarian system" to young and old—establishing the foundations of a wide-ranging professional and personal network that cut across the Iron Curtain and belied the divisions of the Cold War.[59]

Increasingly, this network was held together by the common denominator of Kodály's name, even before the method emerged as an identifiable model. This branding was done by design: while not yet using the popular moniker "Kodály method," in her 1966 lecture on the "characteristics of the Hungarian system," Szőnyi called Kodály the "foundation of our whole musical education."[60] Lois Choksy, author of the most widely used handbook on the method, wrote in 1974 that it was "unlikely that Kodály ever thought of what was taking place in the Singing Schools of Hungary as the 'Kodály Method.' It remained for foreigners visiting Hungary to give Kodály's name

[58] On Kodály's 1966 visit to the U.S., see Melinda Berlász, "Zoltán Kodály's Visit to Santa Barbara and the Premieres of the *Psalmus Hungaricus* and the Symphony in America," *Studia Musicologica* 58, no. 1 (2017): 89–118.

[59] For example, Erzsébet Szőnyi was invited to the International Seminar on Teacher Education in Music, sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education and held at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in August 1966. Her presentation was entitled "The Principal Characteristics in Hungarian Music Education." See also Jerry-Louis Jaccard, *A Tear in the Curtain: The Musical Diplomacy of Erzsébet Szőnyi: Musician, Composer, Teacher of Teachers* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2014).

[60] Szőnyi, "The Principal Characteristics in Hungarian Music Education," op. cit., 102.

to what they saw."[61] The name indeed came from international protagonists translating the Hungarian educational system as a method along the lines of the Szuzuki-, Orff-, Ward-, or Dalcroze-methods.[62] The model was born out of the interaction of a local practice and a global framework, prompted by the comparative perspective embedded in the field of professional music education. From 1966 onward, its identity solidified in both everyday usage and professional publications.

However, until the middle of the 1970s the international dissemination of the method and the numerous attempts of its adaptation remained an essentially non-governmental, bottom-up, transnational effort animated by the professional network of music educators. The Hungarian teachers of the method and their international partners perfected two practices for winning adherents and transferring knowledge across borders. One was to regularly put the Hungarian "singing schools" on display and to immerse foreign observers in the everyday workings of the music education system. This was accompanied by coursework in the theory of the method at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest. Lacking any financial support from the Hungarian government for welcoming foreign students and teachers, they came to Hungary covering their expenses and fees from grants or their own savings.

For example, in 1967 Denise Bacon, the director of the Dana School of Music, spent most of the academic year 1967/68 in Hungary learning the Kodály method. In a report submitted voluntarily to the Ministry of Education and the ICR, she praised Hungarian schoolchildren's knowledge of music as "superior to that of most of our music teachers in the U.S. I am afraid to go home and tell our teachers how good these children are for fear they will be discouraged instead of inspired."[63] Her general

---

[61] Choksy, *The Kodály Method,* 10. In the UK, the Kodály method was known as the "Choral Method" due to the translation work of Percy M. Young. See his article "Kodály as Educationist," *Tempo* 63 (Winter, 1962–1963): 37–40.

[62] See Erzsébet Szőnyi travelogues, *Öt kontinensen a zene szolgálatában* [In the Service of Music on Five Continents] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1979).

[63] Report of Denise Bacon to the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Cultural Institute, June 17, 1968. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 218.

impression of the impact arising from the introduction of the Kodály method in Hungary reads like the fulfilment of Kodály's utopian intentions:

> I am much impressed and interested in the benefits your people seem to receive from this type of education, especially in a cultural sense. What today is done for the whole country cannot possibly be overestimated. … That the average man or child knows something about music and art and is able to distinguish between great art and mere entertainment is unbelievable and thrilling to me.[64]

It was positive accounts like hers that fuelled the international image of the "Hungarian success story": a country in which people were educated and musically literate thanks in no small part to the wide application of the Kodály method. In the eyes and the writings of American music educators, Hungary was becoming an indisputably ideal example to emulate. In other words, foreign pedagogues were working on the improvement of the country's international image—without the slightest prompting or control by Hungarian authorities.

Another practice for disseminating the Kodály method internationally, and especially throughout the U.S. and Canada, was for Hungarian music educators to attend summer universities and workshops—and teach the method overseas. Although many of Kodály's disciples travelled widely and frequently, perhaps none had such a packed schedule as Erzsébet Szőnyi's 1969 summer itinerary reveals. She started on July 15, with a workshop organized by Alexander Ringer at the University of Illinois for music teachers who spent the previous academic year in Hungary. Afterwards, she visited another Hungarian educator, Katalin Forrai, leading a workshop at Indiana University. From there Szőnyi travelled to Washington University in St. Louis then flew out to the East Coast to visit Denise Bacon at the Dana Hall School of Music in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Her next destination was San Francisco and

---

[64] Ibid.

then Washington University in Seattle, only to travel to Canada shortly after and give a series of lectures at McGill University in Montreal and at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.[65]

Both mechanisms reveal the significant guiding role and heightened agency of Hungarian educators in a global context. The knowledge and skills accumulated by Hungarian teachers through decades of experience in developing and applying the method could not be simply copied and reproduced in different educational contexts without their help. The direct input, guidance, and legitimizing touch of Hungarian partners was crucial in starting most foreign projects based on the Kodály method, especially in the U.S. Additionally, having been Kodály's disciple was an invaluable source of prestige—a direct connection to the late composer conferred an aura of authenticity on the activities and publications of Hungarian educators. This translated into a transnational cultural capital which had the power to legitimize not just summer university courses but entire institutions of education.[66]

Accordingly, the collaborative relationship between American and Hungarian educators was characterized by balance and reciprocity—and not by the otherwise dominant (centre-periphery) power-dynamics of the economic and military spheres of the Cold War.[67] In this sense, the story of the dissemination of the Kodály method also goes against the conventional narrative of intellectual and technological transfers going from West to East, establishing the gradual hegemony of the former over the latter.[68] Furthermore, the practices of lively demonstrations and overseas invitations were informal, personal, and ad-hoc—true to their grass-roots nature. They came from the inherent logic of the pedagogical profession and were based on the

[65] Erzsébet Szőnyi's travel report, submitted November 28, 1969. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 221.

[66] See for example Szőnyi's foreword in Choksy's monograph.

[67] See Westad, *The Cold War,* op. cit.

[68] See Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization,* op. cit.; Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century,* op. cit.; or Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

principles of direct observation, communication, participation, and learning by practice. Once projected across the geopolitical divide separating the Soviet bloc from the U.S. these principles inevitably went against—or outright defied—the overarching logic and animosity of the Cold War. Nonetheless, these essentially transnational and collaborative practices were accepted and institutionalized by the end of the 1970s on both sides of the Atlantic by American private foundations and the communist Hungarian authorities.

Thanks to the activity of American music educators, the popularity of the Kodály method grew rapidly in the U.S., becoming part of undergraduate and graduate curricula, music instruction in numerous schools, and serving as an organizing principle for new institutions or programs. With the financial support of the National Endowment for the Arts, Alexander Ringer established the Kodály Fellowship Program at the University of Illinois in 1968. Through the graduates of the program, he initiated a teaching experiment based on the method in the elementary schools of New Haven, Connecticut.[69] The Kodály Musical Training Institute (KMTI) was founded in 1969 in Wellesley by Denise Bacon with the help of a Ford Foundation grant of $184,000.[70] The young David Rockefeller Jr. acquired an interest for the method, visited Hungary in 1971, and soon became the Chairman for the Institute's Board of Trustees. Smaller centres for the education of the Kodály method were started also in California, Wisconsin, and Indiana. Holy Names College in Oakland, California, hosted the first Kodály International Symposium in 1973 and the Organization of American Kodály Educators was founded in 1975.

More importantly, however, the Kodály method was introduced in thousands of elementary schools across the U.S. A 1979 study that focused on the states of Connecticut, Indiana, and Washington found that nearly half of the music

[69] See Alexander Ringer, "Kodaly and Education: A Musicological Note," *College Music Symposium* 11 (Fall, 1971): 60–65.

[70] Press Release by the Council for Public Schools, Boston, Mass., October 26, 1969. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 221.

teachers in their sample had training in the method and used it in their classes.[71] Furthermore, the method made an impact on American popular culture and became part of the zeitgeist after it featured in the 1977 Steven Spielberg movie, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Such popularity and proliferation of usage shows that the informal and transnational initiatives of the 1960s bore fruit by the 1970s in the form of financial support, institutional setting, and universal recognition. It is worthwhile to pause and consider: the official music education system of a communist country (introduced during Stalinism, no less), instructed and mentored by employees of the Hungarian state, was taking American education and pop culture by storm—while the Vietnam War and the invasion of Czechoslovakia dominated headlines.[72]

The internationalization of the Kodály method and its remarkable success in the U.S. remained a phenomenon without a supervising central authority in Hungary for over a decade. By the time those responsible for the design of cultural diplomacy at the ICR woke up to the possibilities offered by the widespread appeal of the method, both the transnational network of educators and the American institutions were solidified. During this decade, the Hungarian authorities did not initiate any of the contacts, exchanges, or international projects related to the method. The ICR and the various ministries acknowledged its rise to fame and "contributed" to the process by not obstructing the trans-Atlantic mobility of Hungarian educators or the entry of Americans into Hungary. For example, Péter Erdei, who as a fresh graduate of the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music was invited in 1968 by Denise Bacon to Wellesley to help her set up the KMTI, was allowed to remain in the U.S. for four consecutive years—a privilege rarely awarded to young scholars during those years. However, when Erzsébet Szőnyi asked the ICR for

---

[71] See Charles R. Hoffer, "The Big KO: How Widely Are Kodaly and Orff Approaches Used?" *Music Educators Journal* 6 (Feb. 1981): 46–47.

[72] For an attempt at explaining the success of the Kodály method in the U.S., see Samuel D. Miller, "Zoltán Kodály as Musician-Educator Exemplar: A Critique," *College Music Symposium* 1 (Spring 1980): 126–134.

assistance in receiving a group of American music educators from the state of Washington, their reply was: "Thank you for informing us, the matter does not concern our Institution."[73]

A change in official attitudes came once authoritative figures in the ICR and the Ministry of Culture discovered the extent of the financial and moral support the Kodály method received in the U.S. and realized that the steady influx of students and visitors represented a significant source of hard currency for the Hungarian state. In other words, previously dismissive bureaucrats gradually understood that the transnationally developed and externally funded Kodály method was in fact a veritable gift which fell in the lap of Hungarian cultural diplomacy—and they duly set about to appropriate and exploit this valuable cultural product.

This transformation can be followed through the change in dealing with Denise Bacon and her plans to establish an institution for teaching the method in the U.S. (the future KMTI). She intended to create an institutional setting for the informal practices that had developed since 1964: to regularly bring Hungarian educators to the U.S. and send American teachers to Hungary. Throughout her stay in Budapest in 1968, miss Bacon made regular visits to the ICR, the Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to inform them of her plans and to request their help. She was received with reluctance and her offer for collaboration was banished into the limbo of non-conclusive inter-ministerial correspondence, with the diminishing note: "Professional opinion about her very negative—no action needed."[74]

However, an internal note of the Ministry of Culture from February 1969 already had an appreciative tone, commending her for the tireless efforts exerted in promoting the "cause of Hungarian education abroad" and acknowledging her ability

---

[73] Letter from Erzsébet Szőnyi to the Institute for Cultural Relations, April 7, 1967. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 215.

[74] Note by József Kerekes, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 7, 1968. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 218.

to win financial support for her ideas in the U.S.[75] The final recommendation in the note was full-blown support of her plans which could provide Hungary with income and a chance for disseminating cultural propaganda. In a later memo, support was predicated on the condition that the future KMTI would be "professionally and politically irreproachable," meaning that it would "disseminate the Hungarian method of music education without distortion and maintain appropriate relations with the Hungarian state."[76] However, the Ministry also admitted that Hungarian officials had limited leverage in the matter and concluded that the "encouragement and support for Miss Bacon's initiative is ultimately advisable, considering that the institution would be established with or without our endorsement…"[77]

During this time, Miss Bacon remained highly persistent and staunchly dedicated to building a workable and transparent partnership with the communist authorities, notifying them of every development and inviting representatives to consultations and celebratory events. She was firm on her prerogative to personally interview and select the Hungarian educators to be employed in her institution (accepting the recommendations of Erzsébet Szőnyi, and not of a government body), and in return was ready to promise political concessions that satisfied the Cold War suspicions and taboos of the Hungarian establishment. Namely, she promised not to hire anyone to the KMTI who "has left Hungary since 1956, at least for the first three to five years of the program."[78] As a result, in June 1970 the KMTI signed a long-term agreement of collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, establishing a two-year degree for those enrolling in its program: after the first year of preparation at Wellesley,

[75] Internal note from Róbert Boros, Ministry of Culture, to József Horváth, ICR, February 8, 1969. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 219.

[76] Internal note by Róbert Boros, Ministry of Culture, October 1, 1969. MNL OL, XIX-I-4-jjj, box 42.

[77] Internal note, Ministry of Culture, January 6, 1970. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 221.

[78] Letter from Denise Bacon to Róbert Boros, January 14, 1970. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 221.

candidates were to spend another year studying at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music and observing the "singing school" in Kecskemét.[79] Since all costs were covered by the American side, the "support" given to the whole enterprise by the Hungarian authorities—besides sending educational materials and handling logistics—was overwhelmingly symbolic.

The officials responsible for Hungarian cultural diplomacy wished to appropriate, supervise, and influence the Kodály method as a cultural product representative of communist Hungary. According to their hopes, the KMTI "would basically allow us to promote our cultural values in the field of American public education with the financial and moral support of the Ford Foundation."[80] Despite such expectations, Hungarian authorities were in fact unable to exercise genuine financial, intellectual, or political control over transnational initiatives like the one realized by Denise Bacon. Given the ICR's limited power over KMTI in real terms, it wanted to at least win the game of perceptions and to—unfairly—claim credit for the idea. In a letter to the Ford Foundation the ICR declared that they considered the KMTI "another U.S.-Hungarian Project initiated and materialized by the Ford Foundation and the ICR."[81] This strongly worded claim proved to be an empty promise since the ICR still lacked the means or the strategy to fully engage in the promotion of the Kodály method. In a 1973 letter about her participation in the first Kodály International Symposium organized in Oakland, Szőnyi unabashedly confronts the leaders of the ICR for their failure to send any official Hungarian delegate to such a high-profile event attended otherwise by the

[79] "Általános hosszúlejáratú együttműködési megállapodás a Magyar Művelődési Minisztérium és a Kodály Zenei Képzési Intézet, Wellesley, Mass. között [Long-term agreement between the Hungarian Ministry of Culture and the Kodály Musical Training Institute, Wellesly, Mass.]," June 9, 1970. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 221.

[80] Internal note by Gábor Vígh, ICR, February 27, 1970. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 221.

[81] Quoted in a letter by Gábor Vígh, ICR, to Ervin Hivatal, Ministry of Culture, June 26, 1970. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 221.

representatives of the IREX, the Ford Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education.[82]

Gradually, however, the architects of Hungarian cultural diplomacy realized that in order to effectively appropriate the transnational cultural capital associated with the Kodály method they would need to do more than just engage in pompous rhetoric and passive supervision. The process of incorporating the method into the mechanisms of centrally coordinated cultural relations will require proactive organization and meaningful financial contribution. The focus of these emerging realizations was the plan to establish a Kodály Institute at Kecskemént with the aim of channelling the international interest in the Kodály method and coordinating its instruction both domestically and abroad. The rationale of the proposition submitted by the Ministry of Culture to the Department for Agitation and Propaganda was to change the current state of affairs: all initiatives and activity related to the international circulation of the Kodály method originated outside of Hungary. According to the proposition, these projects were "lacking a unifying conception and a coordinated leadership" and it was the duty of the Hungarian state to fill this role.[83]

By 1973, it also became evident to the authorities that unless they act promptly the international guardianship of the Kodály method might slip away from its Hungarian roots. At the Kodály Symposium in Oakland, Alexander Ringer proposed the formation of an International Kodály Society (IKS) to take charge of the method's promotion globally. Seeing the IKS as a potential rival for the domestically planned Kodály Institute, the goals for Hungarian cultural diplomacy finally crystallized: get the Institute running as soon as possible; bring the II. International Kodály Symposium to Kecskemét; and tie the IKS to Hungary by institutional, personal, and financial means. And by the fall of 1975 these goals were

---

[82] Letter by Erzsébet Szőnyi to Endre Rosta, director of ICR, November 28, 1973. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 11.

[83] Proposition for the Department for Agitation and Propaganda about the establishment of the Kodály Institute for Music Education, June 12, 1972. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 11.

essentially accomplished: through a donation of 600.000 Forints from the government, the IKS became the first international non-governmental organization with its headquarters in Hungary and its Board of Directors overwhelmingly Hungarian.[84] More than a decade after the Kodály method made its appearance on the international stage thanks to the efforts of a transnational network of music educators, this highly popular and beloved educational model was at long last incorporated into the cultural policy agenda and institutional structure of the country that it all started from. This official gesture brought financial stability and regularity, but also centralization and oversight, eliminating to a certain degree the informality and creative spontaneity inherent to the transnational network and the previous cross-systemic interactions. It also signalled that Hungary was ready to intensify its presence on the international scene after the Helsinki Agreement[85] and to strengthen its relations with the U.S., leading to a cultural agreement in 1976, the accord of "most favoured nation," and the return of the Holy Crown to Hungary in 1978.

Conclusion

The period of the Cold War was made and unmade by the intertwining stories of geopolitical competition and transnational interaction. Its socio-political and cultural history was defined by complex processes of negotiating institutional ties, intellectual transfers, local and international privilege, and the increasing agency of artists, scholars, scientists, and athletes. In Cold War Hungary, the geopolitically and ideologically framed agenda of the communist establishment was in a

[84] Mrs. Kodály was elected honorary president, while the Australian Deanna Hoermann became president. Péter Erdei and László Vikár served as deputy directors, Sister Mary Alice Hein as treasurer, Davide Liani (Italy), Pierre Perron (Canada), and Éva Rozgonyi (Hungary) as members of the board.

[85] For a discussion of Hungary's cultural diplomacy after the Helsinki Agreement, see in this volume Róbert Takács, Hungarian Foreign Policy and Basket III in the Cold War Confrontation from Helsinki to Madrid, *Múltunk* 2019 Special Issue, 59-106.

dynamic push-and-pull interplay with the transnational aims of its leading professional cadres, researchers, pedagogues, etc. In many cases regarding Hungary's international presence, the intention to propagate a positive image of the Hungarian Peoples' Republic was accompanied by the often stronger institutional and professional agendas of the privileged figures animating these cross-systemic interactions.

The international career of the Kodály method provides an instructive example of how the geopolitical and the transnational logic of the period interacted within the larger framework of global integration. Faced with a fully developed educational method and a strong professional network by the early 1970s, the architects of Hungarian cultural diplomacy were not leading a global phenomenon, but following it—not initiating promotional projects, but accommodating to existing developments. By wanting to appropriate and exploit the diplomatic value of the Kodály method, state officials in communist Hungary were compelled to recognize the trans-Atlantic ideas and practices of pedagogues and researchers as culturally valuable and prestigious.

It was the universality and malleability of the method that made it so widely appealing, and it was the intellectually, spiritually, and physically hard work of the transnational group of music educators which made its application successful, from Japan to Canada. The flexibility of Kodály's conception and the creativity of those implementing it elevated the international promotion of the method high above the practice of disseminating cultural propaganda in the service of "a Hungary that is building a living and existing socialism," as communist functionaries would have wished it. The Kodály method was neither a product of the communist regime nor a scheme of the Cold War—and so it survived and transcended both, thanks to its complex history and cultural potential.

PETER CSUNDERLIK

From Criticising 'NATO History-Writing' to the Triumph of 'Comecon History-Writing': A Change of Attitudes in Hungarian Historiography after 1956*

In order to outline the main ways in which attitudes changed in Hungarian historiography during the Kádár era, I would like to begin with two citations. Both are from Hungarian reviews of monographs on the Habsburg Empire published in the USA. The first comes from Imre Gonda, in his critical review in 1959 of Robert A. Kann's book *The Habsburg Empire* (1957).[1] He stated that

> It has not been a secret at all that NATO does not only have "defence tasks," but other ones as well. Nor is it a particularly new discovery that NATO will become a more specific "ideological" centre, in the sense that it also transmits the military methods and aims of the Cold War into intellectual space, and transforms the specific spirit of Western citizenship into the spirit of a NATO way of life and a NATO approach. Western ideologues play an important role in the formation of this new NATO approach. But Western historians have a prominent role in this process. Their task is to repaint the nearer and further past in NATO-colour in order to legitimize the aims of NATO.[2]

[1] Robert A. Kann, *The Habsburg Empire. A Study in Integration and Disintegration.* (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1957)
[2] Imre Gonda, "Néhány megjegyzés Robert A. Kann 'The Habsburg Empire' című könyvéhez [Some Remarks on the Monograph of Robert A. Kann 'The Habsburg Empire']," *Történelmi Szemle* 3–4 (1959): 515.

And so the criticism of a "NATO approach" and "NATO historiography" goes on. Imre Gonda mentions the acronym "NATO" eleven times in his review, and only later mentions the name the concrete topic of the monograph, *The Habsburg Empire*. In his review, Gonda criticized Robert Kann for actually creating "NATO propaganda" by appreciating the integrative role of the Habsburg Empire. Imre Gonda's review was based on the negative Monarchy-image prevalent during the Rákosi era, according to which Hungary was placed in a "colonial" position in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and was thus exploited.

The second citation comes from György Ránki's 1988 review of John Komlos's *The Habsburg Monarchy as a Customs Union*,[3] published in 1983:

> According to Komlos, it is not only about Austria not exploiting Hungary economically—as part of the public opinion assumed and Hungarian historiography claimed for a long time—but also not about Austria and Hungary enjoying the benefits of a "marriage" thanks to comparative advantages, like Hungarian economic historians assume today. According to Komlos, the benefits [of the customs union] were mostly enjoyed by Hungary.

Although György Ránki was not completely satisfied with the method used by Komlos, he still added: "It is true that Hungary enjoyed the benefits of this marriage very much."[4]

In one of his last writings, György Ránki illustrated his and Iván Berend's historical approach and the methodology of economic history, arguing for "empirical coexistence" with reference to "comparative advantages," or, in other words, a reform-oriented attitude that marked representative authors of Kádár-era historiography. In the 1970s and '80s, this

[3] John Komlos, *The Habsburg Monarchy as a Customs Union. Economic Development in Austria-Hungary in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983)

[4] György Ránki, "John Komlos: A Habsburg Monarchia mint vámunió: gazdasági fejlődés a 19. században [John Komlos: The Habsburg Monarchy as a Custom Union: Economic Development in Austria-Hungary in the Nineteenth Century]," *Századok* 3 (1988): 511.

attitude and methodology was informally known as "Comecon history-writing," as Gábor Gyáni pointed out in his study on the remembrance of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in Hungary.[5] András Kovács had already described the oeuvre of the renowned Berend-Ránki couple in that way for the *Bibó Memorial Book*, which in turn came to be recognized as a key work in the Hungarian historiography of the Kádár era.[6]

I chose these two quotations from reviews in *Történelmi Szemle* and *Századok* because they show the ways in which the Compromise of 1867 and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in general were re-evaluated during these periods. On the other hand, the difference between Gonda's and Ránki's approach reveals not only changes in historical approaches, but methodological developments too, and most of all the ways in which innovations from the formerly rejected Western, "bourgeois" historical literature became accepted during the Kádár era.

Indeed, one of the main inspirations behind Berend and Ránki's oeuvre was Walt Whitman Rostow's book *The Stages of Economic Growth*, published in 1960.[7] Berend and Ránki had become familiar with further American literature during their Ford Scholarships to the USA in the mid-1960s. They were among the first to receive it after 1965, the year it became possible. Ránki got the opportunity in 1965; Berend in 1966. Berend wrote the following in his memoir about his year at Columbia University, which he considered to be his "second university":

> I rushed in euphoric happiness from my tiny hotel room
> to the university through Broadway every morning. I was

---

[5] Gábor Gyáni, A Habsburg-múlt emlékezeti kánonjai [The Canons of the Remembrance of the Habsburg Past] In: Gábor Gyáni, *Relatív történelem,* [Relative History], (Budapest: Typotex, 2007), 121–122.

[6] András Kovács, Két kiegyezés [Two Compromises], In: *Bibó Emlékkönyv 2.*, [Bibó Memorial Book] (Bern: Európai Protestáns Magyar Szabadegyetem, 1979), 118–139.

[7] W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth. A Non-Communist Manifesto*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1960)

almost dizzy from the open-shelf system of American libraries while I was walking among the bookshelves of the library room, and I took every book from the shelves I wanted. Most of them were unfamiliar to me, or I had only heard about them from "critical" reviews before. [...] Contemporary American economic and economic historical research showed me new ways, and the studies of Alexander Gerschenkron shed new light on what I had known about the history of Hungarian economy.[8]

Ten years had passed between Berend's year in the United States and when the first collection of studies by Alexander Gerschenkron were published in Hungary at the Karl Marx University of Economic Sciences,[9] where Iván T. Berend was the rector at the time (and the head of the Department of Economic History, too). The work of Walt Whitman Rostow had already been published in 1968 in Hungary by the Kossuth Publishing Company, the party publisher, however the subtitle of the work was left out from the Hungarian translation: "A Non-Communist Manifesto."[10] And this reveals how the wall between Western and Eastern historical science was—using a biological term— "semipermeable," like a membrane, from the 1960s onward.

In the following, I would like to outline the main directions and characteristics of the relations between Hungarian and Western historiography in the 1970s and 1980s, as the limits of this study do not make it possible to give a broader panorama. My information on this topic was drawn mostly from my own interviews in May and June 2019 with Márta Lázar, the former editor of social sciences at Akadémiai Kiadó, the publishing company of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and with András Gerő, Gábor Gyáni, Tibor Hajdu, Géza Jeszenszky, Gábor Klaniczay, György Kövér, György Németh, Attila Pók

---

[8] Iván Berend T., *A történelem – ahogyan megéltem.* [History – How I Lived It], (Budapest: Kulturtrade, 1997), 78–79.

[9] *Válogatás Alexander Gerschenkron gazdaságtörténeti munkáiból.* [Selected Works of Alexander Gerschenkron on Economic History] (Budapest: Marx Károly Közgazdaságtudományi Egyetem, 1976)

[10] W. W. Rostow: *A gazdasági növekedés szakaszai.* [*The Stages of Economic Growth*], (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1968)

and István Rév, all of whom are notable historians who were active in the 1970s and 1980s. Furthermore, I corresponded with Hungarian historians living in the USA, namely Iván T. Berend, István Deák, and Peter Pastor. Their aid was simply priceless for me. In addition, I checked book reviews in the main historical and social scientific journals of the period, *Századok*, *Történelmi Szemle*, *Valóság*, *Világosság*, as well as issues of *Világtörténet*.

It is important to stress that my starting point is that the so-called Erik Molnár Debate (*Molnár Erik-vita*) of the early 1960s, which generated the opportunity for Hungarian historiography to integrate itself conceptually into Western historiography. László Péter, a historian who left Hungary in 1956 and then graduated from Oxford as a disciple of C. A. Macartney, had already drawn attention to the importance of the Erik Molnár Debate in his 1965 study *Hungarian Nationalism*.[11]

The fact that the "national-independence fighter" approach of the Rákosi era was replaced by "class struggle" after 1956 led to the denationalization of Hungarian historiography in the 1960s, and this increased the importance of social and economic history, the latter being internationalist by its very nature. Of course, the growth of the importance of economic history in the era was also due to the fact that the most influential historians of the 1960s and 1980s, Zsigmond Pál Pach, Iván T. Berend, and György Ránki were all economic historians. They filled significant international roles: Zsigmond Pál Pach was elected vice-president of the International Economic History Association (founded in 1960 at the International Historical Congress in Stockholm) in 1965, and he became its president in 1978.[12] Iván T. Berend was the president of the association from 1986 until 1994.

[11] László Péter, "A magyar nacionalizmus [Hungarian Nationalism]," in *Elbától keletre. Tanulmányok a magyar és kelet-európai történelemről* [East of the Elbe. Studies on Hungarian and East European History], edited by László Péter (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 1998), 80–84.

[12] Iván T. Berend, "Pach Zsigmond Pál (1919–2001). Egy nagyszabású tudományos életmű, [Zsigmond Pál Pach. A Monumental Oeuvre]," *Történelmi Szemle* 3–4 (2001): 145–157.

When the 1987 World Congress of the International Economic History Association was held in Hungary—perhaps the most significant event in Hungarian historiography of the era—this was due in no small part to their own authority and pursuits. It was also because of Pach, Berend, and Ránki that the Department for Economic History of the Karl Marx University of Economic Sciences could welcome special guests from the West like Michael Postan, Peter Mathias, Rondo Cameron or Bo Gustaffson, who already gave lectures in Budapest in English in the 1970s.[13] It can be said about foreign guests generally that Western historians were relatively free to visit Hungary. A. J. P. Taylor, Eric Hobsbawm, Fernand Braudel, and Immanuel Wallerstein also visited Hungary in this period, just to mention a few "stars" of the field. Michel Foucault would have come too, but he was embroiled in a scandal because of his support for the 1979 Iranian Revolution.[14]

Nevertheless, international visits were not exempt from Cold War tensions. It mostly affected relations toward Hungarian emigrant historians. Several expulsion scandals and bans affected Hungarian emigrant researchers returning from the West. Just to mention a few cases, Rudolf Tőkés, who was invited to the International Conference on the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1969 on its fiftieth anniversary—because he was the author of Béla Kun's biography published in the USA in 1967—was expelled from Hungary during the conference (and he could not get a visa until 1976).[15] László Péter was not allowed to enter the country in 1970 (so he was forced to collect

---

[13] "Egy történésznek nem lehetnek illúziói – Kövér György [A Historian Cannot Have Illusions – György Kövér]," in *Történészek története. Kutatók hivatásukról, pályájukról, eredményeikről* [History of Historians. Researchers on Their Profession, Career and Achievements], edited by Dóra Czeferner, Zoltán Szőts, Kinga Szőts-Rajkó (Budapest: Fakultás Kiadó–Újkor Alapítvány, 2018), 143.

[14] Gábor Klaniczay, "Michel Foucault," in *Ellenkultúra a hetvenes-nyolcvanas években.* [Counter-Culture in the '70s and '80s], edited by Gábor Klaniczay (Budapest: Noran Libro, 2004), 152–153.

[15] Rudolf Tőkés, "Kun Béla [Béla Kun]," in *Újragondolt történelem. Válogatott tanulmányok, 1967–2017* [History Rethought. Selected Studies, 1967–2017] (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 2018), 17.

sources on the history of Hungary in the era of dualism in Zagreb). István Deák, who was working on his Kossuth book at that time, was expelled from the country in 1974, only to return to Hungary triumphantly in 1978 as a member of the US delegation bringing home the Holy Crown. Peter Pastor, who wrote an important monograph on the foreign policy of the Károlyi government, was expelled in 1978 as well.[16]

It is important to mention that while these historians were expelled from Hungary—sometimes because of ridiculous accusations like "espionage," as in the case of István Deák— their American books were reviewed and widely recognized in Hungarian historical journals. From these American books, the 1979 monograph by István Deák, *The Lawful Revolution – Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848–1849*, was even published in 1983 in Hungary, however in this case the title itself was censored to erase the notion of "lawful revolution." Thus, the Hungarian title of the book simply became *Lajos Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848–1849*. The book's importance was even greater than usual, since Deák's book was the first monograph by an emigrant, non-Marxist author that was allowed to be published in Hungary. In fact, the Hungarian edition was authorized at the "highest party-level," according to Deák. However, Ervin Pamlényi, who worked at Gondolat Publishing Company, indicated to Deák at the time that the original title could not be kept. So, only the second Hungarian edition of Deák's book, published in 1994, had its original title, *A törvényes forradalom* (*The Lawful Revolution*).[17]

The "semipermeable" nature of the wall between Western and Hungarian historiography can also be demonstrated not

---

[16] Peter Pastor, *Hungary between Wilson and Lenin. The Hungarian Revolution of 1918–1919 and the Big Three* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1976).

[17] István Deák, *The Lawful Revolution. Lajos Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848–1849* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); István Deák, *Kossuth Lajos és a magyarok 1848–49-ben* [Lajos Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848– 1849] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1983); István Deák, *A törvényes forradalom. Kossuth Lajos és a magyarok 1848–49-ben* [The Lawful Revolution. Lajos Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848–1849], (Budapest: Gondolat, 1994).

only through publishing, but also through exchanges and professional travel from Hungary to the West and vice-versa. However, the opportunity for Hungarian historians to leave the country was limited not only by political but also financial reasons. Traveling abroad was put under administrative restrictions due to the limited amount of foreign currency in Hungary.[18] Professional travels could offer more opportunities than plain tourism, but scholarship funding—based on the Hungarian budget or bilateral agreements—and conference invitations were also financially restricted. If there was not a foreign host who paid for everything, it was hard to secure the foreign currency to the historians who wanted to travel abroad.

This was also true for book publishing. Limited amounts of foreign currency affected the volume of cultural transfer. Publishing companies had different amounts of foreign currency to spend on the rights of books from abroad. Európa Publishing House had the biggest amount of foreign currency in order to buy foreign literature—through the Hungarian Copyright Office (*Szerzői Jogvédő Hivatal*)—but Gondolat also had enough foreign currency for the same reason because its director, Margit Siklós, had excellent connections within the party. This explains why the Gondolat Publishing House could publish the *Társadalomtudományi Könyvtár* (Social Science Collection) series,[19] which in turn contained the works that had a great

---

[18] This was the case generally: Hungarians could travel relatively freely compared to other state socialist citizens, however the narrow dollar "budget frame" allowed for only a limited number of trips. For a study on Hungarian travel regulations throughout the Cold War, see Péter Bencsik, *Kelet és Nyugat között. Államhatárok, úti dokumentumok, határátlépés Magyarországon és Csehszlovákiában (1945–1989)* [Between East and West. State Borders, Travel Documents, Border Crossing in Hungary and Czechoslovakia (1945–1989)] (Budapest: MTA BÖlcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont TTI, 2019).

[19] See the study of Erzsébet Takács in this volume: Erzsébet Takács, In the Mantle of Professionalization. The Openness and Confinement of Family Sociology in Hungary During the 1970s and 1980s, *Múltunk* 2019 Special Issue, 155-191.

effect on the modernization of Hungarian historiography during the 1970s and '80s.[20]

The publishing companies did not even receive income for their books sold abroad, since everything was managed by the Hungarian Copyright Office. No matter how small the amount was, Akadémiai Kiadó, the publishing company of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, also sold a small number of books abroad, the publications of the *Studia Historica* series in English, edited by Ferenc Mucsi. For example, Tibor Hajdu's monograph on the Hungarian Soviet Republic was published in English in an abbreviated form in this series, just like the 1982 book by Julianna Puskás, *From Hungary to the United States, 1880–1914*.[21] The work of Puskás was one that was also counted in the West from the basically provincial Hungarian historiography.[22] Another big bestseller was the study of Jenő Szűcs, *Vázlat Európa három történeti régiójáról* (*Three Historical Regions of Europe: An Outline*)—originally published in the Bibó Memorial Book—whose French edition was introduced by Fernand Braudel.[23]

The lack of foreign currency also hindered the acquisition of foreign publications in Hungary, therefore the historical journals rather reviewed works that were sent for free from abroad. That explains why many Romanian books were reviewed. However, the supply of foreign journals was excellent: the libraries of the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA), the Karl Marx University of Economic Sciences's Department

[20] See "Izgalmas sorozatok – több egyedi könyv. Beszélgetés a Gondolat Kiadó igazgatójával [Interesting Series – More Unique Books. Interview with the director of Gondolat Publishing House]," *Népszava*, August 11, 1978.

[21] Julianna Puskás, *From Hungary to the United States, 1880–1914* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982).

[22] Gábor Gyáni, "Kivándorlás és az amerikai magyarság sorsa [Emigration and the Fate of American Hungarians]," in *Történészdiskurzusok* [Historians Discourses] (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2002), 276–284.

[23] Gábor Gyáni, "Szűcs Jenő, a magányos történetíró [Jenő Szűcs, the Lonely Historian]," in *Nemzeti vagy transznacionális történelem* [National Or Transnational History] (Budapest: Kalligram, 2018), 188–212; For the French edition of Jenő Szűcs's essay, see Jenő Szűcs, *Les trois Europes* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985). For an English translation, see Jenő Szűcs, "The Three Historical Regions of Europe: An Outline," *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 29, no. 2–4 (1983): 131–184.

for Economic History, and the library of the Lajos Kossuth University in Debrecen received exchange copies from almost everywhere. This explains why the journal of the Hungarian Historical Society, *Századok*, included not only reviews of monographs, but also of foreign journals during the editorship of Ervin Pamlényi (1957–1975).[24]

The journal *Világtörténet* was created specifically for the presentation of foreign literature in 1979, with László Makkai as editor-in-chief, who had very good foreign relations, mainly French. When Makkai fell ill, Miklós Incze replaced him in 1986. Although it also published Soviet studies in Hungarian, the main purpose of *Világtörténet* was to present the scientific results of Western historiography. The researchers of the institute were obliged to write reviews for *Világtörténet*, which also published translations of books and parts of books published abroad.[25]

The international relations of the Institute of History at MTA were prominent in that period. Its researchers regularly attended foreign conferences—especially the five-year International Historical Congress.[26] Getting a scholarship was almost exclusively possible (that is, informally) for historians who were backed by the Institute of History, but essentially with the aid of György Ránki. Although Ránki only became the director of the Institute of History in 1986 formally, he had already directed the institute informally during the directorship of Zsigmond Pál Pach.[27]

[24] Ferenc Glatz, "Szerkesztői életpálya. Pamlényi Ervin (1919–1984) [The Career of an Editor. Ervin Pamlényi (1919–1984)]," in *Történetírás – korszakváltásban. Tanulmányok* [History Writing in a Shifting Age. Studies], (Budapest: Gondolat, 1990), 262–272.

[25] Ignác Romsics, *Clio bűvöletében – Magyar történetírás a 19–20. században – nemzetközi kitekintéssel* [Under the Spell of Clio: Hungarian History Writing in the 19th and 20th Centuries, with an International Outlook] (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2011), 402–403.

[26] Karl Dietrich Erdmann, *Toward a Global Community of Historians. The International Historical Congresses and the International Committee of Historical Sciences, 1898–2000* (New York–Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005).

[27] Gábor Gyáni, "Történetíró a diktatúra korában. Ránki György élete és munkássága [A Historian in the Age of Dictatorship. The Life and Career of György Ránki]," in *Nemzeti vagy transznacionális történelem*, 213–233.

Looking at scholarships, the most important relationship of the Institute of History was with the Institut für Europäische Geschichte in Mainz, whose director was Karl Otmar von Aretin between 1968 and 1994. Aretin was the initiator of the creation of joint committees of Western historians with the Soviets (bilateral joint committees were the official linkages between different countries in historical science). Aretin built a good relationship with Ránki, and thanks to this Hungarian researchers could receive one-year scholarships to Mainz, where 8–12 scholars were guests of the institute at the same time. Ferenc Glatz, Lóránt Tilkovszky, Judit Fejes, Dániel Szabó, János Pótó, and Attila Pók also had the opportunity to spend a year in Mainz.[28] However, it is important to notice that only researchers of the Institute of History could get these scholarships, so they were in a privileged position in this regard.

There is no place for presenting all the international relationships with Hungary, from Britain to Israel, in the 1970s and 1980s, so let me just mention France and the *Annales* school, with whom Éva H. Balázs, Domokos Kosáry, and László Makkai had excellent relationships. (As a case in point, Fernand Braudel was elected an honorary member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1982.[29]) From the middle generation, Gyula Benda and György Granasztói, and from the younger, the medievalist Gábor Klaniczay, played an outstanding role in adapting the history of *mentalités á la* Annales to the Hungarian historiographic context.[30] The importers finally gathered in the István Hajnal Circle, founded in 1987, and centred around the

[28] Mária Ormos, *Remények és csalódások* [Hopes and Disappointments] (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 2017), 171–172.

[29] Éva H. Balázs, "Fernand Braudellel Fernand Braudelről. Beszélgetés a világhírű történésszel [About Fernand Braudel with Fernand Braudel. Interview with the World-Famous Historian]," in *Életek és korok. Válogatott írások,* [Lives and Ages. Selected Works], edited by Lilla Krász, (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 2005), 169–173.

[30] On the Hungarian reception of the *Annales* school, see Gábor Klaniczay, "Találkozások az Annales-iskolával Magyarországon [Encounters with the Annales School in Hungary]," in *Redite ad Cor. Tanulmányok Sahin-Tóth Péter emlékére* [*Redite ad Cor.* Studies in the Memory of Péter Sahin-Tóth], edited by Lilla Krász and Teréz Oborni (Budapest: Eötvös Kiadó, 2008), 647–658.

review journal *BUKSZ*, launched in 1989.[31] Of course, there were also opponents of methodological innovations. In an interview in 2000, one of the "conservative" medievalists, Gyula Kristó, claimed that the approach of the Annales school was not applicable for Hungarian historical publications.[32]

I would like now to focus on descriptions of the American relations, and since they were closely connected to research on the history of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, let me return to the works of Robert Kann and John Komlos. The first American grants were given by the Ford Foundation in 1965, but intensive professional relationships began in 1967, when a major conference was held on the centennial anniversary of the *Ausgleich* in Bloomington. It was this year when Péter Hanák published a study that re-evaluated the Compromise in the *Austrian History Yearbook*.[33] Dénes Sinor, a professor at the University of Indiana-Bloomington, played an important role in paving the way for these connections, and it is also his merit that a Hungarian Department was established there in 1971. The result of this American-Hungarian cooperation was the *History of Hungary* published in English, written by Peter F. Sugar, Péter Hanák, and Tibor Frank—a book published by the Indiana University Press, too.[34] In addition to the Ford Foundation's scholarships, later scholarships funded through the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), the

---

[31] Gábor Gyáni, "Miért és hogyan született meg a Hajnal István Kör? [Why and How was the István Hajnal Circle Born?]," in *Nemzeti vagy transznacionális történelem*, 234–256.

[32] "Akadémikusok nyakkendő nélkül – Kristó Gyula történész [Academicians without a Tie – the Historian Gyula Kristó]," April 12, 2000. Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kozz_ocZEJ4. (Retrieved on October 26, 2019) For Gyula Kristó's memoir, see Gyula Kristó, *Érték és értelem (Önéletírás korrajzzal)* [Value and Sense. (Biography with a Sketch of the Age)] (Szeged: JATE Press, 2016).

[33] Péter Hanák, "Hungary in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy: Preponderancy or Dependency?" *Austrian History Yearbook* 3 (1967): 260–302.

[34] Peter F. Sugar, Péter Hanák, and Tibor Frank, eds., *A History of Hungary* (Bloomington–Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990); Tibor Frank, "Az amerikai történetírás és Magyarország [American Historiography and Hungary]," in *Amerika világai* [The Worlds of America] (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 2018), 61–62.

American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), and the Soros Foundation also appeared.[35]

Just as Hungary could only have become part of nineteenth-century and fin-de-siècle great power politics as part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the results of Hungarian historiography on the "Compromise debate" could also draw attention only as part of the wider sub-field of Habsburg studies. Thus, research into the history of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy played an important role in rebuilding Hungarian relations with Western (and particularly American) historiography, which had been interrupted from 1948–49 until the 1960s. All of this coincided with a trend: writing about the history of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy became popular from the 1960s onward, the most influential creator of this "fashion" being Carl E. Schorske, who published his magnum opus, *Fin-de-Siécle Vienna*, in 1980.[36]

Schorske had the greatest impact on Péter Hanák in Hungary. Hanák even made an interview with Schorske in Princeton, and he published a Schorskian essay-collection in 1988 under the title *The Garden and the Workshop*.[37] The collaboration between Schorske and Hanák also resulted in a joint US-Hungarian conference series that dealt with the urban and cultural histories of New York and Budapest. Later on, the organization of the conferences was taken over by Thomas Bender and Attila Pók, the result of which was a joint volume edited by Schorske and Bender in 1994: *Budapest and New York: Studies in Metropolitan Transformation, 1870–1930*.[38] In addition to the New York–Budapest conferences, the Centenary

---

[35] See Iván T. Berend, *A történelem – ahogyan megéltem,* op. cit.; Tamás Ungvári, *Lezáratlan nyomozás* [Unfinished Investigation] (Budapest: Ulpius Ház, 2004), 142–145.

[36] Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna. Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1980).

[37] Péter Hanák, *A Kert és a Műhely* [The Garden and the Workshop] (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 1988); translated into English and published by Princeton University Press in 1998. See Péter Hanák, *The Garden and the Workshop* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

[38] Thomas Bender and Carl E. Schorske, eds., *Budapest and New York: Studies in Metropolitan Transformation, 1870–1930* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1994).

Georg Lukács conferences held in the USA in 1985 should be highlighted, which were organized by Carl E. Schorske and György Ránki.[39]

The importance of the research of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in the international relations of Hungarian historiography is illustrated well by Péter Hanák's earlier intention to organize a Habsburg Studies-centred historical department at Central European University, inspired by the institution's original framing at the Inter University Centre in Dubrovnik.[40] However, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy has not been seen as a forerunner of Comecon since the 1990s. Rather, the empire stands as a forerunner of the Common Market and the EU.[41] This is how Hungarian historiography has arrived into the era of "EU-history writing" since the 2000s.

[39] Miklós Almási, *Pisztoly a könyvtárban. Életinterjú* [Gun in the Library. Life Interview] (Budapest: Kalligram, 1979), 175–176.

[40] On the history of the CEU, see *Ten Years in Images and Documents. Central European University, 1989–1999.* (Budapest: Central European University, 1999.)

[41] As an example, see András Gerő, *Dualizmusok. A Monarchia Magyarországa.* [Dualisms. Hungary in the Monarchy] (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2010), 178–183.

ERZSÉBET TAKÁCS

"In the Mantle of Professionalization."

The Openness and Confinement of Family Sociology in Hungary during the 1970s and 1980s.*

As part of my investigation into external influences on sociology in Hungary, first I examined the sub-discipline of the sociology of the family. There were a number of reasons for that. On the one hand, there was significant research in this field at three different Hungarian workshops (KSH, MTA, ELTE) during the 1970s and '80s. On the other hand, there was a paradigm shift on the international scene at the same time; exploring that paradigm shift promised some intriguing results in terms of the adoption and reception of international developments in the Hungarian sociological research scene. That is why an outline of sociological paradigms of the family is provided below, which is then followed by an introduction into the Hungarian scene, looking at factors that enhanced, hindered, or prevented reception. I grouped the sources that I have used according to the institutionalisation of the respective sub-disciplines. I looked at recollections in connection with the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH), as well as literature on the history of the office's library. For the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA), I examined studies in the journals *Szociológia* and *Társadalmi Szemle*, as well as recollections, research reports, and published books. In connection with Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), I delved

into issues of the journal *Szociológiai Figyelő*,[1] and conducted interviews. I considered the examination of the perspectives of teacher-researcher sociologists a priority in terms of Western impact assessment, as sociological knowledge could only reach a wider—and not necessarily a limited—professional audience due to the peculiarities of university education.

I have encountered a number of difficulties concerning this topic. Knowledge produced in an informal way (e.g., research material left in the drawers, unpublished) is always problematic, since researchers could only share their results with co-workers due to limitations on publishing because of censorship practices. This means that sociological knowledge could only find its way into professional publicity in a filtered, partial form. Another difficulty is that the scene of sociological research, which was primarily founded on personal relationships, hardly involved following generations. Plenty of research documentation disappeared or was left to waste. As such, a topic could disappear from the research scene for decades if not explicitly passed along to other researchers.[2]

Sociology of the Family in the 1970s and 1980s

As posterity sees it, sociology of the family was a moderate, somewhat unexciting sub-discipline until the 1970s, which was dominated by a consensus on the conjugal model of the family. Social challenges of the time—like class or social injustice, prejudice or consumption—mostly attracted researchers from other disciplines. Sociology of the family came into the centre of attention in the 1970s as the institutionalization of the field quickly started to develop. Population policy discovered the means that sociology of the family could offer, while the

---

[1] This research offers a qualitative analysis of the sources. To my knowledge, the quantitative impact assessment of Western influences is being conducted by Viktor Karády and Péter Tibor Nagy.

[2] Vera Szabari, Éva Kovács, and András Lénárt, *(Disz)kontinuitások—A magyar szociológia 1960 és 2010 között,* [(Dis)Continuities—Hungarian sociology between 1960 and 2010], manuscript, 1999.

family itself started to be more and more difficult to define due to the plurality of family forms—and became an increasingly interesting research topic. The decrease in the number of children and increase of divorces inspired a lot of empirical research with more or less government support depending on the central population policy.

However, the functional paradigm of the family had been questioned well before the spectacular changes often referred to as the crisis of the family. The feminist approach had the biggest role in that: questioning static and hierarchical roles in the family, a refutation of exploitation, unpaid domestic work and of functional family model as such.

According to the Parsonian functionalist approach that had been dominant in sociology of the family until the 1960s, the function of the family—as a sub-system of the social system—is reproduction and socialization. The transfer of norms and values through roles assigned to positions (making the obligations of and expectations from the individual clear) sustains the balance of the system as well as the construction of the personality (system) and in adulthood it also provides a stable background for the ability to handle stress. In Parson's model, the main role (function) of the nuclear family—which is based on marriage and reproduction—is socialization, that is, to create emotional stability relying on a clear distinction between male and female roles. Such an idea of family structure is rather rigid, certain (gender) expectations (tasks) are assigned to positions. Men have instrumental tasks, e.g., executive, judgemental, decision-making functions; women have expressive roles, e.g., they are supporters, who make harmony and ease tension.[3] The modern, nuclear family got rid of a number of traditional roles such as education, the force of transferring the profession, or taking care of the elderly; families became predominantly isolated (from the family they originate from, other relatives). This patriarchal family model based on gender inequality and represented as functionalist was not a valid appropriate explanatory framework

---

[3] According to the theory, this is why fathers do not participate in raising children during the early years.

even in the 1970s, and yet demography had no doubts about its valid (and doctrinal) character for decades.

Another paradigm in the sociology of the family at that time was interactionalism. This approach appeared in the 1920s and had the notion of role in its centre. The family was a particularly interesting scene for the realization of socially defined and projected roles and struggles for them, as well as for the examination of learning, losing, and transformation of roles. Hungarian social changes would have offered a great opportunity to apply this paradigm, however, it rarely happened.

The third school was the development approach—the latest of the three, so it could exploit the results and conclusions of the empirical researches of the two other approaches. That is why the development approach led to theoretical eclecticism to a certain extent. At the same time, the development approach made way for the dialectical approach, which was better fit for longitudinal and multi-generational data collection, and it was easily operationable.[4] While the pluralization of family forms was a challenge for statisticians in terms of operationality, the development approach could not handle childless couples, couples living together without being married, or remarried couples, and many saw (and still see) signs of a crisis in the transformation of the family or in its collapse as an institution. However, from the 1970s onward, international and Hungarian sociology of the family saw the adaptational potential in family forms that transformed due to economic, political, and social changes. In the 1960s, Hungarian social scientists dutifully applied the conceptualization of the crisis of the family to—exclusively—Western, bourgeois families, but it is less typical from the 1970s. This flexible approach is hardly true for non-professionals. To this day, changes concerning (gender) roles in the family, marriage, and decisions about one's own body are still referred to as crisis in debates on population growth. (And for the same reason emancipation struggles for change

---

[4] László Cseh-Szombathy, *Családszociológiai problémák és módszerek* [Problems and Methods of Family Sociology] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1978), 23.

are still condemned.[5]) While family had long been considered as a means to transfer the dominant forms of tradition and society, in the last three-to-four decades this changed radically: the family became the scope of investigation in terms of the change and transformation of norms and values in society.[6]

To describe the context of adoption in the field of sociology of the family, it is essential to outline its institutionalization and general development in Hungary. Before it became an established subfield, there had been constant research into the morphology of the family as well as into demographical trends at Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH). The sub-discipline itself developed as a result of Western influence, because two influential researchers realized during their trips to Western Europe that the academic area of family-related research existed separately from other fields. One of the best-known Hungarian researchers, László Cseh-Szombathy, became acquainted with the leader of the sub-committee on Family Research of the International Sociological Association in 1969. This relationship made it possible for him to meet the best representatives of family research in the same year at a seminar in Geneva, with some of whom he developed friendships. The

[5] On the debates on population (policy) in the sixties and seventies, see Mária Heller, Dénes Némedi, Ágnes Rényi, *Népesedési viták Magyarországon 1960–1986* [Debates on Demography in Hungary, 1960–1986] (Budapest: KSH, 1990); Attila Melegh, "Ki mitől fél? Kommentár a népesedési körkérdésről [Who fears what? Commentary on the demographic all-round inquiry]," *Demográfia* 3–4 (1999): 339–350; Zsombor Bódy, "A Népességtudományi Kutatóintézet története és a népesedéspolitika a Kádár-rendszerben, [The history of the Demographic Research Institute and Demographics Policy in the Kadar Era]," *Demográfia* 4 (2016): 265–300; Erzsébet Takács, *Hulló magyarság. Az eltűnés félelme a hazai demográfia krízisdiskurzusában a Kádár-kortól napjainkig* [Falling Hungarians. The Fear from Disappearance in the Crisis Discourse of Hungarian Demography from the Kadar Era to Present Days], Manuscript.

[6] Since the 1990s, the following research tendencies have become common: research based on demographic data (morphology, demographic factors that influence the life of a family), research on the internal operation and dynamics of the family (functions, strategies, internal relationships, the elements of power and aggression), and analyses of family political issues (families and the ruling establishment, responsibility relations). In the 2000s, a bigger emphasis was placed on roles, identity, and the problem of (primarily intergenerational) solidarity.

other sociologist, Péter Somlai, also discovered the potential of the area on a Western research trip.[7] The story is not unique: Zsuzsa Ferge also heard about social policy as an independent discipline at a conference in Evian in 1966.

Western influence in the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH)[8]

In terms of Western influence, KSH was in an exceptional position. On the one hand, in the Rákosi- and Kádár-era a unique continuity characterized it on both personal and institutional levels, which is best proven by the papers of researchers active in the 1930s and '40s that were published in *Demográfia* at this time. On the other hand, it was deeply embedded internationally compared to other academic institutions. A number of recollections highlight the excellent professional expertise of employees of KSH, their international recognition, which was partly due to the fact that the leaders of KSH at the time, György Péter and Egon Szabady, "collected the tainted ones."[9] They employed talented people who were put aside or made unemployed because of their political activities.

[7] His stay at the Ruhr University (Bochum, Federal Republic of Germany) was made possible by the Humboldt scheme in 1976. One of the "potentials of the area" was the possibility to do research autonomously: "One must research only if they are curious about something and does not know the final results," said Péter Somlai in my interview with him (Interview with Péter Somlai, 2019. Interviewer: Erzsébet Takács). Sociology of the family was an excellent "escape route" in the sense of research free from incessant political control, as it was a sufficiently neutral field with low prestige. László Cseh-Szombathy and Rudolf Andorka said similar things, and Pál Lőcsei, who participated in the 1956 events, also ended up in this field.

[8] The Hungarian Demographic Research Institute was established in 1968 within the KSH, with various research groups (later, departments) where research on the sociology of the family was conducted as well. Certainly, the sociology of the family cannot (and should not) be distinguished from other areas. For example, the research of Zsuzsa Ferge—of the Social Statistics Department at KSH—on social strata were connected to the topic.

[9] Interview with László Cseh-Szombathy, 2000. Interviewer: Gábor I. Kovács. In: *Emberi viszonyok: Cseh-Szombathy László tiszteletére.* [Humain relations. Hommage à László Cseh-Szombathy] [Szerk.]: Spéder Zsolt, Tóth Pál Péter,

It was its international acknowledgement and embeddedness that saved the Demographic Research Institute (Népességtudományi Kutatóintézet) of KSH from reorganization/ elimination in the 1960s and again in the 1980s. An argument for keeping the institute in both cases was its "missionary role" in socialist countries, as there was no similar institute in the Soviet bloc, especially not with such an international network and recognition, so it was presented as a common interest for these states to be represented on the demographic scene by Hungary. Without a doubt, demography had certain autonomy in the 1960s. The potential and intriguing research topics originated only partly from Hungarian demographic trends; the majority was identified by the international professional community, due to the foreign relations of Hungarian demographists. The researchers could word questions and research plans in a way that they were approved or even supported by "higher levels" and at the same time they met international standards for the discipline of demography.[10] From the turn of the 1970s and 1980s onward, the situation slightly changed at KSH. Several departments were eliminated and some newly appointed leaders with different mentalities and strategies forced many employees—including László Cseh-Szombathy—to leave. Financial support for research on the sociology of the family and the KSH's library was also reduced significantly.[11]

The library of KSH, which operated as an independent institute, was also unique in terms of reception history and access to Western literature.[12] In the 1960s, they subscribed to twenty "capitalist" journals on demography alone, and from

---

Budapest, Andorka Rudolf Társadalomtudományi Társaság – Századvég, 2000, 13-38.

[10] Zsombor Bódy, op. cit., 280.

[11] Ibid., 280.

[12] The director of the library employed István Bibó and Rudolf Andorka (and many more). Bibó was responsible for the acquisition of foreign books for a while.

1980 onward they received more than 200 foreign periodicals.[13] As Lajosné Leölkes recalled,

> From around 1970 we had catalogues from mainly economic publishers coming in from abroad. From these, we had to choose which ones to buy. In other libraries in Budapest, the party secretary or the trade unionist would check what was coming in from the West. Nobody cared here. On the one hand, they didn't speak the language—they pretended, "as if," but did not look into it. On the other hand, they were used to exchange; that is how anything that was necessary for the Hungarian administration entered the country. Certainly, we couldn't just give foreign statistics to anyone. Those who wanted to read them would go to the director and ask for a stamped permission. In the "soft dictatorship," we got everything that we found good.[14] We had money, since KSH would give to support culture and especially have foreign literature brought in. We had everything coming in: statistics, economics, sociology, economic geography, political sociology. We subscribed to series of textbooks from American universities on statistics and economics. Rudolf Andorka and Iván Szelényi would not have become the people they became had they not been here. They were close to everything, they had access to everything.[15]

---

[13] Half of which were in English, 11% in German, 9% in French, 10% bilingual (English-French and French-German), 6% in Russian and 11% in other languages. István Csahók, "A Központi Statisztikai Hivatal könyvtára és dokumentációs szolgálata, [The Library and Documentary Service of the Central Statistical Office]," *Statisztika Szemle* 5 (1986): 518–526.

[14] For example, they ordered the book *Old Family/New Family*, edited by Nona Glazer-Malvi (New York: Van Nostrand, 1975), which was cited by László Cseh-Szombathy in connection with intimacy in a relationship. The book had probably not been checked, since more than half of the chapters are about research on homosexual couples and families.

[15] Lajosné Leölkes "Ez a könyvtár nagyon jó ugródeszkának bizonyult". In: Dávid Rózsa, Ákos Lencsés, "Három visszaemlékezés a KSH könyvtárának harminc évéről, [Three Reminiscences on the KSH Library]." Source: http://ki2.oszk.hu/3k/2012/09/harom-visszaemlekezes-a-ksh-konyvtaranak-harminc-everol/ (Retrieved on September 2, 2019).

In the 1980s, due to decreasing financial resources, the foreign exchange network of the library gained even more significance. That is how KSH could acquire most of the official foreign statistical data. In return, its own material had to be produced and—at least the tables—had to be translated.[16] In the 1980s, 2000–2500 works arrived from abroad (and 2500–3000 left in return).[17] Although the Metropolitan Ervin Szabó Library (FSzEK) had the best-supplied Hungarian library stock,[18] KSH's main appeal was that everything could be available to the public.

Foreign academic literature could be accessed in other research institutes as well. In 1969, the Institute of Social Science of the Central Committee was established (led by Sándor Lakatos), where not only classics (Durkheim, Max Weber, R. K. Merton, W. Mills, György Lukács), but the most recent works (Western, or critical) could be accessed as well as freely discussed among each other. Csaba Gombár remembered that

> We learned a lot, read and argued a lot, inspiring each
> other. Our friend, János Széll, conveyed Eurocommunism
> based on his experiences in the Gramsci Institute, and
> the attitude of the Italian Communist Party, which was

[16] About collection and publication of statistical data see: Róbert Takács, Hungarian Foreign Policy and Basket III in the Cold War Confrontation from Helsinki to Madrid, *Múltunk* 2019 Special Issue, 95.

[17] In 1985, the library was in contact with 418 foreign institutes (60% of which were European, 12% North-American, and 14% Asian.) 70% of the institutes in exchange programmes were socialist, but there were 46 international institutes as well. The collection of statistical works, with 130,000 books in the library, was unique even on a European scale due to its wide range and historical concept. István Csahók, op. cit., 521–522.

[18] FSzEK increased the number of its periodicals from 80 to 160 between 1970 and 1982, but they could not keep up with the specialization of the discipline: at the end of the 1970s there were 550 sociology journals worldwide. Another, more serious problem than specialization was the increasing prices of the journals. László Remete, "A Fővárosi Szabó Ervin Könyvtár szociológiai periodikaállományának keletkezéséről és fejlődéséről (1870–1982), [On the Formation and Development of the Stock of Sociological Periodicals in FSzEK (1870–1982)]," In *A FSzEK évkönyve*, 19. 1979–1980. [*The FSzEK Yearbook, 1979–1980*] (Budapest: FSzEK, 1980), 59–65.

much more open than ours. We learned about German literature through Zsolt Papp, who had been to Germany, and paid attention to what was going on there. All in all, we had an outlook beyond Hungary's borders, on the whole of East-Central Europe, also to the Balkan region, and thanks to our colleague Péter Polónyi on China, too. After a while, those who could read in Spanish helped us access the other hemisphere as well. There was the obvious desire to know more and more about the United States. This led me to California as well, when I could study a year in America. We sought knowledge ferociously, literature too. We had exceptional opportunities to gather information from many places. Considering the fact that the institute was fundamentally interdisciplinary in terms of composition, we were happy to cross these academic boundaries.[19]

However, nothing of that "could leave that place," the knowledge acquired resulted in "exclusive" sociological knowledge.[20] In the Institute of Social Sciences there was no research into the sociology of the family, but the authors whose works were studied here were later taught in various places (e.g., by Zsuzsa Ferge, Kálmán Kulcsár, Iván Szelényi, Ferenc Pataki, and Tibor Huszár), which had a great impact on research into family sociology and research on lifestyles.[21]

The third scene of family sociology was the university, or more specifically, Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE). Decades of effort by Sándor Szalai to promote sociological research

---

[19] Interview with Csaba Gombár, in Vera Szabari, Éva Kovács, András Lénárd, op. cit.

[20] Melinda Kalmár, *Történelmi galaxisok vonzásában* [In the Pull of Historical Galaxies] (Budapest: Osiris, 2014), 317. Sándor Lakos recognised that a certain amount of autonomy was necessary for researchers in order to explore reality, but at the same time he heavily censored and banned any material that got out.

[21] It is important to mention that the journal *Szociológia*, which was founded by the institute in 1972, had Cseh-Szombathy as chief editor, and that the Hungarian Sociological Association came into existence through the institute in 1978 with Sándor Szalai as president.

and institutionalize its education[22] succeeded in 1970, when the first sociology department was established at ELTE, led by Tibor Huszár. It was followed by another at the Karl Marx University of Economic Sciences (today, Corvinus University), led by Rudolf Andorka.[23] The role of universities in terms of the diffusion of knowledge from abroad is of extreme importance. As Petér Somlai recalled,

> I think in '82, I listed a specialization course at the university and it was very successful. A lot of students came ... we could hardly sit down. Even though this specialization course was about the theory of communicative action, all I did was talk about the great work of Habermas chapter by chapter. And there were students who had never read Hegel, George Herbert Mead, or Durkheim in their lives, authors that play an important role in that book, but they were still very excited about it. That course gave the basis for the Hungarian book, which has been in use to this day.[24]

Specialization courses were not attended by sociology students but by journalists, pedagogists, public educators and students of other courses in humanities.

The university scene provided an opportunity to learn (and use) foreign methods. Péter Somlai learnt it during his stay in Bochum: how to involve students in research, on what conditions and for what kind compensation (grades, grants) they can be expected to give professional performance. Somlai's two-decade-long, famous research[25] was carried out with a method based on the active participation of students (a

---

[22] Vera Szabari, "Szalai Sándor (1912–1983)," *Szociológiai Szemle* 3 (2012): 105–122; Vera Szabari, "Egy tanszék létrehozás az 1970-es évek Magyarországán [Creation of a Department in the 1970s in Hungary]," in *Vita Publica: Tanulmányok Rényi Ágnes tiszteletére*, edited by Vera Szabari, Erzsébet Takács, and Eszter Pál (Budapest: ELTE, 2015), 207–220.

[23] Demography studies were only included randomly in Hungarian higher education, to demographists' dismay.

[24] Interview with Péter Somlai, 2010. Interviewer: Vera Szabari.

[25] Péter Somlai, ed., *Családmonográfiák* (Budapest: Oktatási Minisztérium, 1979).

method he saw at the Ruhr University). In 1964, László Cseh-Szombathy learned empirical methods from Paul Lazarsfeld for three weeks, which were definitive in sociological research methodology after 1945 as well as in forming a paradigm. (It turns out from his recollections that he taught at the university from these notes even in the 1980s.[26])

The book series Social Science Collection (SSC—Társadalomtudományi Könyvtár) of Gondolat Publishing House was also launched in the early 1970s, and can also be associated with Tibor Huszár.[27] Until 1991, fifty-two books were published, thirty-two of which were Western (and Hungarian immigrant) authors, including sociologists Jürgen Habermas, Max Weber, George Simmel, Ferdinand Tönnies, Robert Merton, George H. Mead, Pierre Bourdieu, and Herbert Marcuse. In the beginning, the appropriate proportion of the authors was important, which changed in favour of Western authors as time passed. Publishing Western books was more expensive because of royalties, and it also required a bigger scientific apparatus. These non-Marxist "capitalist" volumes demanded forewords or afterwords to explain appropriate interpretation to Hungarian readers. According to András Lénárt,

> The SSC series did not break down taboos, it only paved the way for the results of Western social sciences—and that was its original intention. The party publishing house, Kossuth, undertook the publication of more delicate works in numbered copies and distributed them in a closed network, but they [Gondolat Publishing House] dealt with the "unpublishable" books.[28]

[26] Interview with László Cseh-Szombathy, 2000. It was organised by Sándor Szalai. To my knowledge, Zsuzsa Ferge and Bálint Surányi participated aside from Cseh-Szombathy. Interview with Péter Somlai, 2019.

[27] See András Lénárt, "Egy sorozatról: a Társadalomtudományi Könyvtár [About a Series: The Social Science Collection]." In *Kádárizmus—átereszek. Az 1956-is Intézet évkönyve*, XVII [Kadarism—Leakages. The Yearbook of The 1956 Institute, vol. XVII], edited by Gyula Kozák, 154–183 (Budapest: The 1956 Institute, 2011). The first book published in the series was (naturally) a Soviet opus about the opinion poll (B. A. Grusin) to balance Jürgen Habermas' book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.

[28] Ibid.

Institutionalization and professionalization of sociology—by Soviet influence?

Professionalization could have been the result of internal evolution, but it was not entirely. On the one hand, it is known that the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) urged changes in science policy. The so-called Moscow Programme aimed at not only accelerating academic research but also increasing its social role. Research topics were modified accordingly after 1969, but more importantly, there was an intention among the highest circles to explore *reality*, which would provide grounds for planning ahead realistically. They also counted on sociology's contribution in that sense. The scientific-technological pressure, which was (or which had hoped to be) introduced to optimize management, efficiency, and develop the desired trend of structural change, secularized and professionalized the leadership at all levels. By "outsourcing" planning, it involved economic, academic, and social participants. In all socialist countries, new, large centres were established, for example to lay down the foundations of "applied" sociology and its "appropriate" supervision. In the case of Hungary, it was different, as they counted on already-existing academic capital, involving former experts.[29] Unlike other socialist countries, censorship was not supervised from large centres, but it was delegated to lower levels—as the practices of journal- and book-publishing testify—along with the widespread practice of self-censorship.[30]

The idea that sociology was—at least partly—professionalised by foreign influences is further proved by the fact that Sándor

[29] Probably the result of this multi-centeredness was the establishment of the Institute of Social Sciences in 1969, to counterbalance the Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Science. The establishment was related to the changes is Hungary: the Korčula Declaration of 1968, the removal of András Hegedüs, the philosopher trials, exclusions in 1973. See Melinda Kalmár, op. cit., 319–325.

[30] Melinda Kalmár, op. cit., 297. About self-censorship, see Róbert Takács, "Sajtóirányítás és újságírói öncenzúra az 1980-as években [Press Control and Self-Censorship of Journalists in the 1980s]," *Mediakutató* Spring (2005): 55–70.

Szalai fought for decades in vain to institutionalize sociology and to establish sociology training[31] as well as by the earlier failure of a professionalization strategy. The context was certainly different—and that is the point; when András Hegedüs promoted the idea of creating an autochthonous critical Marxist sociology in 1963, it was a better fit to the propaganda of modernization and development than Szalai's professionalization strategies).[32] At the time, professional expertise, efficiency in exploring reality, and the application of scientifically reliable methods, were neither attractive nor highly appreciated—and nor was Sándor Szalai himself. Nevertheless, his international network of relationships was highly exploited by his environment, the broad and close academic scene.[33]

The idea of introducing Western methods came up as early as the 1960s; Sándor Szalai argued for the indispensability

[31] Szabari, "Szalai Sándor (1912-1983)," op. cit.; Szabari, "Egy tanszék létrehozás…" op. cit.

[32] Júlia Szalai, "A családi munkamegosztás néhány szociológiai problémájáról, [About Some Sociologcal Problem of Distribution of Work within the Family]," in *Család és házasság a mai magyar társadalomban* [Family and Marriage in Today's Hungarian Society], edited by Pál Lőcsei (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1971); John P. Robinson, Philip E. Converse, and Alexander Szalai, *The use of time daily activities of urban and suburban populations in twelve countries* (Hague, Paris, Mouton: European Coordination Centre for Research, 1972). For an analysis of the debate, see Vera Szabari„Töredezett" tudománytörténet? A szociológia hazai történetének 1960 és 1987 közötti recepciója, 2000 - Irodalmi és társadalmi havi lap, 2011, 59-74. The establishment of critical "Marxist sociology" at the end of the 1960s gave Hegedüs opportunity and ammunition against his competitors (e.g., Erik Molnár's historical materialism and Sándor Szalai's professionalization strategy), but it became suspicious after 1968, precisely because of the critical element.

[33] Despite Szalai's efforts, András Hegedüs was appointed to lead the Sociology Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Science, and Szalai was invited to New York in 1966 to be the research deputy of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, where he worked for six years. In 1972, he published his book, *The Use of Time*, which was the summary of his international comparative time budget research with the involvement of 12 countries, which gave an opportunity for some Hungarian sociologists to participate in international research. See Vera Szabari, "'Töredezett' tudománytörténet? A szociológia hazai történetének 1960 és 1987 közötti recepciója ['Fragmeted' Science History? The Reception of the History of Hungarian Sociology between 1960 and 1987]," *2000* 4 (2001): 59–74.

of Western methods on several occasions, unsuccessfully.[34] The success of the professionalization strategy was (is) greatly dependent on the external (political *and* economic) context— as the sociology of the 1990s illustrates well. The assessment of sociology in the Kádár-era from a socio-historical point of view is determined by the interpretations in the 1990s, which tried to rearrange the Hungarian sociological scene according to the buzzword of the time, "professionalism" (which can be integrated in international academic work).

The concept of science in the 1990s is much more dominated by methodological considerations, mainly the application of quantitative methods which are adaptable, efficient, can be broadly applied, but most importantly, are compatible with international academic life. From this perspective, sociology in the 1960s can be characterised with dilettantism, and in the 1970s with professionalism. Whilst the seemingly paradoxical situation where a political regime that was becoming more and more isolated and rigid in fact contributed to an institutionalization and professionalization that embraced foreign influences,[35] the results of the 1970s could not have been achieved without the "dilettante" accomplishments of the 1960s. Certainly, social scientists of the socialist countries in the 1960s worked (and published) in completely different conditions, but as I see it, it was not due to the ignorance or negligence of (Western) methods, but rather because of the goals set (e.g., the creation of an overall autochthonous sociology rooted in Marxist ideology), the comprehensive and interdisciplinary methods assigned to them, as well as to the uncertainties that followed.[36]

[34] Vera Szabari, "Határmunkálatok a magyar szociológiában: burzsoá kontra marxista szociológia, [Borderworks in Hungarian Sociology: Bourgeois vs. Marxist Sociology]," in *Határmunkálatok a tudományban* [Borderworks in Science], edited by Gábor Kutrovátz, Benedek Láng, and Gábor Zemplén (Budapest: L'Harmattan Kiadó, 2010), 104., 111.

[35] Szabari, Kovács, and Lénárt, op. cit. That reaction took place in demography as well, as we will see in the following.

[36] On revisiting Soviet sociological research, see Martine Mespoulet, "La «renaissance» de la sociologie en URSS (1958–1972). Une voie étroite entre matérialisme historique et «recherches sociologiques concrètes»," Quelle

Hungarian results in the sociology of the family

The first significant Hungarian work in sociology of the family (which can also be seen as the launching point of the period) was *Család és házasság a mai magyar társadalomban* [Family and marriage in contemporary Hungarian society], edited by Pál Lőcsei.[37] Its foreword mentions the preceding research in the 1960s, moreover, Lőcsei emphasizes that the morphological examination of the family has been significant in Hungary due to the problem of population decline for more than three decades. In terms of theories in sociology of the family, there is room for improvement, although these notions are essential to make prognoses of processes.[38] However, a necessary first step is empirical research to explore *reality*, for which "no theories from 'over the Leitha' can be imported, regardless of Hungarian factual reality." Hungarian sociology of the family "has to be built up step by step," which will not be easy as it is a research area where the personal space of people is to be intruded, where operationalization is extremely difficult, although "acquired data can be 'verified' by means of information technology."[39] In order to create theories, first it is essential to know the facts and the scene, not just in terms of sociology but psychology and demography as well.

---

sociologie derrière le «rideau de fer»? 1950–1989*, Revue d'Histoire des Sciences Humaines* 1 (2007): 57–86; Natalia M. Rimachevskaïa and Lidia Prokofieva, "L'enquête de Taganrog, Le début de la sociologie du niveau de vie en URSS," Quelle sociologie derrière le «rideau de fer»? 1950–1989, *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences Humaines* 1 (2007): 87–112.

[37] Pál Lőcsei, ed., op. cit.

[38] In his paper two years later, Cseh-Szombathy pointed out the importance of the change in (international) literature on the sociology of the family when the significance of theories increased. Although accounts of empirical research were still dominant in publications, the sociology of the family in the 1970s was characterized by an intense theoretical interest. László Cseh-Szombathy, "Az elméletek jelentősége a családon belüli intergenerációs kapcsolatok vizsgálatában [The Significance of Theories in the Reasearch of Intergenerational Relations within the Family]", *Szociológia* 2 (1973): 170–186.

[39] Pál Lőcsei, Foreword, op. cit. 10.

The first paper in the book was written by Kálmán Kulcsár,[40] who identified the effect of social forces as the sole factor that causes the transformation of the family. Somewhat surprisingly, Kulcsár cites the isolation-research in Ivád which entered a new phase in the 1950s, in which human genetic, biodemographic, and sociodemographic analysis of the population in the Bodrog region was conducted by Hungarian historians, sociologists, demographists, and doctors with West German cooperation (i.e., with researchers from Mainz and Bremen). The focus of interest in the research, that is, the genetic heritage manifest in anthropological features, clearly continued the "research" tradition of the 1930s and 40s.

The innovative nature of the book is well illustrated by the paper of Júlia Szalai, which partly tackles the problem of double burden on women in lower social groups, which renders any chance for education or mobility impossible.[41] The poorer one is, the less likely one is to have access to services or equipment that ease domestic burdens, and the more one does household chores aside from their daily job. She cites

[40] Kálmán Kulcsár was the successor of András Hegedüs. He held significant positions and had influence on the sociological scene at the time. In his paper "*A magyar szociológia történetszemléletéről. Gondolat a külső minta jelentőségéről* [On the view of history of Hungarian sociology. Comments on the significance of external model]," *Valóság* 5 (1984): 1–24, Kulcsár examined the sociology of the early twentieth century and the rural movements of the 1930s, he arrived to the conclusion that a sociology which is trying to adopt Western theories and methods and apply them to Hungarian conditions (i.e., "following a pattern") cannot be successful, nor can one that participates in "shaping society using endogenous resources—and consequently—is in defense against external patterns" (i.e., "creating a pattern") be successful. Only a "third way" model could succeed that combines the two approaches. Models of modernization can be successful if there is a basis for further development after the external push, and the external circumstances have changed. Hungarian sociology found the right balance in the 1960s, says Kulcsár (who had a scholarship as visiting scholar of Columbia and Berkeley University in 1965/66), which is not obviously connected to the recognition of regional characteristics of the (Hungarian and Soviet) political leadership from the end of the 1960s. (See Melinda Kalmár, op. cit., 310.) In the 1980s, with the development of the Hungarian socialist political reforms, it was not surprising to set a specific course for Hungarian sociology.

[41] Júlia Szalai, op. cit.

György Konrád and Iván Szelényi's paper on the phenomenon of how workers were disadvantaged in the government scheme to provide residence to citizens. The latter provided the basis for their work *Az értelmiség útja az osztályhatalomhoz* [The intellectuals on the road to class power],[42] for which the authors were arrested in 1974 and were offered immigrant passports.[43] Károly Varga's paper[44] is significant in terms of Western impact assessment, as it illustrates how many people worked in (and cited) international lifestyle research, organised by Sándor Szalai from Vienna with the help of UNESCO,[45] which was considered unsuccessful on the Hungarian scene. Based on the research of Pál Lőcsei and the German sociologist, René Kőnig, Varga surprises the readers with the fact that although German married individuals spend twice as much time with their partners than Hungarian ones, there are more divorces in Germany. The studies of Rudolf Andorka, Béla Buda, and Judit Kiss discuss the correlations of family and deviance, often introducing—today classic—Western authors.

The Demographic Research Institute of KSH outlined a research project by 1975 to examine the role of work done outside of home in the various stages of women's lives. The programme aimed at exploring the reconciliation of work and family roles and its difficulties by combining the methodology of demographics and sociological biography.[46] This project seems somewhat belated in the light of papers on family sociology

---

[42] György Konrád and Iván Szelényi, *Az értelmiség útja az osztályhatalomhoz* [Intellectuals on the road to class power] (Bern–Párizs: Európai Protestáns Magyar Szabadegyetem, 1978).

[43] György Konrád chose internal immigration, while Szelényi left the country.

[44] Károly Varga, Házassági kohézió az időmérleg tükrében [Marriage cohesion in mirror of time-budget], in: Pál Lőcsei op. cit, 200-225.

[45] John P. Robinson, Philip E. Converse, Alexander Szalai, eds., op. cit.; Sándor Szalai, *Idő a mérlegen* [Time on Scales] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1978).

[46] László Molnár, "Az otthonon kívül végzett munka szerepe a nő életútjának különböző szakaszaiban (kutatási hipotézisek) [The role of economic activity done out of home in women's different life-stages]," *Demográfia* 1 (1977): 9–22.

at the time due to political concerns. Mária Márkus,[47] Zsuzsa Ferge, Katalin Koncz, and Júlia Szalai[48] raised politically uncomfortable questions: the problem of paid and unpaid (and therefore exploitative) work in connection with double burdens; the failure to make domestic work social, and growing inequality among women as a result (due to double burdens, it was the working class that lagged more and more behind in terms possibilities); "leadership positions 'customized for men'" (later referred to as the glass ceiling or glass wall);[49] as well as the halt of female emancipation, prevailing traditional gender roles, and the negative consequences of keeping women at home (e.g., "maternity pay"). Mária Márkus diagnosed the appearance of the American female life path model in Hungary, based on parallels with American society, such as a depersonalised society, an increasing number of intimate small families, women staying at home for a long time after the birth of the child(ren), and the reproduction of gender inequalities.[50]

[47] "In my own research, the problem of family is represented as one of the fundamental scenes of women's emancipation…" Márkus looks at the problem of female roles in Hungary within the theoretical framework of habitus and dispositions, without mentioning Bourdieu's name. "One necessary condition of successful socialization that the acquired knowledge and patterns have practical relevance for the new generation, that they could really be applied not just within the family, but outside of it, in confrontation with other people and other situations. This requires a certain stability of relationships and situations, consistency in both society and within the family. Mária Márkus, "A család szocializációs funkciójának és modelljeinek változásáról, [About the Changing Socialization Function and Modells of the Family]," *Szociológia* 2 (1974): 227.

[48] Venyige Júlia Molnárné later published papers on the history of women's employment.

[49] At the same time, János Kádár thought it desirable to deliberately feminize certain professions. See Melinda Kalmár, op. cit., 303.

[50] Mária Márkus, "A nő helyzete a munka világában [Women's Situation in the World of Work]," *Kortárs* 2 (1970): 126–142. After looking at the corpus of the periodicals mentioned, I arrived at a completely different conclusion than that of Eszter Bartha, who claims that the researchers of the time were (all?) totally insensitive to gender considerations. She makes this claim based on (unpublished) research material that attempted to explore the cultural interests of working women in 1973, Eszter Bartha, "Munkásnő-interjúk és munkáséletmód-kutatások az 1970-es évek Magyarországán [Interviews with and Research on Female Workers in Hungary in the 1970s]," in *A női kommuni-*

Perhaps the most outrageous theory was set out by Ágnes Heller and Mihály Vajda, also in 1970, who identified the way out of the crisis of the family through the construction of communes as a replacement for the bourgeois family.[51]

The project took place by higher orders and coincided with the announcement of the Year of Women, whose topic was: "Women and decision-making: a socio-political priority." Research on women's employment and their roles in the family was also motivated by the fact that in the Soviet Union, and also in Poland, massive empirical research was conducted in the 1960s, while in Hungary women's employment was considered as a factor that made it more difficult to have children.

László Cseh-Szombathy wrote the work that has become a classic of Hungarian sociology of the family.[52] It was completed in 1974, as Cseh-Szombathy's PhD thesis, but—typical of the era—was only published in 1978 (as part of the SSC series), and the author had to choose whether it would be a textbook on family sociology or a comprehensive work. He commented upon this dilemma in the introduction of the book, as other sub-disciplines already had excellent collections of texts,[53] however, such a collection would not be able to represent the complexity of contemporary sociology of the family and would not help the reader get acquainted with tendencies in research, relevant problems, and the deficiencies of various approaches.[54]

---

káció története [The History of Female Communication], edited by Balázs Sipos and Lilla Krász (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2019).

[51] Ágnes Heller, Mihály Vajda, "Családforma és kommunizmus [Family Form and Communism]," *Kortárs* 10 (1970): 1655–1665. Ágnes Heller and Mária Márkus signed the declaration in Korčula in 1968, some years later with Iván Szelényi they were fired from their jobs, Heller and Ferenc Fehér emmigrated to America, Mária Márkus and György Márkus to Australia finally in 1974.

[52] Cseh-Szombathy, *Családszociológiai problémák.*

[53] For example: Zsuzsa Ferge, *Francia szociológia* [French sociology] (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1971); István Kemény, *A szexuális élet szociológiája* [The sociology of sexual life] (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1972); Rudolf Andorka, Béla Buda, and László Cseh-Szombathy, *A deviáns viselkedés szociológiája* [The sociology of deviant behaviour] (Budapest: Gondolat,1974); and later, Evelyn Sullerot, *A női nem* [The female gender] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1983).

[54] Cseh-Szombathy, *Családszociológiai problémák*, op. cit., 6–7.

The author was aware of the fact that Hungarian researchers were familiar with contemporary foreign literature, but claims that the access to these was rather incidental. He emphasized that there was no comprehensive work in the field therefore overspecification was typical. He openly wrote about the difficulties in gathering information in Hungary and the lack of debates and open discussions also caused by the fact that researchers were only informed in a very limited field. Foreign results were treated with distrust and heavy criticism. Hungarian sociology of the family should examine domestic problems, for which specific approaches were necessary, but foreign theories of family sociology had to be exploited as well. "The prerequisite for Hungarian sociology of the family to examine the main problems of the family from various aspects and to provide a foundation for social politics concerning the family is to expand Hungarian research which now applies international results selectively."[55]

Cseh-Szombathy suggested Hungarian research could be connected to international research in terms of hypotheses, elaborating on one's own conceptual apparatus as well as borrowing methods of data collecting and applying specific methods in family sociological analyses. In order to do that, Cseh-Szombathy made an attempt to provide an overview on the research field based on "the last 15 years of literature" (in fact, 25 years), interpreting more than 400 items cited in a most thorough way. His specific intention was to guide researchers in terms of research topics, approaches, applied methods, also adding an extremely useful and up-to-date methodological attachment at the end of the book.

Cseh-Szombathy selected his material carefully, and his ultimate aim was to describe major issues and problem areas. Cseh-Szombathy argued that the conventional functions of the family (e.g., the reproductive, socialising, tension-easing, religious, political etc., functions) had changed or had been lost. Therefore, he suggested the use of development

---

[55] Ibid., 340.

approach(es) to grasp the (changes of) the contemporary family, which advocated a dialectical approach to the family. In order to examine oppositions in the family, "the Marxist approach to the family" *could* be an excellent way, but sociology of the family was rather underdeveloped compared to other branches of sociology in socialist countries.[56] He claimed that Western conflict-theoretical approaches might prove to be useful, despite underlining that typical conflicts among Western and socialist societies were substantially different both inside and outside of the family. Therefore tensions in the socialist family should be interpreted by a modified conflict model as "the opposition of man and woman is not a typical characteristic of a socialist family."[57] That is how conflicts—the internal dynamics of the family—can be described with the addition of what psychology has to offer on imitation, learning external patterns and gender roles, to be compared with textbooks in Hungarian, as well as anthropological research, disproving static gender roles like Parson's model after the researches of Margaret Mead.[58]

The book is divided into sub-chapters according to the development stages of the family, like socialization in childhood, choosing partners, relationships, marriage, family decisions, parent-child relationship, intimacy in relationships, (in)stability in marriage and divorce. The author raised many questions that are relevant to this day and offered theoretical explanations that are just as progressive as half a century later.[59] He openly

---

[56] Ibid., 28; 31.

[57] On the other hand, Marxist sociologists' notion of function is different from the structuralist-functionalist approach, as the aim of socialist sociologists of the family was not to look at manifestations of "constant family functions," but to establish functions based on empirical research of families working in socialist societies. Ibid., 30.

[58] Ibid., 34–55.

[59] Unfortunately, that says more about our time. Cseh-Szombathy wrote about John Bowlby's influential attachment theory in 1952 and its afterlife, and he partly refuted, partly developed the original theory. The theory is still a reference point for voluntarist and pro-natalist views, whereas the deficiencies of Bowlby's original idea and his misleading conclusions on mother-child attachment became clear in the 1970s (for example that a child deprived of the care of their mother by blood will necessarily have issues of mental pathology).

discussed various motivations to have children (after Clifford Kirkpatrick), relationships of childless women, sexuality in relationships,[60] happy marriages turning unhappy after the child is born, conflicts that trigger unhappiness and divorce, and the physical abuse of children.

In the chapter on intimate communities, the sections about authority, obedience, possessing, and the communication problems in marriages were intended for a wider audience—and they have not lost their relevance, either. In terms of marriage and living together with someone, he does not only focus on the topic of (in)stability of marriage and divorce, which is in the focus of interest of demographics and is assessed from a normative point of view, but deals with the role and function of conflicts in a relationship. So, he left behind the idea that adaptation is the key of a good marriage—which also claims that a successful marriage is long one—and proposed the need for a typology of conflicts in Hungary. Cseh-Szombathy refuted to explain the increasing number of divorces as crisis—a notion that readers came across repeatedly in debates on demographic policy in periodicals like *Nők Lapja, Élet és Irodalom,* and *Valóság.* He claimed that the number of divorces grew due to a change in the function of marriage (e.g., loving marriage, personal happiness), and spouses lost confidence because of each other's ambiguous expectations as well as those of society.[61] Cseh-Szombathy refuted the idea in the 1970s, which seems to prevail to this day, that divorce was the "cause" of deviance,[62] while he made

---

[60] In addition, Cseh-Szombathy focuses on the question of open marriage, the exchange of sexual partners or group sex, which can be read in the Kinsey Reports (1948, 1953). To write the chapter on intimacy, Cseh-Szombathy used Nona Glazer-Malbin's book (see footnote 12) which looked at homosexual family forms.

[61] Cseh-Szombathy cites Pál Lőcsei's unique research in Budapest, which revealed the extent to which the number of divorces do not reflect reality, as many more lived separately than those who formally announced it, and the other way round: in many cases the couples had to live in the same space after the divorce. Pál Lőcsei, ed., op. cit.

[62] Cseh-Szombathy does not use the pejorative term "broken family," either. On "unproductive psychologization," see Cseh-Szombathy, *Családszociológiai problémák*, op. cit., 333–335.

it clear that divorce is a psychological turmoil, and highlighted the resulting vulnerability, insecurity, development disorders and bad impact on personality development in children.[63] He was so interested in the sociology of marital conflicts, about which he wrote his DSc thesis. The book was published more than three years later, aimed at a wider audience.[64]

A year later, Péter Somlai's book *Konfliktus és megértés* [Conflict and understanding] was published.[65] Unlike Cseh-Szombathy, Péter Somlai did not focus on development theories when elaborating his family sociological approach; he was more influenced by conflict theory. Moreover, he was responsible for the introduction of another new paradigm: consensus theory, from which he highlighted the problems of integration and identity. The reader could come across literature on (and the notion of) intimacy and privacy in Somlai's book for the first time, and due to West German influences, the sociology of autocratic families. Aside from its theoretical foundation,[66] the book introduced the results of empirical research on the family, conducted with the help of students, using the method of family monograph that he elaborated after his travels in West Germany. The interviews and anthropological descriptions recorded in Budapest, Balassagyarmat, Karcag, Tiszazug, Pécs and Pécsvárad gave opportunity for mutual influencing, to make coalitions, to describe theories on transmitters of conflicts, and to provide a selection of the most interesting researches on lifestyles in Hungary.[67] Somlai's sociology of the family strived

---

[63] Ibid., 339.

[64] László Cseh-Szombathy, *A házastársi konfliktusok szociológiája* [The Sociology of Marriage Conflicts], (Budapest: Gondolat, 1985).

[65] Péter Somlai, *Konfliktus és megértés* [Conflict and Understanding] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1986).

[66] The ideas discussed include works by Durkheim, Habermas, Halbwachs, Veblen, Simmel, Berger and Kellner, Luckman, Goffman, Horkheimer, Riesman, Rapoport, Krappmann, Ariès, Parsons, and Bales. Hungarian sociology of the family is characterised by strong reference to the classics (e.g. Max Weber); the reasons for this are not discussed here.

[67] The research was designed to look at four main areas: space (common/ality, intimacy, privacy), time (spent together and alone, holidays), resources (shared budget, decisions), and network (shared or own network of

for a synthesis; he integrated psychological, pedagogical, and economic results of the time. A good example is the volume of Elemér Hankiss on zero-sum games, which became well-known: the problem of a shared pasture and the harmonization of dilemmas of game theory with conflict theory.[68]

This paper cannot undertake to provide a detailed description of sociology of the family at the time, but the Western reception can hardly be discussed without some major works. Next, I intend to look at briefly Judit H. Sas's *Nőies nők és férfias férfiak, társadalmi sztereotípiák* [Feminine Females and Masculine Males: Social Stereotypes].[69] The book offers a summary of academic results on gender roles based on the most recent literature in biology, psychology, and social psychology at the beginning of the 1980s. The section on social psychology was based exclusively on Western literature, mentioning a number of experiments on stereotypes. Sas urged a methodological turn: instead of looking at books in households, which had been a basic source for investigation, she proposed the use of time-budget research, but mostly the application of new observational techniques, for example lab experiments of social psychology.

The book was in fact the first Hungarian work in gender studies and summarized literature on pre-marital relationships on the 1950s and 1960s along with the research on sexuality in the 1970s. In connection with romantic love as a basis for modern relationships, the idea of love in modern societies was mentioned and so were the topics of the idealization of partners when entering a relationship and all its consequences,

---

relationships). The responses revealed the extent of family integration, but anthropological observations led to interesting outcomes as well. See Péter Somlai, *Családmonográfiák* [Family Monographs] (Budapest: Oktatási Minisztérium Marxizmus-Leninizmus Oktatási Főosztálya, 1979).

[68] Elemér Hankiss, *Társadalmi csapdák* [Social Traps] (Budapest: Magvető, 1979).

[69] Judit H. Sas, *Nőies nők és férfias férfiak, társadalmi sztereotípiák* [Feminine Females and Masculine Males: Social Stereotypes] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1984). I hope to explore this area more thoroughly, since this paper lacks discussion of the work of Pál Lőcsei, András Klinger, Zsuzsa Ferge, Ágnes Utasi, et al., in this field.

the various aspects of choosing partners and theories on that (complementarity vs. homogamy). In connection with choosing partners, a lot of attention was devoted to marital mobility, the problem of the mobility of residence, the ways of family decision-making. In a substantial part of the book she tackled the correlation of women's employment and gender stereotypes, also commenting on the misconception (prevailing to this day), which connects women's employment to the measures in the Rákosi-era. The author paid a lot of attention to the problem of gender roles in her lifestyle research in the first half of the 1970s. The top governmental leadership in Hungary was highly interested in encouraging women's employment at the time, while research proved that women were undermotivated in taking up daily jobs. Sas concluded in her book *Életmód és család* [Lifestyle and Family][70] that undermotivation can be derived back to a lack of recognition. As gender inequality and discrimination on the labour market could only be criticized carefully, she approached the problem from another angle: employment created possibilities for women, but they received appreciation and solidarity primarily for the traditional tasks done within the family. In most cases, even if a woman took a job, she was not given a profession, knowledge, influence, or a better chance for intellectual development, whereas in the family she received protection to a certain extent, partial recognition, not to mention that these tasks had to be done anyway, which dragged women back to their domestic and childcare burdens.

As we can see, those in the field of Hungarian sociology of the family encountered the repeated problem that relationships were being transformed by enormous domestic and international social changes. The notions of the scene of the family, mentality, gender and family roles, and autonomy within the family remained rather rigid and conservative. In the 1970s, this was a characteristic both of Hungarian society and political decisions. While demographists' progressive proposals

---

[70] Judit H. Sas, *Életmód és család. Az emberi viszonyok alakulása a család-ban* [Lifestyle and Family. The Development of Human Relations in the Family] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1976).

concerning demographic policy were mostly ignored by those in charge,[71] family sociologists tried to outline directions for a smaller public. As Cseh-Szombathy noted,

> Domestic research that came to the conclusion of the necessity of the family also revealed some phenomena that could be considered as malfunctions, and cannot be treated as a result of external influences, alien to the socialist society, but rather as ones closely connected to our economic-social development. We must acknowledge that social development induced fundamental changes in the structure of the family, in its mode of action, and as a result it cannot accomplish traditional tasks perfectly without the assistance that we still expect of it. A working family policy is necessary, which is by no means guided by an idealised image of the family in the past or by the idea of restoring an earlier family structure, and nor does it strive to recreate the equilibrium between society and the family. We need a family policy that acknowledges that the problematic changes concerning the family are consequences: reactions to changes in other spheres of society and that the equilibrium between family and society can only be created through modified forms, leaving the past conditions behind.[72]

Factors enhancing and hindering reception

A number of factors enhanced and hindered the reception of Western academic and cultural influences. The possibilities of Hungarian researchers to receive information, as well as their room for manoeuvre, was greatly influenced by the receiving context, such as external pressure and opportunities and the considerations of the political decision-makers of the time,

---

[71] Zsombor Bódy, op. cit.; Mária Heller, Dénes Némedi, Ágnes Rényi, op. cit.
[72] László Cseh-Szombathy, *Családszociológiai problémák*; László Cseh-Szombathy, "Változások a család működésében [Changes in the Operation of the Family]," *Társadalmi Szemle* 6 (1980): 35.

namely the aforementioned decision by Moscow to encourage academic research in 1969, the Helsinki Declaration on the free flow of ideas and information in 1975, as well as exchange programmes within two-sided agreements with various capitalist countries.[73] In the following, I intend to highlight the hindering or enhancing factors for reception that emerged in my research into sociology of the family.

Firstly, let me emphasize the opportunities in *international cooperation*, that is, *joint international research*, not just because of their self-evidence, but for specific instances. Although Sándor Szalai was "removed" when sociology was institutionalized in the 1960s in Hungary, he built an impressive career in research management on the international sociological scene. For example, the international comparative time budget research from 1966, led by Szalai, involved 12 countries. As such, it was a great opportunity on various levels.[74] Hungarian researchers involved in the project were given much freedom in terms of research, as the Soviet Union was part of the common project.[75] The research in Hungary was led by László Cseh-Szombathy and Zsuzsa Ferge, but Szalai took care of foreign research trips for more Hungarian researchers before 1966. That is how Cseh-Szombathy could participate in a UNESCO

---

[73] Melinda Kalmár, op. cit.; Róbert Takács, "Helsinki és a kulturális csere Magyarország és a Nyugat között (1975–1980) [Helsinki and the Cultural Exchange between East and West (1975–1980)]," *Múltunk* 4 (2018): 160–186; Katalin Somlai, "Ösztöndíjjal Nyugatra a hatvanas években: Az Országos Ösztöndíj Tanács felállítása [To the West with a scholarship: The establishment of the National Council of Scholarships]," in *Kádárizmus: Mélyfúrások* [Kadarism—Deep Drills], edited by János Tischler (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2009), 273–314; Katalin Somlai, "'Kiutazása érdekünkben áll': A Nyugatra utazó ösztöndíjasok és a hírszerzés kapcsolatai a Kádár-korszakban ['Travel is Our Interest': The Relationship of Scholars Travelling to the West and Intelligence Services in the Kadar Era]," in Gyula Kozák, ed., op. cit., 241–263.

[74] Robinson, Converse, and Szalai, eds., op. cit.; Szalai, op. cit.

[75] "Szalai gets Patrusev, and so they are given the green light." Interview with László Cseh-Szombathy, 2000, interviewer: Gábor Kovács, in: *Cseh-Szombathy László a jelenvalóról és az eljövendőről. Emberi viszonyok: Cseh-Szombathy László tiszteletére* [László Cseh-Szombathy about the Present and the Forthcoming. Human Relations. In Honour of László Cseh-Szombathy], edited by Zsolt Spéder and Pál Péter Tóth (Budapest: Andorka Rudolf Társadalomtudományi Társaság–Századvég, 2000), 13–38.

Seminar in Oslo in 1964, and learn empirical methods from Paul Lazarsfeld, perhaps the greatest sociologist of the postwar period. He continued to use these notes and teach methodology from them even in the seventies. In other words, participation in international research meant more liberal research conditions, and even the possibility to co-publish with Western authors on multiple occasions. The research itself was a valid source for writing papers within the country for a good one and a half decades. The most dynamic part of (socialist) sociology in the 1970s was research into the quality of life, as this notion was also embraced by Marxist ideology as a useful approach in international ideological struggle, which could be contrasted to income or supplemented with consumers' goods. It seems that a lot of papers were allowed to be published as an excuse for lifestyle research, taking advantage of the international reputation of Szalai's research, and they could reach a professional audience, which otherwise would have been hardly—or not at all—reached.[76]

International researches could be presented at *international conferences*, which provided opportunities for networking[77] and acquiring literature, for example copies distributed at conferences.[78] The professional audience at home could benefit from these conferences indirectly, as—otherwise hardly publishable—ideas could find their way into reports on conferences. Publishing the keynote speeches of conferences were especially suitable for that.

---

[76] One example is the English-language book of the lectures at the symposium of the Ninth World Congress of Sociology, in which a number of papers on comparative value research were published by Western authors (along with Elemér Hankiss's article). The book is rather far from the original questions and issues of lifestyle research. László Cseh-Szombathy, "Az élet minősége. Összehasonlító tanulmányok" [The Quality of Life. Comparative Studies.]," *Magyar Tudomány*, 7–8, Special Issue edited by Sándor Szalai and Frank M. Andrews (1981): 629–630.

[77] It seems that those professional relationships worked fruitfully on the long term, which became informal and friendly.

[78] The conference in Evian might have been especially successful in this respect, as it comes up in numerous recollections.

Foreign scholarships had a significant role in enhancing the institutionalization of certain sub-disciplines and academic fields. There were instances when the foundation supporting the scholar provided them with a certain sum for buying (foreign!) books. Some of this legally acquired foreign literature was lent to other colleagues, who made notes for their own purposes.[79]

I have already touched upon the role of *libraries*, evidently both the library of KSH and FSzEK made use of their acquisition potentials to the maximum.[80] When examining the Russian literature, it is apparent that cited Western authors could be accessed earlier—often much earlier—in Hungary, but they were published sooner in Hungarian than in Russian. In terms of libraries, the question arises: who could access Western literature? Evidently the researchers of KSH were able to do so, so were researchers in Budapest, university lecturers to a lesser extent; universities outside Budapest and minor research centres were in dire need of these opportunities. Only a small part of the professional audience had no problem with keeping up with significant Western academics. The lack of access, the impossibility to copy, and the limitations that followed keep coming up in interviews.

That is also why *translations and reviews* had a great significance. Review-writing was considerably more prestigious at the time than today, since reviews informed the academic community about the publishing of Western works and new ideas in them.[81] When assessing the impact of Western literature, the problem of adopting terminology arises. When can we talk about loaning terms to describe domestic phenomena, and when is it

---

[79] Péter Somlai was surprised to see the offer of Humboldt scholarship for buying books a year after his return home. The amazing sum of 1000 Deutsche Marks was enough to cover the price of 50 books and encyclopedias.

[80] The library of KSH tried to provide information on a broad scale. In 1984, they launched a series *Reviews and Translations*, which conveyed current economic and political-economic information to the top political and economic leadership based on incoming foreign literature. István Csahók, op. cit., 526.

[81] Moreover, it could be assumed that the writer of a given review was in possession of the Western work.

the adoption of the research topic itself—even if the problem or area examined had not existed before? Recollections gathered through interviews reveal that the researchers of the era deliberately wanted to adopt Western concepts: "It was natural that we took foreign published material and we used them as reference, we adopted them as we could. Debates concerning ideology was a different issue, what Hegedüs, Ferge wrote about at the time. In the published items of KSH, we tried to use the categories of classes that were in Western works."[82]

There were practical reasons for adoptions, such as making research easier as well as providing theoretical background methodology and theoretical framework as well as comparability on an international scene. However, we can encounter examples for the adoption of Western problems or at least research preferences, such as researching old age in family sociology, which could be integrated into international projects due to increased interest around it, or the intergenerational transfers from the 1980s. Tibor Kuczi came to the conclusion, by analysing articles in *Valóság* in the 1970s, that almost all adopted concepts are English, French, or German terms, which, according to the author, signals a utopic element in the terms as they were applied to describe an unevenly modernised society.[83] After the political transformation, it was often the case that new terms appeared to replace old ones, especially in the border areas of sociology. Such terms were the aforementioned generation transfer in family sociology; and glass ceiling, glass wall in *gender studies.*

In terms of impact assessment, I would like to mention two factors briefly: *the transfer role of Polish sociology and Mária Márkus*, as well as the potentials of education. As for the socialist countries, Polish sociology was in a distinguished situation due to its historical traditions, its close relations with Western sociology on a personal and professional level, and to its quick

---

[82] Interview with István Kemény, In: *Szociológiai Szemle*, 2 (2008): 3-21.
[83] Tibor Kuczi, Szociológia, ideológia, közbeszéd, [Sociology, Ideology, Public Talk], In: Valóság '70. (Budapest: Scientia Humana Társulás, 1992) 42.

(re)institutionalization.[84] The significance of Mária Márkus—who had Polish origins from her mother's side—in transmitting the results of Western social sciences was acknowledged and highly appreciated by her contemporaries. Her oeuvre and special role in Hungarian sociology and philosophy deserves separate examination, here only one element is highlighted, the adoption of qualitative method based on biographical sources. It had been used in Polish sociology since the 1920s. William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki's *The Polish Peasant* could have been known for Hungarian academics in theory; the method had been applied here for a good forty-fifty years. As Mária Márkus recalled,

> In my latest research I tried to apply a method, which—like every method—has its strict limitations, and yet promises relevant positive outcomes that could not be otherwise grasped. This is the method of "personal document," which has been widespread in sociology since Znaniecki and Thomas. [...] Sociology of the family—like other sub-disciplines of sociology—most often collects data from various questionnaire-based researches (beside statistical data). As well as its well-known advantages, this method has its—also known—disadvantages as well. Firstly, the researcher has a significant and uncontrollable influence on the answers themselves simply by wording the questions. Another disadvantage

[84] In Poland courses on sociology were available at universities since 1956 (e.g. Zygmunt Bauman's lectures), in 1957 the Sociological Association was founded, but most importantly, Polish sociologists had close organizational relations with Western sociology: S. Ossowski was the deputy, J. Szczepański was the president of the International Sociological Association. In retrospect it is fair to say that these relations defended and reinforced the position of Polish sociology in Hungary. See: Gyula Gombos, A trivializálódás árnyékában? A lengyelországi szociológia a kilencvenes években. [In the Shadow of Trivialization? Polish Sociology in the 1990s] In: Éva Kovács, ed., *Mi újság a kelet-közép-európai szociológiában? A lengyelországi, a magyarországi, a romániai, a szerbiai és szlovákiai szociológia a kilencvenes években*, [What's New in East Central European Sociology? Polish, Hungarian, Romanian, Serbian and Slovakian Sociology in the 1990s] (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2002), 12–70.– Polish sociology made use of the interest of "capitalist countries" in exotic socialist societies from the beginning of the 1960s.

is that the answers—especially if they refer to questions not asked by the person on a verbal level—can be rather random and ad hoc.[85]

At the beginning of 1972, the Sociological Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences with Hungarian Radio and *Nők Lapja* launched the research "Sikeres életek" [Successful Lives] based on the ideas of Márkus, and thousands of biographies arrived.[86] later on, more and more researchers used personal documents, for example Katalin Hanák in her research on foster children, or Péter Somlai, who—as we have seen—found this method in West German literature.

Surprisingly, the role of *higher education* for Western impact on sociology of the family has not been explored yet. It might be because it is evident, but difficult to measure—or for other reasons.[87] As it is apparent that most students of sociology do not find employment as researchers, the jargon, the integration of certain concepts, the knowledge shared cannot be overestimated—not exactly in academic context, but outside the profession. What is even more important: learning a perspective, a viewpoint, developing sensitivity to certain problems. In terms of Western academic and cultural influences, these carry more significance than certain academic works being integrated into some author's work, although in that case, reception is apparent and can be verified.

Political and economic factors hindering reception, theoretical and practical problems were present on the scene of Hungarian sociology of the family just like anywhere else—however, the room for manoeuvre was significantly different in various sub-

[85] Mária Márkus, "A család szocializációs funkciójának," 225.

[86] On the change of socializing functions of the family, see Mária Márkus, "A család szocializációs funkciójának."

[87] Although a book was published in 2016 partly as continuation of the project *A magyar neveléstudomány története a szakmai folyóiratok tükrében* [The History of Hungarian Pedagogy in Terms of Professional Journals], the pedagogy in the socialist era is yet to be explored. See András Németh, Zsuzsanna Hanna Bíró, Imre Garai, eds., *Neveléstudomány és tudományos elit a 20. század második felében* [Pedagogy and Scientific Elites in the 20th Century] (Budapest: Gondolat, 2016).

disciplines. Mária Márkus, who had been doing important research in sociology of the family from the beginning, was among the outcast and the banned from the early 1970s. The publishing of the relevant research result was considerably influenced by the repercussions István Kemény had to face after his research on poverty in 1968,[88] but there were other *bans*, *party directives*, *denouncement* (of research especially if somehow connected to the working class.) These losses are hard to recognize in retrospect, or they might fade away, but they did add significantly to the operation of *self-censorship* at the time—which had its mark on Western reception. *Risky forms of knowledge remained in close circles* due to political pressure and ideological conformation, which led to the development of *personal oral culture*—as mentioned before—and finally, to its disappearance. As a consequence, when an expert stopped his or her research due to a change of interest or personal reasons, the research could not be continued by others because of lack of public data or access to reports. A *close circle of researchers* is an obstacle to Western influences regardless of the political situation, and not just due to lack of capacity: discussions among an unchanging group of individuals always took place in a confined personal space; the interests, tastes, and access of the members determined Western theories and methods applied in social sciences. One of the most influential paradigm of the 1960s–70s, interactionism for example, was absent from Hungarian sociology,[89] while the network research (network analysis for a long time) that grew out of it became a popular field of research by the end of the 1980s due to the internationally acknowledged work of Róbert Angelusz and Róbert Tardos. Knowledge remaining in a close circle—with all

---

[88] The paper using KSH's data on income distribution was banned before its publication, but it became known within professional circles. István Kemény, op. cit. Kemény was allowed to publish his gypsy-survey only in part. He was fired from his job, so he was forced to emigrate in 1977.

[89] Maybe it was the coherent theoretical deficiencies that made it unattractive for qualified sociologists of the family, or the methods may have been difficult to apply in Hungarian context.

its negative consequences—was also caused by banning certain fields, e.g. demographics, from education.[90]

International cooperation was hindered by a number of *difficulties on the organizational level.* Péter Somlai talked about the "total failure" of a promising project with American researchers, which had a cluster of typical hindering factors. The project *Kinship and Aging* in 1985–86 involved KSH, MTA, and ELTE. The leader of the Sociology of the Family section of the American Sociological Association initiated the cooperation, offering finance. The Americans were mainly interested in what role relatives have in taking care of the elderly beside the existing institutional possibilities.[91] It turns out from the interview that even communication among the three institutions (and their leaders) caused difficulties, *data collection* was made problematic and impossible by the constant control and censorship of the questionnaires (conducted in KSH), the American research method with computerised data processing, and the slow, convoluted Hungarian ways were not compatible. Moreover, the majority of American researchers were retired from university education, so they were not motivated to publish the research, and Hungarian researchers had no lobbying potential to publish in American journals, which seemed out of reach anyway. The research was left in the drawer. *Publications in foreign journals* for Hungarian researchers of sociology of the family were extremely difficult due to the clearly-defined nature of the sub-discipline in America. This was especially significant as potential research-partners were chosen for new researches based on publications, but it involved insurmountable difficulties

[90] On the Hungarian reception of the paradigm of demographic transition, and its difficulties, see: Attila Melegh, "Az angolszász globális népesedéspolitikai diskurzusok alakulása a 20. században. Lépések a pro- és antinatalista népesedéspolitikák összehasonlító vizsgálata irányában [Anglo-Saxon Discourse on Demography Policies in the 20th Century. Steps towards the Comparative Study of Pro- and Anti-Natalist Demography Policies]," *Replika* 39 (2000): 157–175; and Erzsébet Takács, op. cit.

[91] The dilemma is relevant to this day, two contradictory approaches have developed: one claims that the elderly are left alone by their relatives because of institutional solutions, according to the other one, institutions ease their burdens and they have more time to spend on taking care of them.

to get into American professional journals. That is why it was of utmost importance to maintain already existing relationships; that is why participants embedded in international academic life were important.[92]

Due to the limitations of Hungarian researchers reaching Western countries—even if only in terms of professional publicity—the significance of *foreign experts visiting Hungary* was enormous. However, it had its strict limitations: in the 1960s it was so problematic to invite experts even with the right cadre sheet (and to have it approved), that in most cases they did not even start the process. Although it eased by the second half of the 1970s, there were financial obstacles to the invitations. What remained to resort to were internationally financed conferences and, rarely, the lectures and resources of foreign embassies.

The obstacles of receiving foreign intellectual and cultural influences listed so far are primarily external characteristics of the system. There were *obstacles concerning mentality*—to put it in a euphemistic way: "theoretical" issues which are more difficult to grasp but also carry major significance. On the one hand the question "What do we have to offer to the West?" was more rarely asked than "What can the West offer to us?" The relationship was hardly characterised by mutuality, rather than how to profit from "the other" party. At the same time, intellectual confinement and a conservative way of thinking was also an obstacle to reception. Modern tendencies associated with population decline, which are part of the theory of the demographic transition, were unacceptable for the Hungarian public—who were "informed" on the topic not by demographists/

[92] In this respect, demographists were in a much favourable situation. It was made easier for them, when the International Planned Parenthood Federation channelled in to the United Nations and UNESCO had been in contact with KSH since the 1960s—moreover, Egon Szabady had an important position in the scheme, which provided many demographists and statisticians substantial financial resources and freedom to travel (abroad), Zsombor Bódy, Op. cit. 281.. The scheme of family planning was extremely important for America due to the boom in population in the third world (see also: "family planning industry"; Attila Melegh, op. cit.).

sociologist experts, but by journalists and self-proclaimed writers with folkish backgrounds, terrified of population decline. Public opinion—constantly under strong pro-natalist influence and not far from the political leadership—had its impact on the profession as well. The most important Western theory of modernisation could only be interpreted in terms of decline in Hungarian thinking.

In spite of the obstacles, adoption was incessant. The debate that had high stakes in the 1960s on the similarities of capitalist and socialist societies, converging (social) theories and the harmful effects of de-ideologization that followed was settled by the 1970s. Adopting the carefully-chosen Western example was represented as something evident, rather than as an aim to catch up. From the second half of the 1970s, Hungarian academic institutions saw a benchmark in the international world order, rather than the socialist one, especially because research had to be harmonised with the *vague demands of 'existing socialism'.* This meant uncertainty and constant unpredictability, as some of the research could not be made public for political reasons, and a significant part was in fact ruined. *Expertise being ignored* and results staying in drawers were frustrating especially for demographists, who had a lot of proposals about population policy—by request of the political leadership—but their proposals were finally disregarded by the political decision-makers.[93] A natural consequence of possibilities being closed down "internally" was that the expertise of researchers was made use of "externally"; as we can see in case of demographists, they put more and more effort in the integration into Western academic life. In the late Kádár-era there was—banned or "state samizdat"—research on the sociological scene that provided opportunity for cooperation with Western researchers and institutions.[94]

---

[93] The context of the 1973 regulation of abortion is especially interesting.

[94] Ervin Csizmadia, Diskurzus és diktatúra. A magyar értelmiség vitái Nyugat-Európáról a késő Kádár-rendszerben, [Discourse and Dictatorship, The Dabates of Hungarian Intellectuals on Western Europe in the Late Kadar Regime], (Budapest: Századvég Kiadó, 2001), 126.

ATTILA ANTAL

The Re-institutionalization of Political Science in Hungary*

Introduction

This paper investigates the procedure by which political science in Hungary was institutionalized in the 1970s and 1980s. It would be an exaggeration to say that political science or other social sciences in general had important roles in the post-1989 transition. At the same time, they contributed to the atmosphere of the regime change. Political science in Hungary has been subordinated to politics since the 1980s, which is why, despite adapting to Western European standards, it has not developed any critical approaches of its own.

The institutional integration of political science in Hungary was planned into the Socialist-Communist framework from the second half of the 1970s. On the other hand, due to the weakening of the Communist regime, scientific elites from other fields among the social sciences constantly widened the boundaries of the system. This opened up opportunities for the application of the achievements of Western political science to Hungary. The speed of political processes overtook political science, and this distance increased after the regime change. However, we should not overemphasize the role of historical determinants. According to Tibor Valuch, during the regime change,

> ideological education departments of universities were
> replaced by institutes of social theory and/or political
> science, retaining the majority of their former teaching
> staff, which did not prove a benefit to Hungarian social
> science research and education.[1]

I am attempting to subvert the notion that the ideologically
determined social science of the Kádár regime turned
into professional political science only under the political
transition. In my view, with many real shortcomings and many
determinants, the early rise of political science had already
begun in the 1970s. This paper is based on interviews with
leading and founding figures of political science in Hungary
from the 1980s and 1990s, among them Mihály Bihari, Attila
Ágh, and József Bayer.

Antecedents: Early Political Science before World War II

Political science is one of the youngest social sciences; its
emergence and institutionalization began in the twentieth
century. The American Political Science Association (APSA),
the largest institution in the field of political science in the
world, was established in 1903. Political science is tied to other
disciplines: philosophy, economics, sociology, and law. This is
especially true for the Hungarian situation, where the various
traditions of political thinking in the nineteenth century, linked
to dualism, and into the interwar period,[2] were the foundations
for the reorganization of political science from the 1970s onward.

The political and pamphlet literature that emerged from
the nineteenth century, as well as law, state philosophy, and

---

[1] Tibor Valuch, "A magyar művelődés 1948 után [Hungarian Culture after 1948]," in *Magyar művelődéstörténet* [The History of Hungarian Culture], edited by László Kósa (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2006), 623.

[2] Ervin Csizmadia, "Beszámoló. A magyar politikatudomány tradíciói (OTKA-azonosító: 69072) keretében végzett kutatómunkáról. 2010 [Report. On Research in the Framework of Hungarian Political Science Traditions (OTKA: 69072), 2010]." Source: http://real.mtak.hu/2695/1/69072_ZJ1.pdf (retrieved on December 20, 2019).

constitutional theory, can be regarded as precursors of political science broadly understood. Mihály Bihari emphasizes that the theoretical works of Lajos Kossuth, István Széchényi, and especially the so-called centrists, can be characterized as early scientific approaches to politics. From this period, József Eötvös' synthesizing activity stands out, as well as the works of Zsigmond Kemény, Antal Csengery, and Ágost Trefort.[3]

Ervin Csizmadia has concluded that the common precursor to political science was the emergence of journalistic literature and the scholarly pursuit of politics, even though they define the two frameworks for political thinking that still exist today.[4] While journalistic political literature represents a mobilizing issue that focuses on catching up with the West in political and social terms, scientific thinking about politics is fundamentally different. As Csizmadia notes,

> the acceptance and popularity of French-influenced publicism and German-style political science are far from equal; it weakens the position of science as a servant of foreign power, as opposed to pamphlet literature seeking to solve domestic problems. So, the roles were fixed quite early: journalism is on the side of progress (opposition), science is on the side of conservatism (government).[5]

It is worthwhile to mention that the study of the history of scholarly thinking in politics had been inextricably connected to the teaching of public law disciplines, especially the beginnings of administrative science (otherwise known in German-speaking lands as *Kameralismus* or *Polizei*, rendered in English as "cameralism").[6] At the Faculty of Law of Eötvös Loránd

---

[3] Mihály Bihari, *Politológia. A politika és a modern állam. Pártok és ideológiák* [Political Science. Politics and the Modern State. Parties and Ideologies] (Budapest: Nemzedékek Tudása Tankönyvkiadó, 2013), 2.

[4] Csizmadia, op. cit., 20.

[5] Ibid.

[6] *A jogászképzés múltja, jelene és jövője – Ünnepi tanulmányok, konferencia-előadások, kerekasztal beszélgetések* [The Past, Present and the Future of Legal Education—Festive Studies, Conference Presentations, Roundtable Discussions]. Source: https://www.ajk.elte.hu/Jogaszkepzes_konfkotet (Retrieved on December 20, 2019).

University, and its predecessors, political science education began with the establishment of the Department of Politico-Cameralism in 1777 and continued under various names until 1948.[7] For this reason, it is worth highlighting that the textbooks of the university, in conjunction with state law, emphasized the scientific analysis of politics: in 1862, Gyula Kautz's work and, in 1894, Győző Concha's *Politics* were published. Both sought to outline the specific field and methodology of political science and drew a sharp line between science and journalism. In this vein, we should also highlight the works of Ignác Kuncz, Ágost Pulszky, Gyula Pikler, Gyula Kornis, Oszkár Jászi, Bódog Somló, and Ervin Szabó.

Csizmadia draws attention to a very important feature of organizing scientific-political thinking. According to him, Western-type political science was fundamentally different from the Hungarian. He argues that Western European political thinking, before the emergence of political science, had always showed its inherited traditions. "Compared to this," Csizmadia states, "the organization and foundation strategy of Hungarian political science is quite different:

> First, there is less philosophy in it, even less political philosophy. Even if it has a philosophical background, it is a German-oriented value philosophy that seeks to distinguish social science from natural science […] rather than a political philosophical foundation for thinking and acting. But it also lacks empirical orientation. The basic works of the Hungarian political science tradition are state-, law-, and constitution-based. If it is curious about the movements of society, it describes society very mechanically as a phenomenon of state life. In most respects, it is almost the opposite of Western European mainstream political philosophy and political science.[8]

---

[7] *Az ELTE Állam- és Jogtudományi Kar Politikatudományi Intézetének rövid története* [The Short History of the ELTE Faculty of Law Institute of Political Science]. Source: https://www.ajk.elte.hu/file/TSZ_PTI_tortenet.pdf (Retrieved on December 20, 2019)

[8] Csizmadia, op. cit., 23.

From this point of view, it is very important that the reorganization of political science in the second half of the twentieth century can be characterized by a kind of "path dependence" from other well-established social sciences. There is nothing more needed to prove this than the fact that political science education is tied to law and law education by a thousand threads.

In the interwar period, the institutionalization of political science continued, not only at the already existent faculties, but also in the organization of sciences. The Hungarian Ethnographic Society and its journal, *Social Science* (*Társadalomtudomány*), declared its intention to unite those engaged in political science. At the same time, these institutional frameworks, like other social sciences, stalled during the Horthy era. The works of Zoltán Magyary, Imre Csécsy, István Bibó, Ferenc Erdei, Gyula Kautz, and Győző Concha are worth mentioning between the two world wars.[9] After 1945, scientific education and the research of politics became ideologically more and more determined by the communist system. Political science was discredited as a bourgeois science, and the teaching of historical materialism and scientific socialism became the focus of higher education. According to Mihály Bihari,

> This led to a peculiar scientific "memory loss," which made political science and its cultivation seem … a new fashion, or at best a new discipline. "Loss of memory" was more like a "memory erasure," because the large figures and works of Hungarian political thought could not appear in writings on the state, politics, and education for about three decades.[10]

[9] Mihály Bihari, op. cit., 3.
[10] Ibid.

The Reorganization of Political Science in the 1970s

> *The representatives of Hungarian political science—primarily because of the credibility and international recognition of our country and Hungarian politics—have a reputation in international science, their message provokes interest. ... The active participation of Hungarian science in the World Congress and in international forums is encouraged by our socialist partners.*[11]

As a result of the establishment of Communist power in the late 1940s, the history of political science was interrupted, and it was only relaunched in the 1970s.[12] According to István Balogh, "it was the time when the first political theory publications and empirical studies were published on the possibilities, basic concepts of political science, and the development of public opinion."[13] It is worth starting from the fact that the traditional dual source of political science (i.e., journalistic literature and the scholarly pursuit of politics) gradually lost its pillars in the transition to the post-World War Communist system: journalism based on free expression and the analysis of political processes died and the transcription of science along Marxist-Leninist ideological principles took its place. Political science began to emerge in the scientific frameworks in the 1970s with the contribution of *samizdat* literature of the 1980s, which represented the rehabilitation of the genre of political journalism. In this study, I focus primarily on the frameworks

---

[11] *MSZMP KB Tudományos, Közoktatási és Kulturális Osztály: Javaslat a Politikai Bizottság számára a Magyar Politikatudományi Társaság megalakítására* [Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, Central Committee, Department of Science, Public Education and Culture: Proposal to the Political Committee for the Establishment of the Hungarian Political Science Society], January 19, 1982, Hungarian National Archives – National Archives, MNL OL M–KS 288. f. 5/845. ő. e. Hereafter referred to as: Hungarian Socialist Workers Party's Proposal 1982.

[12] István Balogh, "A politikatudomány Magyarországon az 1990-es években [Political Science in Hungary in the 1990s]," *Politikatudományi Szemle* 2 (1999): 131–142.

[13] Ibid., 131.

of the latter of the two traditional sources of political science, that is, the scholarly investigation of politics.

In the following, I shall analyse the reorganization and institutionalization of political science along three nodes: first, the scientific (i.e., educational, research) and political spheres in which political science unfolded; second, the opening of Moscow toward political science and the relationship between the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (MSzMP) and social sciences; and third, the main steps toward institutionalization.

The educational and scientific environment before the institutionalization of political science

The Hungarian Workers Party abolished the multisectoral education system at the end of the 1940s; the basic tasks of the new primary and secondary education system were to educate the young generations in a materialist-atheist spirit, about the exchange of the elite, and the raising up of oppressed classes.[14] The state of the social sciences adjusted to that situation, and from 1948 onward, the ruling party started to reshape the system of higher education according to the "needs of the people's democracy." In 1950, the first Marxism-Leninism department was established at the University of Budapest, which had been named after Eötvös Loránd. This step indicated that self-contained, bourgeois political science would not be able to develop for a long time. Social scientific work was isolated by the early 1950s in Hungary; the teaching of and research into sociological and psychological subjects had been terminated.

Scientific institutions, and above all the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS), lost their scientific and financial autonomy. Scientific research unfolded in the institutions of HAS from the 1950s.[15] In 1948, all the scientific organization and management powers of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences were transferred to the Hungarian Scientific Council, which organized a new research network. The newly established institutions were strictly separated from each other. Several

[14] Valuch, op. cit., 618–619.
[15] Ibid., 625.

research institutions were created: from 1948, law; from 1950, the philosophy and economics research institutions. In HAS, the Psychology Committee was established in 1958, and the Sociological Committee in 1961. In 1963, the Independent Sociological Research Group was created. This shows that the re-institutionalization of previously repressed fields within the social sciences had already begun. Furthermore, these processes began in conjunction with the re-appearance of political science as a distinct discipline. It is very interesting that political science was in a difficult situation and it was very hard to legitimize its disciplinary independence before and after the change of regime as well. In other words, political science was institutionalized in an *inter*disciplinary framework, in cooperation and competition with other social sciences. That is, political science was able to institutionalize among, and at some time against its counterpart social sciences.

In conjunction with this later development, it is also important to note that universities were deprived of the ability to award academic titles. Rather, the entire system of awarding scientific qualifications was reorganized, and the Soviet model was introduced.[16]

The temporary easing after the Revolution of 1956 was a short-lived concession; it was soon replaced by ideological discipline, and consequently the development of political sciences was delayed by the decision of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party's (MSzMP) Political Committee on Cultural Political Principles adopted in 1958. The resolution proclaimed that the most important task of education and culture was to spread Marxist-Leninist ideas. That is to say that no one without an ideological commitment could obtain a scientific degree. However, in 1958 the possibility of obtaining a doctoral title at universities (the so-called small doctorate) was restored.[17] The rehabilitation of the scientific profession on political issues was also made difficult by the establishment of the institutional system of the Marxist-Leninist University, which was the

---

[16] Ibid., 620.
[17] Ibid., 620–621.

backbone of cadre education, moreover from 1968 MSzMP's Party College received university rank and was renamed as the College of Politics. Yet, at the same time, the fact that Hungarian scholarship opportunities opened to Eastern and Western European institutions in the 1960s greatly contributed to the process of scientific and cultural opening.[18]

The beginning of relief: the opening of Moscow and the relationship between MSzMP and political science

In the case of political science, which was perhaps one of the most sensitive "bourgeois" disciplines, the era of general political easing brought fundamental changes. Direct political control and centralization gradually weakened from the 1970s and ideological relief was almost inevitable. Nevertheless, after the oppression of the Prague Spring, several research groups, research directions, and individual scholars were restricted and removed (for instance: Iván Szelényi, philosophers attached to György Lukács, István Kemény, among others), but these restrictions indirectly accelerated the development of critical thinking in some academic circles.[19] At the same time, it is worthwhile to say that during Khrushchev's process of de-Stalinization, it was emphasized that the centre of the international struggle in the bipolar world order was shifting to economic and ideological areas and away from direct military

---

[18] In this sense, among Western scholarship funds, Ford Foundation scholarships should be emphasized. Katalin Somlai points out that social science scholarships had become increasingly prominent after the ideological lightening. Katalin Somlai, "Ösztöndíjjal Nyugatra a hatvanas években. Az Országos Ösztöndíj Tanács felállítása [With Scholarship to the West in the Sixties. Establishment of the National Scholarship Council]," in *Kádárizmus – Mélyfúrások. Évkönyv XVI.* [Kádárism – Deep Drilling. Yearbook XVI], edited by János Tischler (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2009), 288–293. In the field of widely held social science fellowships, it is worth mentioning that, in 1964, András Bródy, from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS) Institute of Economics, joined the Boston-Cambridge–Harvard Research Project; Iván Szelényi received a grant from the HAS Sociology Research Group to go to the Department of Sociology at Columbia University; and László Viski from the HAS Institute of State and Law took part in the work of the University School of Law in New York. MNL OL XIX-J-1s 1965 USA Box 7.

[19] Valuch, op. cit., 628.

confrontation. In the 1970s, it became clear that détente did not automatically mean the abandonment of the ideological struggle: the coordination within the Soviet bloc intensified and from 1973 onward meetings of party secretaries responsible for ideological and foreign affairs become regular, and the majority of elaborated issues focused on propaganda and anti-propaganda. Within the framework of this closer cooperation, the Soviets sought to bring together social science research, and the Communist parties of the bloc were assigned a few areas of research: the topics of social democracy and socialist democracy were assigned to the MSzMP.

In this volatile fermenting environment, it had a tremendous impact on similar tendencies emerging in Moscow, which at the same time acted as a kind of confirmation force and kept the processes rolling. According to Attila Ágh, it was extremely important that in 1979 the International Political Science Association (IPSA) held its World Congress in Moscow. It was the eleventh World Congress of the organization and the first organized in a non-Western country. However, at previous conferences there were presenters also from the Eastern Bloc. József Bayer is convinced that the IPSA's conference in Moscow is to be interpreted in the context of mutual opening and thus had a huge impact on the development of the social sciences within the bloc. Thus, the people interested in political science wanted to formalize and legitimize the framework of the early operations of political science.[20] Kálmán Kulcsár wrote in 1979 about the event in the following way:

> However, the World Congress of Political Science had, in several respects, an extraordinary significance. On the one hand, because the processes currently under way in the world presented a "challenge" to politics, and thus to political science, which necessarily made this field

---

[20] József Bayer, "Beszéd a Magyar Politikatudományi Társaság ünnepi közgyűlésén a Társaság 35 éves fennállásának alkalmából [Speech at the Solemn Assembly of the Hungarian Political Science Association on the Occasion of the 35th Anniversary of the Association]," *Politikatudományi Szemle* 1 (2018): 7.

of science more workable and, of course, enhanced its significance. On the other hand, the fact that this world congress was held in Moscow and thus Soviet political science had demonstrated the importance of political science…, this revealed of the importance of this science in socialist societies.[21]

These opening processes were launched within MSzMP. The decisive turning point was the decision of MSzMP's Central Committee on the state of political science research on June 20, 1978, prior to the IPSA's conference. The decision focused on the subject of political science research and ensured the opportunity for the HAS to establish a Political Science Committee in 1980.[22] The gradual and continuous rehabilitation of the scholarly pursuit of politics had started, and even more so at the official levels of MSzMP, where several actors relied on this science. During the first half of the 1980s, the concept of party management of the social sciences was still a general concept, and the Coordination Committee for Social Science was responsible for this task. The party coordinated social science research at both state- and party-affiliated institutions, especially at the Institute of Social Sciences of the Central Committee of MSzMP, and gave orders for scientific institutions and researchers. The party's Central Committee was aware of the need for significant changes in social science research and the fact that strict ideological determination seriously undermined the effectiveness of both political and scientific life.[23]

[21] Kálmán Kulcsár, "Korszakváltás a társadalomtudományban [A Change of Era in Social Science]," *Magyar Nemzet*, September 9, 1979.

[22] Attila Ágh, "A magyar politikatudomány helyzete. Az MTA IX. Osztály Politikatudományi Bizottságának jelentése [The State of Hungarian Political Science. The Report of IX. Class Departmental Political Science Committee]," *Politikatudományi Szemle* 1 (1996): 144.

[23] See "Az MSZMP KB Agitációs- és Propaganda Bizottságának állásfoglalása a XI. Kongresszust követően ajánlott társadalomtudományi témák kutatásának tapasztalatairól (1980. június 3.) [Resolution of the MSzMP Central Committee Agitation and Propaganda Committee on the Recommendations on Experience in Social Science Research after the XI. Congress, June 3, 1980)]," in *A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt határozatai és dokumentumai, 1980–1985*

The need for free political science can be investigated in the light of the criticism of Marxism-Leninism, which served as a "political science supplement." From 1982 onward, the party revealed that there had been enormous professional problems with Marxist-Leninist education.[24] Social sciences, especially political science approaches, started to exert significant influence not only in the scientific sphere but also in politics. This led to the acceptance of critical considerations:

> Students rightly demand that education pay more attention to presenting and criticizing contemporary "bourgeois" theories. This is also due to cultivation, which has recently seen the effects of various bourgeois theories in the name of modernity on some students. A significant proportion of these trends are merely fashion trends, and do not have a lasting impact on students, but can influence their positions on important political and economic issues.[25]

The Central Committee of the MSzMP acknowledged that the approach taken so far—that is, vulgarizing non-Marxist political and economic approaches and emphasizing its anti-Marxist approach—was essentially unsustainable and, while it intended to modernize Marxist-Leninist training and research, it had actually contributed to the emergence of institutionalized political science. In 1985, the Central Committee openly explained that ideological wastage, theoretical uncertainty, and the intensifying influence of bourgeois systems of thought were due to "delays in the Marxist-Leninist analysis of some new phenomena and problems."[26] Social scientific and especially

---

[Resolutions and Documents of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, 1980–1985], edited by Henrik Vass (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 1988), 25–29.

[24] "Az MSZMP KB Agitációs- és Propaganda Bizottságának állásfoglalása a marxizmus-leninizmus oktatás helyzetéről és korszerűsítésének feladatairól az állami felsőoktatásban [Resolution of the MSzMP Central Committee Agitation and Propaganda Committee on the State of Marxist-Leninist Education and its Modernization Tasks in Public Higher Education]," in ibid., 384–400.

[25] Ibid., 389–390.

[26] "Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottságának határozata a tudománypolitikai irányelvek érvényesülésének helyzetéről (1985. január 29.) [Resolution

political scientific approaches started to have a significant impact not only in the scientific sphere but also in politics: "Political leadership uses the input of certain researchers, scientists and expert bodies in its decision-making, and regularly consults the scientific bodies on economics and social sciences."[27]

The main directions of the institutionalization of political science

The most important institutionalization tendencies of political science emerged in the political frameworks examined in the previous section. The establishment of the Political Science Committee was a breakthrough. Political science began to institutionalize as a branch of social science in the academic sphere, which neither had a background in higher education nor a professional organization system. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the research background was provided by the MSzMP Central Committee's Institute for Social Sciences.[28] Accordingly, the further process started in two main directions in the 1980s: firstly, the professional and academic network of political science was established, and then political science began to institutionalize in higher education.

The proposal made by the Department of Science, Public Education and Culture of the MSzMP's Central Committee in 1982 was about the establishment of the Hungarian Political Science Association (*Magyar Politikatudományi Társaság,*

---

of the MSzMP Central Committee Political Committee on the Status of the Implementation of Science Policy Directives. January 29, 1985]," in ibid., 821.

[27] Ibid. 821.

[28] Attila Ágh analysed the emerging, unbalanced political science in the following way: "In the spring of 1982, the Hungarian Political Science Association was founded. This late institutionalization was well illustrated by the fact that, at the end of the '80s, there was in fact only one true political science department [at the ELTE Faculty of Law], while the others were only halfway between the socialist sciences and political theory. Although the Institute of Social Sciences had assembled a significant research team of political scientists and a library of political science, this institute, which was mainly specialized in sociology, was only a small political science island in Hungarian social sciences." Ágh, op. cit., 144.

MPT).[29] Planned research in political science was launched in several institutes and departments, and the HAS set up the Political Science Committee in its IX. Department in 1980 to coordinate these projects. The idea of creating a political science association was formulated at the end of the 1970s (the main impetus was the 1979 IPSA World Congress in Moscow and the general process of ideological easing). In 1979, the Bureau of the HAS established an Administrative Committee, and until the MPT was founded in 1982 it represented Hungary in the International Political Science Association. Thus, József Bayer's statement can be interpreted within this framework: "The idea behind the establishment of the Hungarian Political Science Association was, as it is well known, the desire to think more about the political system and the necessary reforms in the 'peace camp' and IPSA international congresses and discuss their views with Western scholars."[30] The Central Committee of MSzMP therefore considered it a kind of scientific-diplomatic necessity to institutionalize political science in Hungary, and somewhat surprisingly began to refer to political science as an integral part of Hungarian social sciences. Among other things, the scientific organizational activity of the emerging MPT, which was coordinated by HAS, was one of the important factors in which political science reached its institutionalized status by the 1980s, which is also confirmed by the fact that major reform politicians (among others, Imre Pozsgay, János Berecz, and Mátyás Szűrös) became involved in MPT.[31] The Association had become the place of scientific collaboration among integrated professionals with diverse social science backgrounds and interests in political science,[32] and also an important permanent forum for scientific and public debate during the regime change. In addition, by organizing meetings

---

[29] Hungarian Socialist Workers Party's Proposal, 1982.

[30] Bayer, op. cit., 7.

[31] Ibid., 8.

[32] Mihály Bihari pointed out this in his interview, explaining that it was not about calling themselves "political scientists" of organized political science, but of examining power relations with scientific sophistication and a theoretical framework.

and publishing the most important political science series (the Yearbook of the MPT, which began publication in 1988), the association became a key player in the institutionalization of political science in contemporary Hungarian academic life.

The emergent political science also became an independent discipline in terms of scientific qualification due to the establishment of the Political Science Committee within the Scientific Qualification Committee. In the 1980s, the number of candidates for political science or related fields (very similar to a PhD) steadily increased. According to the Political Committee, it was in 1979 when the first political science vacancies were announced.[33] During the 1980s, the number of candidates for the degree in political science increased steadily, from 174 in the military and political sciences in 1986, 197 in 1987, 220 in 1989, 237 in 1989, and 254 in 1990. These tendencies are also important because, in these years, the cohorts of political science scholars were created and these actors would dominate the political science scene after the regime change.

There was an imbalance in the institutionalization of political science in Hungary from the end of the 1970s. Institution building had been continuous at the academic level and from the perspective of the establishment of scientific organizations, but teaching political science lagged behind. This had slightly changed in the 1980s, it was crucial that the Department Group of Political Science was established in 1984 under the leadership of Mihály Bihari at the ELTE Faculty of Law. The Group did not serve as a department, nevertheless this was a very significant step in terms of the university subject structure (and of course within the university). As Bihari explained, political science subjects were introduced in addition to Marxist-Leninist major subjects. In 1989, the Group was officially transformed into a Department, headed by Bihari. In his interview, he highlighted the fact that in 1981 he had been the head of the university and college department of the Ministry of Culture, and this proved very important in the first phase of the institutionalization

---

[33] Hungarian Socialist Workers Party's Proposal, 1982.

of political science. Using this experience, he started the institution-building process and chaired a committee, which, as part of the higher education reform, formulated concepts for preparing the education of political science and the organization of the department.[34] Embedded in these curricula and concepts, political science education at the ELTE Faculty of Law was established and further developed.

The history of the MSzMP Central Committee Institute of Social Sciences (called in a short Hungarian form: *Társtud*) and the journal *Social Science Publications* (*Társadalomtudományi Közlemények*),[35] which had been operating since 1966, represented a complex and independent history of the institutionalization of political science. The journal itself published studies on the widest possible spectrum of social sciences, including history, political science, sociology, social policy, philosophy, economics, and political economy. The primary task of the Central Committee's scientific institutes was to help the party leadership with scientific research and results to answer the most important social and political problems raised by the party congresses. The institutionalization of political science cannot be separated from the staff and research areas of these institutions, given the fact that these people became involved in the institutionalization procedure. Articles in the *Social Science Publications* were established from the second half of the 1970s as the spectrum of political science in Hungary.

As Csaba Gombár reports very emphatically, the *Társtud* had a very productive, lively intellectual-scientific life, and at the same time adequate intellectual autonomy, so that "it is a false popular belief that *Társtud* … was an integral part of the party leadership."[36] In addition to the Institute of Social Sciences, the Hungarian Institute of Public Opinion, formerly known as

[34] Other members included István Schlett, Zsolt Papp, Csaba Gombár, and János Széll, among others.

[35] Available at: https://adtplus.arcanum.hu/hu/collection/TARSTUDKOZL/ (Retrieved on December 20, 2019).

[36] József Marelyn Kiss, "Volt egyszer egy intézet – beszélgetés Gombár Csabával. [There Was Once an Institution – A Talk with Csaba Gombár]," *2000* 10 (2012): 3–14.

the Centre for Mass Communication, was one of the largest social science research institutes of the era.[37] The institution was established in 1963 as the Public Research Department of Hungarian Radio and Television. In 1968, the Political Committee of MSzMP declared the need for public opinion polling by scientific means, therefore in 1969 the Hungarian Radio and Television Mass Communication Research Centre was opened. Its direct political oversight was exercised by the Agitations and Propaganda Department of MSzMP, while its state supervision was exercised by the Council of Ministers.[38] The Institute had tremendous impact on empirical sociology and political science, including one of its most important common areas, research in the field of political socialization.[39] Finally, it is important to note that the foundations of financing science and culture, such as the Gábor Bethlen Foundation and the HAS-Soros Foundation (later Soros Foundation) played an important role in institutionalizing political science after 1984.[40]

Conclusions, Directions for Further Research

One of the most important findings of my research so far is that political science began to institutionalize under quite diffuse circumstances in the 1970s and 1980s: on the one hand, it was a kind of "forced product" of political relief processes, and on the other hand it lagged behind the advanced institutionalization of other fields of social science. Political science in Hungary was institutionalized between strong political constraints

---

[37] Róbert Takács, "A sztálini modell átalakítása a magyar tömegkommunikációban [The Reconstruction of the Stalinist Model of Mass Communication]," *Múltunk* 1 (2017): 68–103.

[38] The institution was established by decision 1056/1988 (VII.12.) of the Council of Ministers.

[39] Mihály Csákó, "A magyar politikaiszocializáció-kutatás történetének vázlata [Draft of the History of Hungarian Political Socialization Research]," *Magyar Tudomány* 9 (2017): 1065–1071.

[40] Béla Nóvé, *A magyar Soros Alapítvány első tíz éve 1984–1994-ig,* [The First Ten Years of the Soros Foundation, 1984–1994] (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 1999).

and political/hegemonic power determinations. Although the emergent political science has not become the "science of democracy"—in the sense that it would provide a suitable analytical framework in all respects for understanding political processes and articulating them to society—undoubtedly it achieved significant results together with other social sciences. At the same time, from the thirty years after the transition and fifty years after the beginning of the institutionalization of political science, it can be argued that it is high time to investigate the detrimental effects of the political dependence of political science.

As far as further investigations and debates are concerned, it is to say that political science has dealt too much with the institutional and procedural foundations of democracy and, unfortunately, too little with the social basis of democracy. For these reasons, I consider it essential to make further research on the institutionalization of Hungarian political science. The traditions of political science must be re-discovered. A thorough exploration of the history of political science in the framework of Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Hungarian Political Science Association, and the Institute of Social Science need to be done. Finally, in addition to a quantitative analysis of the institutionalization of political science, it would be extremely important to study qualitatively the research that had been carried out in the aforementioned institutions and organizations.

GERGELY KŐHEGYI

An Attempt to Ground Central Planning on a Scientific Basis

János Kornai and the Mathematical Theory of Planning*

Introduction: The Institutional Background

Before the Second World War, two main traditions dominated the analysis of economic problems in Hungary: the German Historical School and the Austrian School of Marginalism. While top-down government intervention and even *dirigisme* was an inherent part of economic theory in the former, these were largely rejected in the latter. Regarding the role of mathematical reasoning, both refused it as a misleading methodology, and normally excluded formal models from economic analysis. The only area where quantitative reasoning found acceptance was the systematization of empirical data and rudimentary economic dynamics. In these fields, the works of Kálmán Kádas and Ede Theiss were the most significant.

After the communist turn, economic analysis and planning was built on four main institutional pillars, i.e., four principal organizations: (1) the Karl Marx University of Economics (Marx Károly Közgazdaságtudományi Egyetem), (2) the National Planning Bureau (Országos Tervhivatal), (3) the Central Statistical Office (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal), and (4), the Institute of Economics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA Közgazdaságtudományi Intézete).

Despite internal debates on the role of mathematics, Béla Krekó, professor of mathematics at the Karl Marx University, received permission to select the best 15–20 students in mathematics and invite them to a new specialization called the "Mathematics of Planning" (*tervmatematika*). Mathematics of Planning soon became a prestigious program, gathering young generations of economists for whom mathematical models offered a natural approach to the analysis of economic phenomena. However, the curriculum had nothing to do with Political Economic Theory, and the department was also institutionally separated from the responsible departments dealing with theoretical economics.

From 1966 onward, the Karl Marx University's Mathematics of Planning program provided good-quality human resources for the National Planning Bureau; the same applied to their collaboration with the Institute of Economics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

The main institution responsible for the conceptualization and practice of planning was the National Planning Bureau, founded in 1947. The main task of the office was coordination among the various ministries before entering into plan negotiations with firms in the respective sectors of the economy. In this hugely influential organization, the practice of planning was dominated by a "traditional" political-economic approach without any mathematical modelling. This dominant approach characterized the role of this institution in Hungarian economic policy from the beginning to the end of the communist period, although innovative attempts had been made to integrate scientific tools into the practice of planning.

In 1964, Miklós Ajtai, then the president of the Bureau, claimed that they would need, on the one hand, a solid scientific background of their own and, on the other, a high-performance computer. Four years after the Institute of Planned Economy (Tervgazdasági Intézet) and the Computational Center (Számítástechnikai Központ) were founded, both were attached to the Bureau. In 1971, this Center possessed the highest-performance computer in Hungary (the ICL-4/70). The first

staff of about 40 operators were trained in London. Besides infrastructure, the researchers were also of high professional quality; the staff included such emblematic figures as Mária Augusztinovics, and partly also András Bródy and János Kornai.

In spite of all these innovations, mathematical models played a major role only in long-term planning in the practice of the Bureau. An open-minded approach to long-run perspectives remained exceptional during the communist period as a whole, and the everyday operation of the Bureau was based on traditional material balances.

Statistical work at the state level and the education of mathematicians and statisticians in Hungary had a long tradition. The disciplinary university programs and the spirit of the German Historical School reinforced this tradition, and the Central Statistical Office, established in 1867, provided a strong institutional background for it.

After the Second World War, the office was reorganized by György Péter, who filled the position of the president of the Office from 1948 to 1968. He thought that one of the main roles of his institution was to support the work of Central Planning Bureau. He knew the theory of input-output analysis and thus understood the needs of the Planning Bureau exactly.

Péter not only prepared and managed the censuses of 1949 and 1960, but also developed an entire observation system to measure the performance of state-owned firms. In collaboration with the Central Planning Bureau, the Statistical Office made a proper decomposition of the productive sectors to create the Social Accounting Matrix (SAM) of Hungary. This systematically elaborated matrix served as the verification of input-output calculations of the Planning Bureau. Following Soviet methodology, Péter coordinated the first calculation of the national income of Hungary as well.

His modern approach and deep knowledge of international methodological trends largely contributed to the evidence-based analysis of the Hungarian economy. Péter also encouraged the employees of the Office to make scientific research and take

part in international conferences. He also frequently attended economic debates of the period under scrutiny, criticizing over-industrialization, and emphasizing the role of profit incentives and market forces in general. He became one of the first reform economists in Hungary, although he and the chief economist of the Office, Júlia Zala, seldom joined any political interest group.

In 1953, at the beginning of Imre Nagy's New Course, the Party complained about the lack of professional economic knowledge to support central planning. As a consequence, the Institute of Economics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was established in 1954. It published the journal Economic Review (*Közgazdasági Szemle*), the main scientific monthly of the discipline in Hungary. The first director of the Institute was István Friss, who was delegated by the conservative faction of the Central Committee. However, most of the researchers sympathized with Nagy's reform program, and many of them used mathematical research techniques from the very beginning. András Bródy and János Kornai organized special departments for conducting such research projects, attracting many talented young economists.

The collaboration among these institutions was not the same in all directions. The mathematical economists and mathematicians of the Central Statistical Office, the Computational Center, and the Institute cooperated with no friction. Cooperation was based on personal relationships without special control. However, the University protected itself from these new intellectual waves. The students of the Mathematics of Planning program became acquainted with certain tools, but these were not related to economic theory. The deputy director of the Institute, Tamás Nagy, who was proud to ignore mathematical economics, taught political economy courses at the University. György Péter taught statistics without any (dangerous) theoretical references. Neither Kornai, nor Bródy, nor Augusztinovics, nor their pupils were permitted to teach at the University.

Aside from the above-mentioned scholars, there were many other researchers in the field, such as Rudolf Andorka, Ferenc Jánossy, György Kondor, Gábor Kőrösi, Béla Martos, András Nagy, György Szakolczai, Márton Tardos, and Margit Zierman, who worked in the same institutions or smaller research units (e.g., the Institute of Market Research, Konjunktúra- és Piackutató Intézet) affiliated with various ministries.

Among the scholars and experts at the four institutions, one of the most influential persons was János Kornai. He affected the research interests, methodology, and even the worldview of many researchers, including those in mathematical economics.

Kornai did not believe (and was not even interested) in the labour theory of value, but acknowledged the efficiency of planning. Although he was not a mathematical economist, in a certain period he also chose the neutral language of mathematics to develop the theory and practice of planning. Since mathematics was also the language of mainstream economics, he contributed to the dialogue between the East and the West.

János Kornai: An Easterner in the West and a Westerner in the East

János Kornhauser[1] was born in Budapest in 1928 as the son of a lawyer. His father worked at the German Embassy and dealt with the legal issues of German companies in Hungary. This profession provided an outstanding level of well-being for the whole family, to János and his two brothers and sister. They lived in a luxury apartment in the downtown of Budapest, and had a German nurse. The father was Jewish, thus, after Hitler's accession to power, he gradually lost most of his business contacts but maintained the family's living standard until his deportation.

János entered the German Imperial Gymnasium (*Német Birodalmi Gimnázium*) in Budapest in 1933, where he studied

---

[1] He changed his surname to Kornai in 1945.

every subject (including mathematics and physics) on a very high level in German language. Members of the Budapest intelligentsia sent their children there; this is how Kornai came to know one of his best friends, Péter Kende, who became a political scientist in Paris after the 1956 revolution. In 1941, Kornai had to switch to an ordinary public high school, where surprisingly the segregation of Jewish pupils was much stronger than in the German institution. After the occupation of Hungary by the German army in 1944, his father was transported to Auschwitz. János escaped from forced labour service and hid in a Jesuit Monastery until the Soviet army reached Budapest.

After his graduation in 1945, he entered the Hungarian Federation of Democratic Youth (Magyar Demokratikus Ifjúsági Szövetség, MADISZ) directed by the Hungarian Communist Party. Kornai started studying the works of Stalin and Lenin and later the German original of Marx's *Das Kapital* with his friend Péter Kende. Kornai was impressed by these books and also by charismatic communists like József Révai, editor-in-chief of the most important party daily newspaper, *Szabad Nép*, and his later boss. Kornai had worked as an employee of MADISZ until 1947 when he was invited to be a journalist at *Szabad Nép*. In two years, he was appointed head of its economic section although he did not have a university degree.[2] Many of his articles were commissioned by the head of the Economic Committee of the party, István Friss, who became Kornai's superior at the Institute of Economics in 1955. (Prior to that, Kornai, a follower of Imre Nagy, was fired from *Szabad Nép*.)

The dominant research methodology of the Institute could be labelled as naïve empiricism,[3] and Kornai adhered to this approach by using empirical data for a simple but impartial description of economic phenomena. Before the 1956 revolution, Kornai was mostly influenced by György Péter, who brought

---

[2] He entered the Faculty of Arts at the Eötvös University of Budapest, but never finished his studies.

[3] György Péteri, "New Course Economics: The Field of Economic Research in Hungary after Stalin, 1953–6," *Contemporary European History* 3 (1997): 295–327.

him textbooks and journals from the West, and Péter Kende, with whom he had long conversations about the consistency of Marxian political economy.[4] After the revolution, in a very disappointed state of mind, he set for himself a new goal to achieve: namely, joining Western economics.[5] He started reading mainstream literature on his own. First, he read the introductory books of Paul Samuelson[6] and Erich Schneider,[7] both in German, and simultaneously learned to read English. Then, he studied Arrow (1951), Arrow-Karlin-Scarf (1958), Hicks (1946), Tinbergen (1957),[8] and became acquainted with the "socialist calculation debate" by reading Hayek (1935), Lange (1936–37), Lerner (1944), and Bergson (1948),[9] as well as the works of Eucken, Haberler, Pigou, Stackelberg, and Tinbergen.[10] He explained his break-up with Marxism over its inconsistency and unscientific character.[11]

Kornai's first scientific publication was his dissertation on over-centralization.[12] The defence of the dissertation took place

[4] János Kornai, *A gondolat erejével* [By Force of Thought] (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2004), 88.

[5] Ibid., 144.

[6] Paul A. Samuelson, *Economics: an introduction analysis* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1948).

[7] Eric Schneider, *Einführung in die Wirtschaftstheorie* [Introduction to Economics], (Tübingen: Mohr, 1949).

[8] Kenneth J. Arrow, "Alternative approaches to the theory of choice in risk-taking situations," *Econometrica: Journal of the Econometric Society* (1951): 404–437; Kenneth J. Arrow, S. Karlin, and Herbert E. Scarf, *Studies in the Mathematical Theory of Inventory and Production* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958); John, R. Hicks, *Value and Capital* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1946); Jan Tinbergen, *Ökonometria* [Econometrics] (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1957).

[9] Friedrich A. Hayek, ed., *Collectivist Economic Planning* (Clifton, N. J.: A. M. Kelly, 1935); Oskar Lange, "On the Economic Theory of Socialism: Parts One and Two," *The Review of Economic Studies* 4 (1936): 53–71, and in ibid. 4 (1937): 123–142; Abba P. Lerner, *Economics of Control: Principles of Welfare Economics* (New York: Macmillan and Company Limited, 1947).

[10] János Kornai, *A gondolat erejével,* 134.

[11] Ibid., 94.

[12] János Kornai, *Overcentralization in Economic Administration: A Critical Analysis Based on Experience in Hungarian Light Industry* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). This dissertation earned him the degree of Candidate of Science, an equivalent of PhD in the Soviet-type educational

one month before the outbreak of the 1956 Revolution, when Hungary still seemed to be on her way to a major economic reform. Many economists and politicians endorsed Kornai's work. However, it was published after the Soviet invasion and regarded as a "revisionist" attack against the communist system. Not only leading party officials but also some former supporters, including the director of the Institute of Economics, and one of the most influential political manipulators of the Rákosi regime, József Révai, reconsidered their formerly positive positions on his work. Kornai found himself in a difficult situation, aggravated by the fact that he did not "re-enter" the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party after the revolution.

Following an investigation by a committee chaired by the rector of the Karl Marx University, László Háy, Kornai was fired from the Institute of Economics but, surprisingly, István Friss helped him continue his research at the Planning Office of Light Industry (Könnyűipari Tervező Iroda), and later at the Research Institute of Textile Industry (Textilipari Kutatóintézet). Light industry provided him with the first evidence and motivation to deal with incentives and optimization. In that period, Kornai sympathized with mainstream ideas, and together with Tamás Lipták started working on the mathematical modelling of planning theory. Later, as an employee of the Computational Center of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, he also tried to apply their model of two-level planning to the practice of central planning.

At the same time, an émigré took the Hungarian manuscript of the book on over-centralization and its English-language abstract to England. Anthony Jasay, a Hungarian-born economist read and sent it to the central figure of neoclassical economics, John Hicks, who proposed the book to Oxford University Press for publication.[13] While *Overcentralization* was

---

system. The original Hungarian version was published as a book in 1957: János Kornai, *A gazdasági vezetés túlzott központosítása. Kritikai elemzés könnyűipari tapasztalatok alapján* (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Kiadó, 1957).

[13] János Kornai, *Overcentralization*.

not considered a scientific work by Western standards, it was celebrated as the first credible description of how the command economy works.

After the publication of the book, Kornai was invited to the London School of Economics (LSE) by head of the Economics Department, Ely Devons. However, his application for a passport was refused several times. The first occasion for him to travel abroad came in 1962, when he took part in conferences in the GDR, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. In 1963, Edmond Malinvaud, a main organizer of a conference of the International Economic Association, invited him to Cambridge. The topic was "Activity Analysis in Long Term Growth and Planning." Kornai received the permission to participate, but the secret police followed him closely.[14] At the conference, he met Tjalling C. Koopmans, Leonid Hurwicz, Robert Dorfman, Frank Hahn, Richard Stone, Maurice Allais, Nicolas Káldor, Joan Robinson, and many other authors of his previous readings. Moreover, Ely Devons invited him again to the LSE to give a course on planning theory and practice. He spent a couple of months in London in 1964, where he met Alfred Zauberman and attended lectures by William Phillips, Laurence Klein, and Robert Solow. Later, Arrow invited him to Stanford, Koopmans to the Cowles Commission, Albert Hirschman to Princeton, and he spent one month in Washington at the World Bank in 1973.

When Kornai was in Stanford and at the Cowles, he showed the draft of his *Anti-Equilibrium* to Arrow and Koopmans. In this book, he intended to give a comprehensive criticism of general equilibrium theory. Although Arrow and Koopmans, two protagonists of the theory, helped strengthen his arguments, this book[15] caused a major break in Kornai's scientific career. The most conspicuous episode of the backlash was Frank Hahn's devastating review article, in which he criticized Kornai's naïve methodological standpoint, stressing that the critic failed to make a distinction between the consistency of a theory and

---

[14] János Kornai, *A gondolat erejével*, 175–180.

[15] János Kornai, *Anti-Equilibrium* (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1971).

its applicability.[16] Seeing the fiasco of *Anti-Equilibrium*, Kornai turned to a research program that shows resemblance with the old institutionalist school, and became a highly esteemed expert of the economics of socialism but not of economic theory as such.

In 1967, István Friss took him back at the Institute of Economics. There, Kornai organized a team following Western research standards and started working with mathematically well-trained younger economists. He was not allowed to hold official courses at the University of Economics until the collapse of communism, but gave informal seminars and lectures to university students, for example, at the László Rajk College for Advanced Studies. In contrast to the Robinson Crusoe-like research practice that characterized economic research in Hungary at the time, he instructed many younger scholars to read literature for him, to formulate his ideas in a mathematical form, or to analyse empirical evidence and see whether it proved his hypotheses.

These joint efforts resulted in a number of projects and publications in the field of forced growth,[17] control with non-price signals or "vegetative control."[18] The *Economics of Shortage*, a book he considers his magnum opus, introduced the concept of the "soft budget constraint."[19] This concept, motivated by consumer's theory in microeconomics, was intended to represent the situation where a socialist firm is bailed out by the centre when the revenues do not cover the costs. Kornai regarded this phenomenon as a basic building block of socialist economies. In 1984, he was appointed professor of Harvard University. Although he never cut his relations with Hungary,[20]

---

[16] Frank H. Hahn, "The Winter of our Discontent," *Economica* 159 (1973): 322–330.

[17] János, Kornai, *Rush versus Harmonic Growth: Meditation on the Theory and on the Policies of Economic Growth* (Amsterdam, London: North-Holland, 1972).

[18] Béla Martos and János Kornai, "Gazdasági rendszerek vegetatív működése [Autonomous Control of Economic Systems]," *Szigma* 4 (1971): 35–50.

[19] János Kornai, *Economics of Shortage* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1980).

[20] From 1984 to 2002, he would spend half of the year in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the other half in Budapest.

claiming that his research material lies on the Eastern side of the so-called Iron Curtain, he had the chance again to work with mathematicians and mainstream economists. The mathematical model of the soft budget constraint was developed first by Jörgen Weibull and later by Eric S. Maskin and Mathias Dewatripont at Harvard.

In 1988, Kornai began to work on a synthesis of his all former studies of the socialist economy. However, the *Socialist System* was published only after the 1989 revolutions.[21] In 2002, Kornai returned to Hungary for good. Sometimes, he comments on changes in the Hungarian economy, gives advice in concrete questions but, similar to András Bródy, never takes part in policy making.

Scientific Communism: The Mathematical Theory of Planning

In his dissertation, which can be considered as the starting point for all his later works, in the field of both mathematical economics and the institutional analysis of socialism, Kornai provides a descriptive analysis of central planning based on mandatory planning targets. The book resulting from the dissertation (*Overcentralization*) is based on surveys and interviews with the managers of socialist firms. It summarizes the planning experiences of real production in light industry instead of providing an idealistic model of mandatory planning. Although there are no reform proposals or explicit criticisms in the dissertation, it contains some implicit value judgements on the overcentralized system. The book is intended to be a simple objective description of primary facts and hence it does not use Marxian terminology.

The focus is on the incentives of firms to fulfil a plan. Kornai points out that the most influential manual of production is the quarterly plan, which is determined by the branch ministries

---

[21] János Kornai, *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

and thus the firm's decisions are never independent of politics. The conditions of decisions are embedded in a huge ambiguity and uncertainty. Since the planned system of reward and punishment always motivates the firms to manipulate the "value of production," which is an exclusively quantity-based index, there are no incentives to increase the quality or to make innovations; just the other way round, a simple increase in material-intensive products in the plan is much more advantageous for the firm. Moreover, firms are never motivated to increase production over the planned quantities because of the "ratchet effect."

In doing research on planning in the light industry, Kornai kept dealing with the role of incentives, but turned to abstract modelling from descriptive analysis. At that time, increasing the share of profit in total revenue implied rewards for the managers and workers. This was a reformist attempt to ameliorate incentives. Kornai recognized that this program would have different outcomes as compared with that of simple profit maximization, which he thought to be the optimal solution. Allegedly, he tried to illustrate the difference by formulating two rudimentary linear programming models,[22] but he was not sufficiently trained in mathematics to accomplish his task. Then, he started working with a mathematical genius, Tamás Lipták, who helped Kornai to formulate his research problems and to examine their mathematical properties. Moreover, Lipták gave him private courses in mathematics, which grounded his later research activities in the field of mathematical economics.

The formulation of incentive compatible optimization models led to very complicated nonlinear programming problems where the solution methods and even the analysis of solvability are not trivial. Although Lipták was arrested[23] in 1957, Kornai managed to publish their research results with the support of

---

[22] János Kornai, *A gondolat erejével*, 147.

[23] He took part in printing an underground paper (*Hungaricus*) on the 1956 revolution and spent one year in prison, where he made an unsuccessful suicide attempt.

the Ministry of Light Industry (Könnyűipari Minisztérium).[24] When Lipták was released from prison, they wrote an English-language paper and, without asking their colleagues to check it, sent it by mail to *Econometrica*. The co-editor of the journal Edmond Malinvaud proposed the paper for publication in unchanged form.[25]

The paper was written in the style of a Western journal article in mathematical economics, since Lipták was familiar with the formal requirements of mathematics journals in the West. The authors stressed that they focused on a very special problem that cannot be generalized to interpret the whole socialist system, not even the Hungarian economy.[26] They used both linear and nonlinear methods to clarify the differences between the "sum incentive" and "ratio incentive" settings with an additional analysis of price regulations and concluded that in the case of ratio incentives "firms never raise total output above normal capacity and often stay under it. On the other hand, it is worthwhile for the firms to produce whatever prices are."[27] The sum incentive setting is much simpler in terms of programming properties because the problems can be solved by decomposition and simple ordering, while the ratio incentive setting needs much more complicated iterative methods of computation; and finally, the sum incentive setting is also easier to be implemented by the administration.

Parallel to theoretical research, Kornai—inspired by the works of Koopmans and Dorfman, Samuelson, and Solow[28]—launched an applied project to use linear programming methods

---

[24] János Kornai and Tamás Lipták, *A nyereségérdekeltség matematikai vizsgálata* [The Mathematical Analysis of Profit Incentives]. Mimeograph (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1958).

[25] János Kornai and Tamás Lipták, "A Mathematical Investigation of Some Economic Effects of Profit Sharing in Socialist Firms," *Econometrica: Journal of the Econometric Society* 1 (1962): 140–161.

[26] Ibid., 161.

[27] Ibid., 160.

[28] Tjalling Koopmans, *The Construction of Economic Knowledge. Three Essays on the State of Economic Science* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957), 127–166; Robert Dorfman, Paul R. Samuelson, and Robert Solow, *Linear Programming and Economic Analysis* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958).

in planning practice. First, he organized a group of light industry planners, engineers, experts of international trade, and mathematicians/IT experts to model the choice between different technologies in cotton industry. More concretely, they investigated the most important exogenous variables of the outcomes, such as interest and exchange rates, technological parameters, etc. The emergence of this group generated competition between "linear programmers" and "input-output analysts." The latter group, led by András Bródy and later by Mária Augusztinovics, already had experience in this field, but Kornai emphasized that the endogeneity of technology should be the key concept, which was not incorporated in the input-output models with fixed technological coefficients.[29]

The success of using these optimization models in the planning of light industry motivated Kornai to extend this approach to that of the whole economy by decomposing the principal planning problem into linear programming subproblems. However, he recognized soon that the daily practice of the National Planning Bureau is different. There macro-indices are planned and then decomposed into sectorial indices. The sectoral ministries analyse these figures and a bargaining process between the sectors modify them. During this process, the Central Planning Bureau reallocates the resources among the sectors and re-optimizes the planning targets.

This phenomenon of iterative bargaining served as the basic idea of two-level planning. Kornai constructed an economic model where the central planner allocates input and output quantity requirements among the sectors. Then, the sectoral planners solve their own optimization problem with some programming technique and send a feedback to the central planner in the form of shadow prices received from the solution of the dual problem. The feedback signals serve to balance the initial quantity allocations following the principles of market clearing process by price adjustment. A new round of sectoral optimization and a second phase of feedback iteration follow

---

[29] János Kornai, *A gondolat erejével*, 150.

the reallocation of quantities. The iteration continues until the optimal plan is reached on both macro and sectoral levels.

The mathematical model for these procedures was re-built by Tamás Lipták. He proposed to reformulate the bargaining part of the problem in a game-theoretical framework. This was a really innovative idea, because in the early 1960s game theory was not widely used in Western mathematical economics either. The paper containing this combined programming and game-theoretical method was once again sent to *Econometrica*, which published it in 1965.[30]

In the paper, the authors introduce, on the one hand, the "over-all central information problem (OCI)"[31] represented by a primal-dual pair of linear programming models. On the other hand, Kornai and Lipták introduced the sectoral programming problem analogously to OCI for every sector.

In the first step of the two-level planning procedure, the central planner determines the set of optimal central programs. In the second step, at the sectoral level, every sector solves its problem for each optimal central program. The third step is the composition of the central problem's solution set as a combination of the sectoral solution sets.

Thereafter, the authors reformulated the level planning problem as a "polyhedral game"[32] in which the agents are the central planner and the sectoral planners. Lipták proved first that there exists a bounded nontrivial solution for the two-level planning problem if the corresponding OCI problem is solvable. He claimed that the optimal strategy in the polyhedral game coincides with the optimal central program in the two-level planning problem and the optimal sectoral strategies, in which all sectoral components are equal, forming an optimal shadow price system in the two-level planning problem.

---

[30] János Kornai and Tamás Lipták, "A Mathematical Investigation of Some Economic Effects of Profit Sharing in Socialist Firms," *Econometrica: Journal of the Econometric Society* 1 (1965): 140–161.

[31] Ibid., 144.

[32] Ibid., 151.

This paper became Kornai's most influential work in mainstream economics. The reason for the success was due to the model's similarity to the mathematically reformulated Lange model of market socialism published by Malinvaud in 1967.[33] However, in the Lange-Malinvaud model, top-down information from the centre is mediated by prices, in contrast to the Kornai-Lipták model where it is communicated by quantities. The bottom-up information coming from the sectoral planners is transformed by quantities in the Lange-Malinvaud model to make the size of excess demand or supply transparent while in the Kornai-Lipták model this feedback is mediated by (shadow) prices.

Beyond theorizing, Kornai was also interested in the application of his new model. In the period of political thaw, in 1962–63, he secured a new job at the Computational Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, where the first mainframe computer had been installed in Hungary. There, in collaboration with the Research Institute of the Planned Economy, he organized a team to implement the two-level planning concept. As a first step, they built one central and 18 sectoral models and created many sub-teams to work out the details of their own fields. In the most productive period of research, about 200 employees worked on this project and Kornai edited information brochures to make the method popular among decision makers and funders.

He deliberately avoided confrontation with politics, and never questioned the legitimacy of weights assigned to different sectors. Instead, he treated them as constraints, and the objective function of the model was a neutral index such as the balance of current account.[34] Moreover, his purpose was to contribute only to the long- and medium-term plans and not to the yearly directives.

---

[33] Edmond Malinvaud, "Decentralized procedures for planning," in *Activity Analysis in the Theory of Growth and Planning*, edited by Edmond Malinvaud and Michael Bacarach (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1967), 170–208.

[34] János Kornai, *A gondolat erejével*, op. cit., 165.

During the application of the two-level planning concept, it turned out that finding the solution of the original model is complicated in terms of computation, hence, one had to radically simplify the model and create a simpler version to illustrate its utility for decision makers. The results of the simplified version were much less precise, the input data were unreliable, and the policy makers always changed and never clearly declared the objectives and even the constraints. Moreover, the computation process was too slow to support decision-making in such an environment and the impact of analysis was also ambiguous because policy makers took the results seriously only if those supported their preconceptions. Therefore, the enthusiasm of the team decreased and following five years of hard work, Kornai abandoned leadership.

After 1965, the collaboration between Lipták and Kornai was interrupted. Lipták, who suffered from a serious mental disease emigrated to the UK, and did not continue scientific research. Later, Kornai summarized the experience of implementing their model[35] and tried the review the theory and practice of mathematical planning,[36] but at the end of the 1960s he basically left behind mathematical economics forever.

Conclusion

In this paper, I gave a review of the main building blocks of mathematical thinking in Hungarian economics, especially those that concerns the theory of planning. I focused on four main institutions that played a significant role in the transfer of knowledge, which was a necessary condition for the grounding of planning on a scientific basis. Besides the institutions, some exceptional personas managed to build a hub that supported

---

[35] János Kornai, *Mathematical Planning of Structural Decisions* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1967 [1965]).

[36] János Kornai, *A gazdasági szerkezet matematikai tervezése* [Mathematical Planning of Structural Decisions], with contributions by Tamás Lipták and Péter Wellisch (Budapest, Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1973).

not only the practice of planning but also the scientific research related to optimal planning. These kinds of networks generated the most important channels of knowledge transfer.

Probably the most influential among these key personas was János Kornai. To understand his motivation, I sketched his early life and career, following his way to mathematical theory and the practice of planning. As we have seen, his network was also extended with Western relations that significantly improved his importance on the one hand, and the potential success of realizing a scientifically-based centralization on the other.

To sum up my conclusion: despite original discoveries, high-quality cybernetic applications, and far-reaching Western relations, mathematical methods did not exert significant impacts upon the practice of central planning and changes in economic institutions and policies in Hungary during the state socialist period.

Abstracts

GYÖRGY FÖLDES:
Economic Reform, Ideology, and Opening, 1965–1985

In the middle of the 1960s, preparation for economic reform began in Hungary. As part of this process, new principles and methods of economic governance had to be accepted by Hungarian society. This was the task of propaganda. Another important aspect was the reconciliation of the reform with Marxist-Leninist ideology. The successful completion of this exercise was the precondition that the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party, and leadership of allied communist parties, accepted the prevalence of the laws of commodity production in the socialist economy. The situation was even more complicated by the fact that the détente of the two world systems came onto the agenda in these years. This political and economic opening could not mean abdication of socialist principles and goals. This was the challenge of the time for official ideology in Hungary.

Key words: ideology, Marxism-Leninism, laws of commodity production in socialism

MELINDA KALMÁR:
The Decades of Détente

The notion of détente is a constantly discussed topic in contemporary history writing. There are several theories on

periodization and no fewer definitions of the phenomenon. The Helsinki Final Act is one of those significant examples which can prove quite clearly that most of the spectacular Cold War turning points are embedded deeply in the course of a long, antecedent process of a particular Cold War resilience. This meant that both sides, East and West, wanted to adjust themselves to the *permanent* character of the prolonged Cold War context. Thus, the Helsinki Final Act has no unique status in the Cold War constellation; it was not the result of the dynamization of East-West relations in the early 1970s, but in reality was a necessary consequence of a long-term process that started in the mid-1950s. During the decades of East-West contact, the intentions and institutions of one camp frequently strengthened and motivated the other, slowly developing into new types of political, strategical, economic, and cultural interdependencies between the two rival camps.

Key words: Helsinki Final Act, political and cultural interdependence, European security system, Cold War ideologies, information policy, political resilience, common European identity, Eurasia concept

RÓBERT TAKÁCS:
Hungarian Foreign Policy and Basket III in the Cold War Confrontation from Helsinki to Madrid

This paper interprets the efforts of Hungarian (cultural) foreign policy that relate to the ominous "Basket III" from the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 to the end of the second follow-up conference in Madrid in 1983. Topics covered by Basket III are generally viewed as Western terrain in the intensifying ideological battle of the 1970s; however, Hungary was more or less able to cope with the stipulations of the Helsinki Final Act and received little pressure from NATO (and Western neutral) countries both in Belgrade and Madrid as compared to other Soviet bloc governments. Hungarian foreign policy was able to run an active campaign relating to the Final Act through written

bilateral proposals submitted to all Western participant states. In addition, the Hungarian government could also successfully manage Hungarian topics on the international scene, the most peculiar of which was the promotion of the culture of small and less studied languages.

Key words: cultural contacts, human rights, Helsinki Final Act, Basket III, Hungarian foreign policy

SZABOLCS LÁSZLÓ:

Promoting the Kodály Method during the Cold War: Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy and the Transnational Network of Music Educators in the 1960s and 1970s

Cold War cultural diplomacy projects represented a dynamic mixture of the geopolitical and transnational processes that shaped postwar history. The worldwide dissemination of the Hungarian music education system, known as the "Kodály method," provides an instructive example of how these different agendas interacted within the larger framework of twentieth-century global integration. The chapter examines the transnational collaborations of Hungarian and American music educators that led to the construction of the Kodály method as an internationally marketable and adaptable model for teaching music in the 1960s and 1970s. It traces how pedagogues from the two countries, like Erzsébet Szőnyi and Denise Bacon, forged professional ties through participation at conferences and summer courses—and explores the process through which the Hungarian model was adopted in the U.S. in the form of institutional arrangements like the Kodály Musical Training Institute, established in 1969 in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Furthermore, the article analyses how the Hungarian communist authorities gradually incorporated the Kodály method into their domestic and foreign policy frameworks. Although it initially emerged as a product of transnational exchanges that cut across the Iron Curtain, by the mid-1970s the method eventually became an official Hungarian cultural

diplomacy project, representative of a small state's effort to gain international recognition and legitimacy. However, this process of appropriation compelled the Hungarian authorities to accept and accommodate a truly global phenomenon—and to recognize the ideas and practices of a transnational network of pedagogues and researchers as culturally valuable and politically salient.

Key words: Cold War, geopolitics, cultural diplomacy, transnational history, Zoltán Kodály, music education

PÉTER CSUNDERLIK:

From Criticising 'NATO History-Writing' to the Triumph of 'Comecon History-Writing': A Change of Attitudes in Hungarian Historiography after 1956

The study presents the modernization and change of attitudes in Hungarian historiography after 1956 and the process by which Hungarian historians moved from the rejection of Western "bourgeois" historical literature to the utilization of Western results due to the loosening of ideological constraints and the strengthening of Western relations. It points out that research on the history of the Habsburg Empire played a major role in this process because Hungarian historians could become involved in the circulation of international historical science once more.

Key words: historiography, Habsburg Empire, Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, transfer history, economic history, social history, cultural history

ERZSÉBET TAKÁCS:

In the Mantle of Professionalization. The Openness and Confinement of Family Sociology in Hungary during the 1970s and 1980s.

The aim of this paper is to examine the possibility of the adaptation and institutionalisation of sociology of the family in Hungary during the 1970s and '80s from a domestic point of view.

I look at the ways in which family-sociological "paradigms" of the time were adopted. I analyse this research context in Hungary by looking at relevant papers in *Demográfia*, *Szociológia*, *Szociológiai Figyelő*, *Társadalmi Szemle*, and *Valóság*, as well as recollections, research reports, and interviews. Family sociology proves to be an especially interesting field in terms of contemporary research on adoption and reception, since there was a paradigm shift on the international scene at the time. In addition, there were three significantly different research institutions which focused in part on the sociology of the family: the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH), the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA), and Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE).

Key words: History of Hungarian sociology, family, adaptation, reception

ATTILA ANTAL:
The Re-institutionalization of Political Science in Hungary

This paper investigates the procedure by which political science in Hungary was institutionalized in the 1970s and 1980s. Political science in Hungary has been subordinated to politics since the 1980s, which is why, despite adapting to Western European standards, it has not developed any critical approaches of its own. The institutional integration of political science in Hungary was planned into the Socialist-Communist framework from the second half of the 1970s. On the other hand, due to the weakening of the Communist regime, scientific elites from other fields among the social sciences constantly widened the boundaries of the system. This opened up opportunities for the application of the achievements of Western political science to Hungary.

The paper interprets how the political sciences was reorganized in Hungary during the Communist era. Political science began to emerge in the scientific frameworks in the 1970s with the contribution of samizdat literature of the 1980s,

which represented the rehabilitation of the genre of political journalism. The study examines the role of the International Political Science Association's World Congress of 1979 in Moscow. In the paper, it is emphasized that political science began to institutionalize as a branch of social science in the academic sphere, which neither had a background in higher education nor a professional organization system. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the background of the discipline was provided by the MSzMP Central Committee's Institute for Social Sciences

Key words: Hungary, political science, institutionalization, MSzMP Central Committee, Institute for Social Sciences, social sciences

GERGELY KŐHEGYI:
An Attempt to Ground Central Planning on Scientific Basis.
János Kornai and the Mathematical Theory of Planning

In this paper, I give an overview of the main building blocks of mathematical thinking in Hungarian economics with a special emphasis on planning. I focus on the role of the institutions and on the one of the most important original progenitors, János Kornai. I sketch his early life and career to understand his motivations for turning to the mathematical theory of planning. After that, I outline Kornai's most influential achievement in this field and the short history of trying to practice it for the ends of long-run planning, i.e., the story of the ascension and decline of science-based communism in Hungary.

Key words: History of economic thought, Hungarian mathematical economics, economic planning, Eastern European history of economics, economics under communism

Contents

AUTHORS

ATTILA ANTAL,

PhD; Politologist; Senior Lecturer at Eötvös Loránd University Faculty of Law,
Institute of Political Science; Coordinator of the Social Theory Research Group at the Institute
of Political History;
antal.attila@ajk.elte.hu

PÉTER CSUNDERLIK,

PhD; Assistant Professor at Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities;
Research Fellow at the Institute of Political History;
csunderlikpeter@gmail.com

GYÖRGY FÖLDES,

DSc; Institute of Political History;
gyfoldes@phistory.hu

MELINDA KALMÁR,

PhD; Senior Research Fellow, University of Szeged, Department of Contemporary History;
kalmar.melinda@t-online.hu

GERGELY KŐHEGYI,

PhD; Head of Department and Director of Undergraduate Studies in Economics,
Department of Economics, Faculty of Social Sciences, Eötvös Loránd University;
gkohe@elte.hu

SZABOLCS LÁSZLÓ,

PhD Candidate; Department of History, Indiana University, Bloomington;
szlaszlo@iu.edu

ERZSÉBET TAKÁCS,

PhD; Sociologist and Historian; Faculty of Social Sciences, Eötvös Loránd University;
etakacs@tatk.elte.hu

RÓBERT TAKÁCS,

PhD; Historian; Research Fellow, Institute of Political History;
takrobi78@gmail.com

The central virtue of an "ordinary" ideology is not exactly being open and inclusive. It is particularly true in the case of such a radical ideology that anchored its truths in rigid theses as Marxist-Leninism. It had to face much more important requirements than openness. It is enough here to remind the reader of those that made opening specifically difficult. Marxist-Leninist ideology had to *prove the superiority of socialism* over capitalism. This applies to ideas, society, politics, culture, morals, and, last but not least, the economy. From this aspect, the reality of the "bourgeois" system of the 1960s—its welfare state, parliamentary democracy, and its standard of living—formed a major challenge for communist theorists and politicians. Capitalism did not seem to have suffered a general crisis, nor did the Western working class seem to have become impoverished. Therefore, *an ideological struggle against "bourgeois" ideology remained particularly important,* which was further complicated by recognition: the superpowers must avoid war and try to give way to peaceful coexistence and the improvement of economic, political, and cultural relations.

(György Földes: Economic Reform, Ideology, and Opening, 1965–1985)

Budapest was among those who were solidly committed to the preservation of the Helsinki process, as it corresponded to its more open nature and foreign policy strategy. It paid attention—in internal and foreign politics—to prove its (even if small, but) clear progress in all issues relating to the Final Act, and also targeted Western participants with foreign policy actions to be able to define the agenda in its favour. Hungarian foreign policy was among those that strived for compromise, however as a disciplined ally of the Soviet Union it went by Soviet policy—as opposed to Romanian foreign policy, which frequently challenged Warsaw Pact coordination. Nevertheless, Budapest pursued its own priorities successfully.

(Róbert Takács: Hungarian Foreign Policy and Basket III in the Cold War
Confrontation from Helsinki to Madrid)