

= Social Resistance =



הַצְּבָרִים הַיְשָׁנִים

Official Quarterly
Historical Archives of the
Hungarian State Security

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- > Transylvanian dissidents-----Csongor Jánosi
- > Jewish opposition of the Kádár regime-----Attila Novák
- > On a Western center of "ideological subversion"-----Bogusław Wójcik

= 2022 = 04
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Impressum

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HU ISSN 2732-186X (printed)
HU ISSN 1788-7569 (online)



Nemzeti Kulturális Alap

Supported by the Nemzeti Kulturális Alap (National Cultural Fund)



ABTL

**Állambiztonsági
Szolgálatok
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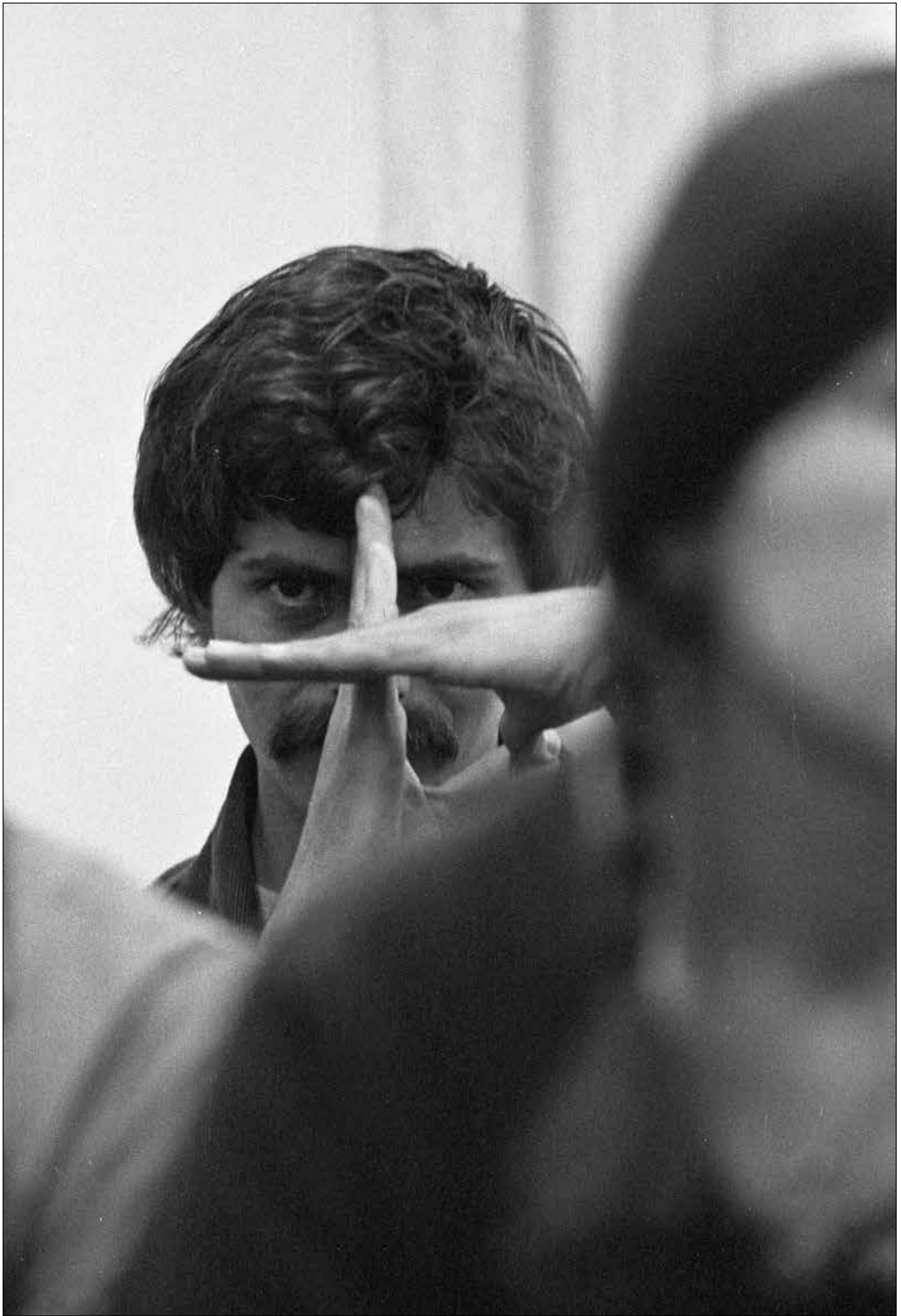
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Divided.

Fortepan / Erdei Katalin

= Introduction =
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No need for statues anymore. Budapest, Hungary.

Fortepan / Magyar Rendőr

===== Nándor Pócs =====

/// A new beginning

Even though more than 15 years have passed since the fall of the communist regimes in 2007, examining our recent past still faces serious obstacles. Apart from various scientific and memory policy debates, Hungarian historiography also had to overcome important practical problems. A considerable part of the remaining documents was still being sorted or was accessible only to a few colleagues. Not to mention the fact that the system of online databases and search interfaces that revolutionise today's research was barely functioning at that time. Since then, the situation has changed considerably. Researchers of the Hungarian communist era have a significantly easier task today, and it is safe to say that the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security played an important role in this. Our archivists brought order to chaos, restoration colleagues tidied up disintegrated files, and associates have been preparing documents on request. And let us not forget the IT staff, as well as the research and customer service frontliners, who helpfully (and above all: patiently) record the incoming requests.

It is no exaggeration to say that the official journal of the archive, *Betekintő*, which was launched in 2007, also made a lasting contribution to better understanding the functioning of the communist services. Hundreds of studies, source publications and reviews published in the columns of *Betekintő*, seek to specify, clarify and supplement the scientific knowledge on Hungarian state security. The fact that now we know the difference between an agent and an informant, and how often the omnipotence of state security was drowned in banal scenes, is due to the long and persistent work of the colleagues publishing in *Betekintő*. Of course, some certain topics led to intense professional debates, but all of this just increased the journal's prestige. The same can be said about our thematic issues, which we have been publishing since 2018, interest in which has increased year by year – from researchers and laymen alike. However, the knowledge we have acquired about the era and communist state security increasingly calls for comparative analyses. The editors have been keenly aware of this, and in addition to our main themes, we have sought to provide space for studies aimed at describing systems

that existed before communism or functioned as rivals to it. This also gave our readers the chance to better understand communism in power not only in Hungary, but also in the neighbouring countries. Consequently, *Betekintő* went on to become one of the main analytical workshops of Soviet-type systems in Hungary.

However, all this is worth little if no one else knows about it. For this reason, we decided to turn the fourth issue each year into an English-language one. We are confident that our call for articles will attract more and more authors in the future, and we live in the hope that one day *Betekintő* will be available only in English. The background of this decision is not scientific arrogance. We still have a lot to do regarding the history of Hungarian communism. Consider the fact that we still do not have a modern perspective biography of Mátyás Rákosi or János Kádár. We can rightly assume therefore that a Hungarian *Betekintő* will be definitely needed for a while. Nevertheless, we would also like to help Hungarian historical studies to be better known internationally. It also should be considered that historians researching the former communist countries should be able to publish their studies in a thematic journal, in the columns of *Betekintő*. Written by the director of our archive, the following cooperation report explains why this ambition just might not be a pipe dream.

Such collaboration is justified by several factors. It seems that, despite the optimism at the end of the Cold War, history (whatever we mean by that) has not “ended” at all. The shadows of the past still lurk among us, just consider the war Russia launched against Ukraine. This extremely bloody conflict – among other things – can be traced back to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In order to understand the most pressing problems of recent decades, we must also go back to the period of communism. Firstly, our generation and the next will have to face the environmental legacy of the modernisation and industrialisation of former regimes. Secondly, the development of Eastern-type consumer societies have become a source of political problems that affect us to this day, which we, the inhabitants of this strange, intermediate region, certainly understand well. The legacy of the Central and Eastern European communist regimes therefore requires joint action.

All in all, we encourage our future authors to follow our call for articles and to honour our small but diligent editorial team with their trust. Until then, we hope that our readers – both Hungarians and non-Hungarians – will benefit from the English issues of *Betekintő*.

Budapest–Terézváros, Christmas 2022

==== *Gergő Bendegúz Cseh* =====

/// The survival Network

Report on the Budapest Meeting of the Secret Service Archives

The annual meeting of the European Network of Official Authorities in Charge of the Secret Police Files (Network) was held in Budapest on 29–30 June 2022. The meeting is traditionally organised annually by the country holding the rotating presidency. This year’s meeting was hosted by the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security (ÁBTI), which has held the presidency since 2021.

In the context of the Network’s activities and operations, it is worth briefly recalling the history of this cooperation and its achievements so far. In 2008, seven Central European partner institutions—Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia—decided in Berlin to formalise cooperation between archives with similar responsibilities. It was with this intention and on this occasion that the above-mentioned international cooperation was founded, which was somewhat self-mockingly named Network. (The term ‘network’ in contemporary state-security parlance refers to a group of civilian collaborators working secretly with the secret services.) The statutes of the cooperation set a threefold objective for the cooperation of the Member States:

- to facilitate individual access to and requests for data on the secret police files of the period,
- scientific research and education on the functioning of the secret services,
- the management of these documents within the framework of the rule of law.

The Foundation Paper made full membership of the organisation conditional on the institution concerned holding ex officio the records of the pre-1990 state security services and being an autonomous collection, independent of other public collections or government institutions. The founding institutions’ leaders considered this condition important because in many countries the state security archives

of the communist era were still held by secret services or internal affairs agencies, which did not provide sufficient guarantees for freedom of information. (The independent operation of the institution has caused many problems over the years, which is why the Statutes had to be amended at this formal meeting.)

Albania joined the seven founding members of the Network as a full member in 2020, having met all the above criteria. In addition to full membership, observer status is granted to institutions which do not operate independently (e.g. departments of a national archives) or which have not been able to receive and provide original intelligence material. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia and, most recently, Ukraine currently have such observer status.

The Network's activities are mainly reflected in two areas: annual conferences and various cooperation projects. The member institutions meet annually in the country holding the rotating presidency, where they share their experiences, discuss the past period and decide on joint research or other projects, usually in a conference and formal meeting lasting two days. The Network's joint projects usually involve the production of a publication, an exhibition or a joint website, such as a volume on each institution,¹ a joint travelling exhibition 'By any means' or a website with documents on the meetings of the Warsaw Pact secret service leaders.²

The Network has been chaired by the Director General of the ÁBTL since 2021, which is why this event took place in Budapest. This year's meeting was made all the more important by the fact that, having been limited to online contact due to the Covid-19 pandemic in the past two years, the heads of the institutions could finally meet in person again after three years. In the end, not everyone was able to overcome travel difficulties, so the event was held in a hybrid format: representatives from Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia and Ukraine joined the conference online, while representatives from the Czech Republic sent a written report on the past period, citing their professional commitments.

On the first day of the meeting, each delegation summarised the changes that had taken place in the life of their institution. The most important lesson learned was that the BStU, the former Stasi archives, had been merged into the Bundesarchiv, but that it was still unchanged in terms of staff and responsibilities, with an independent vice-president overseeing its work. At the recent conference, the President of the Bundesarchiv and the Vice-President in charge of the Stasi archives attended in person, promising future cooperation. Other countries are still at an earlier stage of organisation. For example the Albanian archives, founded in 2015, were only really able to start the process of information restitution last year. The Polish Institute of National Remembrance is one of the largest and most active

1 == The 'European Network of Official Authorities in Charge of the Secret Police Files'. A Reader on the Legal Foundations, Structures and Activities. BStU, Berlin, 2014.

2 == www.sovietblocksecurity.eu

organisations, which has become a key player in Polish memory policy. The Bulgarian and Romanian colleagues gave details of the work of the governing bodies delegated by the political parties to oversee the archives in their countries. In Ukraine and the Baltic countries, where the former Soviet secret services left behind little archival material, they concentrate on the social and ethnic repression led by the former KGB. The online presentation by the Director of the Institute of the National Remembrance of Ukraine was particularly important for all colleagues, as in addition to the political struggles, archives and staff in Ukraine are currently under direct threat.

Several important decisions were taken on the first day. Above all, the members of the Network adopted a joint declaration of solidarity with the Ukrainian State Security Archives and their colleagues, and expressed their sincere concern about the destruction of cultural assets. The document drew attention to the irreparable damage caused by the war launched by Russia not only to human lives and material goods, but also to cultural heritage, including the former state security archives. In the archives in the town of Chernykhiv, 13,000 documents were destroyed in a fire following a Russian missile attack. The declaration was unanimously adopted by the participants and subsequently published on their websites. The participants then amended the Network's Founding Paper and its Rules of Procedure. They specified the criteria organisations had to meet to become full members. These include the preservation of former secret service files, scientific research and the possibility of information reparation. If these three conditions are met, any institution can retain its membership irrespective of the specific organisational arrangements. The network members have also set the order of the rotating presidency until 2030, so that it is possible to plan exactly which country will hold the presidency and host the meeting in each year.

Gergő Bendegúz Cseh, Head of the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security, proposed a joint travelling exhibition. This would present the popular music scene and political reactions of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s in the light of state security documents. Tamás Szőnyei, a researcher at the ÁBTL, gave a presentation on the subject. The initiative was supported by all members. Nándor Pócs, editor-in-chief of the official journal of the ÁBTL, *Betekintő*, also gave a short presentation. He introduced the journal and drew attention to the thematic issue in English on the history of social resistance in the 1980s. He asked colleagues to promote the initiative and send abstracts and manuscripts to the editorial office. They also discussed the issue of a joint project to be launched in 2021, a future common website that would provide an overview of the legal status, archives and research results of each institution. Finally, as a final act of the meeting, the Director General of the ÁBTL symbolically handed over the presidency of the Network to Mr Michael Hollmann, Director General of the Bundesarchiv. In a short speech, the new President assured the audience that the international cooperation

within the Network was not only supported by the former BSTU but also by the German Federal Archives.

The second day of the conference was open to the public, so that visitors were able to participate in the virtual space or in person. Those present filled the 50-seat auditorium of the ÁBTL, and many followed the event online, even from outside Hungary. The common theme of the public meeting was the lessons of the Covid-19 epidemic for the life of archives. On this occasion, delegates summarised the solutions that had been put in place to ensure scientific research and freedom of information. The presentation by the Slovak colleagues proved particularly useful, as they discussed in great detail the situation of the archives as a community institution in times of severe restrictions. In general, the process of digitisation had been greatly accelerated by the closures, and online research had been made possible in many places. The most challenging aspect had been the impersonalisation of archival work, as it has not been easy to maintain an audience for public events and to keep interest. Parallel phenomena have been witnessed: research conditions have become easier for many people, even those living in distant countries have been given access to sources, and this has further democratised scientific processing. At the same time, accelerated research processes had not always led to high-quality studies and books based on state security sources. Shorter access to the sources came with shorter time to write these works.

Overall, the 2022 meeting of the Network proved to be very useful, as it was possible to restart the joint work that had been put on hold for two years by the epidemic. Next year, Berlin will host the Network meeting and we hope to be able to present the first results of the initiatives that have just been launched. To return to the title of this report, the Network has survived the pandemic and is expanding its activities with new ideas and new joint projects.

= Transylvanian fieldworks =
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Unending carousel. Negreni, Romania.

Fortepan / Vova

===== Csongor Jánosi =====

/// *Transylvanian Hungarian dissent in the 1980s*

**Forms of expression: samizdat, individual attitude,
underground scientific circle¹**

I would begin the present study with a definition and an ascertainment. First of all, who can be considered a dissident? According to Roy Medvedev, a dissident is a person who disagrees with the ideological, political, economic and moral foundations of a given society, but beyond sharing different views, he/she also expresses this publicly, that is, not just in the family or among close friends.² How could we characterise the people with different opinions in Romanian society in the 1980s? It seems that the Éva Cseke-Gyimesi's³ definitions are the closest to the truth, since we are talking about conscious resistance fighters (lone or in groups), opponents who cannot be labelled as 'innocent' people or 'victims,' as they voluntarily committed themselves to a certain view of the world, belief, religion and assumed the consequences of their opinions and actions. These included surveillance, intercepted

1 == The present article is a revised and improved translation of the material appeared in Romanian language as Jánosi, 'Disidența maghiară ardeleană în anii 1980: Forme de exprimare: samizdat, atitudine individuală, cerc științific subteran'.

2 == Roy Aleksandrovich Medvedev (1925), Russian human rights activist, dissident, political writer. In this topic see Medvedev and Shriver, *Let History Judge*; Medvedev, Ostellino, and Saunders, *On Soviet Dissent*, passim.

3 == Éva Cseke-Gyimesi (1945–2011), linguist, university professor, literary critic and writer, a staunch defender of the Transylvanian Hungarian's minority rights. About her activity, see the researches carried out in the COURAGE project—*Cultural Opposition: Understanding the Cultural Heritage of Dissent in the Former Socialist Countries*—financed by the European Union within the Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement No. 692919. More precisely COURAGE Registry, s.v. 'Éva Cseke-Gyimesi Collection at BCU Cluj-Napoca,' <http://courage.btk.mta.hu/courage/individual/n25187> (Access on 22 August 2022); and COURAGE Registry, s.v. "Éva Cseke-Gyimesi Ad-hoc Collection at CNSAS," <http://courage.btk.mta.hu/courage/individual/n45705> (Access on 22 August 2022).

calls, home searches, banned publications, disciplinary measures, dismissal from institutions and, in certain cases, physical violence and even imprisonment. All this was done with an awareness that the most they could accomplish was to continuously draw attention to the violation of rights in the given dictatorship.⁴

The Transylvanian Hungarian civic opposition began with a study by Sándor Tóth⁵ and Zádor Tordai⁶ entitled 'Jelentés Erdélyből' [Report from Transylvania], published as an appendix to the March/April 1977 issue of *Irodalmi Újság* from Paris, which exposed the minority conditions in Romania to the Western public.⁷ This was followed later in the year by the petitions of Károly Király,⁸ Lajos Takács⁹ and András Sütő,¹⁰ who were familiar with Party politics from the inside. The most comprehensive initiative was undoubtedly the 62-page document of 25 May 1978, entitled 'Malomkövek között: Levél a román értelmiségiekhez' [Between Millstones: Letter to Romanian intellectuals], signed anonymously, for fear of retribution, by 62 people, many of whom are still unknown. The copy sent to Hungary led to action of the Secret Services, but the version sent to the United States through Király was submitted by Congress as an official document.¹¹

4 = = See Cs. Gyimesi, *Szem a láncban*, 31.

5 = = Sándor Tóth (1919–2011), Hungarian philosopher, university professor. He lived most of his life in Romania. From 1949, he worked at the Bolyai University in Cluj and, after the merger, at the Babeş-Bolyai University. In 1988, he moved to Hungary, continuing his work as a professor at the Institute of Sociology of Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. See from his work Tóth, *Dicsőséges kudarcaink a diktatúra korszakából*, passim.

6 = = Zádor Tordai (1924–2010), Transylvanian Hungarian philosopher, Kossuth Prize-winning writer. In 1960, he moved to Hungary and worked as a staff member of the Institute of Philosophy of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. See Tordai, *Egysz-tencia és valóság*, passim.

7 = = The writing was also noticed by the American Hungarian emigres. See 'Megszólaltak az erdélyi magyarok,' 1.; Gellért, 'A kisebbségi elnyomás új dimenziói,' 1, 4.

8 = = Károly Király (1930–2021), Transylvanian Hungarian politician, economist, journalist. His Romanian secret service materials are rather incomplete and contain mostly wiretapping documents and street reports from the interval 1983–1987. See File no. 203543, vol. 1–3, passim, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania; furthermore Király Ibolya, *Emlék-repeszek*, passim; Király Károly, *Nyílt kártyákkal I*, passim.

9 = = Lajos Takács (1908–1982), Transylvanian Hungarian lawyer, the last rector of Bolyai University in Cluj, communist politician. See from his work Demeter et al., *A Román Népköztársaság alkotmánya*, passim.

10 = = András Sütő (1927–2006), Transylvanian Hungarian writer, journalist, dramatist, politician. See *Membrii C.C. al P.C.R.*, 553.; Sütő, *Létvégi hajrában*, passim; Idem, *Csiperőzsika ébresztése*, passim.

11 = = On the subject, see Király Ibolya, 'Egy tiltakozó beadvány,' 105–110; Kósa, 'Malomkövek között,' 47–70.; Vincze, *Történelmi kényszerpályák*, 362–366.

On a political level, despite the positive results of the Hungarian–Romanian meeting in Debrecen–Oradea in 1977, bilateral relations were drowned in press polemics correctly interpreted by the general public in the years that followed.¹² The ineffectiveness of Hungarian party and state leadership in relation to Ceaușescu’s nationality policy in the early 80s naturally contributed to tougher manifestations of Transylvanian Hungarian civil dissidence outside Party structures, and which, in addition to individual opposition,¹³ primarily took the form of activities of small groups of intellectuals, who operated in several locations in Transylvania and in Bucharest.

This study deals with the most vocal dissidents in terms of human rights in the Ceaușescu dictatorship. I will argue, firstly, that the case of the Oradea-based samizdat publication known as *Ellenpontok*, following its authors’ acquittal, became the turning point for the cultural opposition activities carried out by the linguist Cseke-Gyimesi and the poet Géza Szőcs¹⁴ (both from Cluj), the Limes Circle and the *Kiáltó Szó* samizdat from Cluj. Secondly, they integrated into a natural evolutionary process, and by means of the example they provided, they encouraged civic resistance among the Hungarian minority intelligentsia in Romania. These cases correspond to Kacper Szulecki’s ideal-typical model of dissidentism and the ‘dissident triangle’, which encompasses three factors that allow for dissidentism: 1. open, legal, non-violent dissent, facing repression; 2. domestic infamy and fame; 3. Western attention, transnational ties and empowerment from outside.¹⁵

This paper is more a descriptive text on the dissidents of Transylvania than an analysis of the above-mentioned topic. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, analysis leading to general conclusions cannot take precedence over accurate knowledge of the facts. So, I preferred a limited summary of the hitherto unknown documents of the Romanian secret services about the actors understood so far according to their professional activities, according to the memoirs they wrote or through the public roles they engaged in. Secondly, being involved in a regional research (regarding Harghita county) partial results regarding local dissent push me in the direction of not drawing broad conclusions at this time.

The approach is overwhelmingly based on the information files drawn up by the former Securitate about people involved in opposition actions, studied at the

12 == Földes, ‘A román nemzetiségpolitikai hátraarc,’ 82–92.

13 == Here we include the life itinerary of the actor Árpád Visky, who was in close friendship with contemporary Hungarian poets and writers socialized in the intellectual environment of Cluj. See Jánosi, ‘Erdélyi magyar disszidencia,’ 45–83.

14 == Géza István Szőcs (1953–2020), Kossuth Prize and József Attila Prize winner Transylvanian Hungarian poet, dissident, politician. See Szőcs and Farkas Wellmann, *Amikor fordul az ezred*, passim.

15 == See Szulecki, *Dissidents in Communist Central Europe*, passim.

National Council for the Study of Security Archives (CNSAS), namely Antal Károly Tóth, Géza Szócs, Éva Cseke-Gyimesi, Gusztáv Molnár and Sándor Balázs, and is to a lesser extent based on oral history interviews conducted with some of them, as well as on memoirs.

== The samizdat *Ellenpontok* from 1982

One of the most important questions we should ask is: why did this underground magazine appear in Oradea? This required several circumstances, and one very important one was the existence of the Endre Ady Literary Circle in the locality, whose events represented an opportunity to discuss the works of local writers and authors. Moreover, such meetings also offered the possibility of inviting prominent intellectuals and cultural figures from the Hungarian community, who gave presentations about their field of activity to an often 100-strong audience. Philosopher Attila Ara-Kovács¹⁶ and secondary school teacher Antal Károly Tóth¹⁷ also attended these events. The latter, as president of the Endre Ady Literary Circle in 1976–1978, helped to organise the events and activities of the Circle, which had to respect the rules of the local authorities.¹⁸ The experience encouraged Tóth to become more and more involved in public life and, from 1979, to ‘radicalize’.¹⁹ However, before February 1982, this attitude was manifested only through actions that were limited

16 == Attila Ara-Kovács (1953–), philosopher, politician, journalist and editor. On 26 April 1978 the Oradea Securitate opened a file under the cover ‘Bastionul’ (Bastion) with the aim of keeping under surveillance the members of the Endre Ady Literary Circle. Here we also find data about the person tracked under the code name ‘Kos’. See File no. 210560, vol. 1: 27 (front back); vol. 2: 200; vol. 5: 12, 15–16; vol. 6: 9–31, 184–186 (front back), 232, 265, 362–363; vol. 7: 1–6, 10–15, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania; Attila Ara-Kovács’ blog, ‘Diplomáciai jegyzet: Rólam (Diplomatic note: About me),’ <https://arakovacs.wixsite.com/jegyzet/rolam> (Access on 25 August 2022).

17 == Antal Károly Tóth (1942–), Transylvanian Hungarian essayist, editor, dissident. In the seven-volume ‘Bastionul’ surveillance file, his name was only included in 1979, but he eventually became the main figure. Until their emigration in July 1984, the Tóth family was under constant surveillance by the Securitate. After the emigration, the political police monitored the lives of those involved in the case as well as the contacts maintained with family members at home in the framework of the operational plan bearing the cover name ‘Oponentii-83’ (Opponents 1983). See File no. 210560, vol. 1–7, passim, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

18 == See Gittai and Szűcs, *Péntek esti szabadságunk*, 116–147.

19 == In December 1979, together with his wife, Tóth initiated and participated in a series of events referred to as the ‘circle explosion,’ which resulted in the dismissal of Róbert L. Nagy, the leader of the Endre Ady Literary Circle, on grounds of the latter’s unprincipled compliance with the cultural authorities. At the same time, they managed to make the authorities approve the change—a victory for circle members—which meant that from then on, the literary circle was administered by a board of directors. Interview with Antal Károly Tóth and Ilona Tóth.

to the legal framework of the era, that is, to memoirs of protest without success addressed to the Party leadership.²⁰

The second important component was the lack of a Hungarian-language cultural magazine in Oradea, such as *Korunk* (Cluj-Napoca) or *Igaz Szó* (Târgu Mureş). At the joint initiative of the leader of the Literary Round Table in Oradea, Sándor Bölöni,²¹ chemical engineer Gábor Varga²² and journalist Imre Robotos, a motion was submitted to the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party as well as to the Writers' Union in Bucharest, requesting authorisation to establish an independent journal. Assuming they might be rejected, they came up with a second alternative, specifically that the proposed cultural magazine should be created in the form of a supplement (or 'sister paper') to the Romanian cultural and literary magazine *Familia*. This initiative enjoyed support from the members of the Endre Ady Literary Circle. Furthermore, the Tóth family took part in the nationwide effort to collect signatures, which involved travelling to various places (Cluj-Napoca, Baia Mare, Satu Mare, Carei, Valea lui Mihai, Săcueni) and asking local public figures to support the cause.²³ Tóth's radical position should be mentioned. On 5 April 1981, in Cluj-Napoca, at the meeting of the editors of the youth sections of the county's Hungarian-language newspapers, speaking about the topics to be addressed in the youth sections, he stated that 'they pretend they do not know about the most important problems, namely that of Hungarian-language schools, which are always decreasing in number, although the official version is different'. He believed journalists should primarily focus on this issue and on the chances of self-fulfilment of Hungarian youth in Romania.²⁴

20 = = On 27 November 1979, as a teacher at School no. 1 on Cluj Street in Oradea, Tóth addressed a memorandum of protest to the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, the Ministry of Education and the Bihor County School Inspectorate, in which he drew the attention on the unpaid salaries covering the summer exam session at his former working place (School no. 7 on Griviței Street). In a motion submitted earlier, he had raised the deplorable state of the surrounded castle in Oradea and the partial destruction of the moat. See File no. 210560, vol. 1: 158–163, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania; Tóth, Károly Antal, *Hovatovább*, 17–21.

21 = = Sándor Bölöni (1939–1982), Transylvanian Hungarian journalist, translator, literary organizer. About his activity from 1978 to 1982, until his suicide, see the documents of the political police: File no. 625167, vol. 1–3, passim, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

22 = = Gábor Varga (1948–), Transylvanian Hungarian chemical engineer, politician, dramatist. About his pursuit by the Securitate between 1971–1987, see File 123357, vol. 1–6, passim, Fond Informativ; File no. 1108, passim, Fond Penal, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

23 = = Interview with Antal Károly Tóth and Ilona Tóth; File no. 210560, vol. 1: 254–262 (front back), Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

24 = = See the address no. 0031973 of 18 May 1981 of the Timiș County Securitate Inspectorate to the Bihor County Securitate Inspectorate. File no. 210560, vol. 2: 126, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

The lack of effectiveness of motions and letters of protest, the failure of Transylvanian Hungarian cultural leaders invited to the Endre Ady Literary Circle to provide answers to concrete problems faced by the Hungarian minority (the role of minority as a ‘bridge’, the importance of individual responsibility), led to the search for other forms of expression—samizdat, the product of a handcuffed society. In February 1982, Attila Ara-Kovács, member of the directory board of the Literary Circle, spoke to the Tóths about his plan to launch an underground paper that would carry the name *Ellenpontok*. He had already mentioned this to the Cluj-based poet Géza Szócs as well as to János Molnár,²⁵ a Reformed priest serving at that time in Tămașda (Bihar County). Both Szócs and Molnár promised to offer active support. At that time Tóth still believed that he had not entirely exhausted the possibilities of legal action. However, his wife Ilona’s positive reception of the idea of a samizdat and the Romanian writer Ion Lăncrănjan’s book *Cuvînt despre Transilvania* [A word about Transylvania], written in a hostile tone towards Hungarians, eventually convinced him to become involved in the project.²⁶

The actual editing work of the samizdat began in February 1982.²⁷ For the most part, the texts were acquired by Ara-Kovács with the help of his own contacts. Apart from editing and reproduction, the Oradea-based editors also undertook the distribution of the magazine both in Oradea and in Hungary (by lending the paper to different people). Géza Szócs agreed to distribute the samizdat mainly in Cluj-Napoca and Târgu Mureș.²⁸ The basic concept behind was to openly discuss the everyday life conditions of the Hungarian community. Ara-Kovács wrote a text conveying a general message, which appeared on the second page of each edition, the first half of which could also be interpreted as an *ars poetica*: ‘COUNTERPOINTS is a samizdat magazine. It is issued occasionally. Its purpose is to spread knowledge about the deprivation of human rights in Eastern and Central Europe, and, more particularly, about the political, economic, cultural oppression of Transylvanian Hungarians.’ The paper had been inspired by Hungarian and Polish samizdat publications existing at the time. Although its creation was justified by the need to defend ethnic interests, it aimed to achieve more than that by high-

25 == János Molnár (1949–), Transylvanian Hungarian reformed theologian, church writer, poet and prose writer. About his activity see Molnár, *Szigorúan ellenőrzött evangélium*, passim.

26 == Interview with Antal Károly Tóth and Ilona Tóth.

27 == The private collection in Gothenburg owned by the Tóth family comprises the most comprehensive materials related to the Hungarian-language underground magazine. See COURAGE Registry, s.v. ‘Ellenpontok—Tóth Private Collection,’ <http://courage.btk.mta.hu/courage/individual/n55720> (Access on 25 August 2022.).

28 == Interview with Géza István Szócs.

lighting the inhuman character and destructive nature of communist ideology, at the same time displaying sympathy with the Romanian opposition. The first six issues were reproduced in five copies with the help of a typewriter secretly acquired from Hungary. Since the machine was not registered with the Militia, identification by letter type was not possible. The first five issues were edited by Ara-Kovács and Ilona Tóth helped with the reproduction. The sixth edition was typed and edited by Antal Károly Tóth. The seventh and eighth issues were reproduced by the Tóths in 50 copies in their underground flat, using stencil paper and a Polish 'ramka' duplicator. Published in January 1983, the ninth edition was the work of Attila Ara-Kovács, who, after the events of November–December 1982, made sure that the articles included in the last edition reach Hungary.²⁹

For the most part, the nine editions can be considered thematic in that they focus on the situation and the specific problems faced by the Hungarian minority in Romania. Their length varied between 14 and 56 pages. The articles were organised under columns such as 'Documents,' 'On this Side of Censorship' and 'Reportedly'.³⁰ András Keszthelyi,³¹ who at the time was a student in Cluj, also contributed to the edition of the latter column, which was dedicated to news that could not be published officially. The eight issues published in the span of March to October 1982 feature a total of 65 articles on 293 typed pages. This number grew with the ninth edition, which counted 24 pages. One third of the texts consisted of documentary material and articles borrowed from foreign publications. More than half (almost two-thirds) of the articles consisted of first publications by Transylvanian authors.³²

Given the limited number of copies, *Ellenpontok* did not owe its wide reach to local distribution. It was mostly due to the Hungarian opposition, the Hungarian emigration press, the Western media and primarily Radio Free Europe, which in November–December 1982 broadcast the texts of both the 'Memorandum' and the 'Programme Proposal' on multiple occasions, which even reached the participants of the European Conference on Security and Cooperation in Madrid, triggering open international criticism against Romania, contributing to the isolation of the Ceaușescu regime. Although the Securitate's interventions in November–December 1982 were followed by investigations which led to the 'acquittal' of the editorial team

29 == See Tóth and Tóth, *Egy szemizdat az életünkben*, 36–67.

30 == See Tóth, *Ellenpontok*, passim; Interview with Antal Károly Tóth and Ilona Tóth.

31 == András Keszthelyi (1961), political scientist and political advisor. See Keszthelyi, 'Szélgjegyzetek egy évfordulóhoz,' 23.

32 == See Tóth, *Hova-tovább*, 52–53.

of *Ellenpontok* in May 1983, the experience did not have a reassuring effect on the editors who eventually chose to emigrate.³³

Crucially, the clandestine magazine ‘independently published’ in 1982 dared to defy official ideology and ‘break the wall of silence.’ Its editors proved that thinking differently was possible even in Romania amidst the escalation of repressive measures and that it was not only the solitary hero who could represent the opposition.³⁴ The fact that the system, thanks to the influence of international public opinion, failed to subject the samizdat editors to criminal proceedings, made it possible for *Ellenpontok*—beginning in the mid-1980s—to serve as a reference, strengthening civil courage among the Hungarian minority in Romania.

= = = Minority intellectual life. The activity of university professor Éva Cseke-Gyimesi and poet Géza Szócs in the mid-1980s

As a staff member at the Department of Hungarian Language and Literature of the Faculty of Philology of Babeş-Bolyai University, Éva Cseke-Gyimesi was assigned in 1977 the position of teaching Transylvanian Hungarian literature. The study of the original sources (newspapers, periodicals, secondary literature) from the interwar period radicalised her attitude towards the dictatorship at a particular time when the number of annually admitted Hungarian students to the Department of Hungarian Language and Literature was declining. This came as a direct result of the system of so-called ‘relocation’ at the end of university studies, which meant a two to three-year assignment to a compulsory workplace in Romania. This applied to all graduates, regardless of ethnic origin, but what discouraged Hungarian graduates was the hypothetical ‘relocation’ to a place beyond the Carpathian Mountains, outside their familiar milieu of Transylvania.³⁵ In this context, she

33 = = The *Ellenpontok* Ad-hoc Collection stored in the CNSAS Archives comprises, beside the records of the Securitate, the written evidences of the system-criticizing activity of the samizdat editors and their struggle against the violation of human rights and ethnic oppression. See COURAGE Registry, s.v. ‘*Ellenpontok* Ad-hoc Collection at CNSAS,’ <http://courage.btk.mta.hu/courage/individual/n39270> (Access on 26 August 2022).

34 = = Molnár, *Az Egyetlen*, 5.

35 = = The term ‘relocation’—the act of assigning a professional job to university graduates requires some explanation. Prior to 1989 university graduates in Romania were assigned to a working place by the Ministry of Education through a centralized system. The position assigned as a result of ‘relocation’ could not be abandoned by the freshly graduated student for three years in the majority of cases, otherwise the respective person could not continue working in his/her field. Quite often this led to the destruction of projected marriages, as the future husband and wife to be could not get a place together, unless they were already married before the ‘relocation.’

began giving lectures that were devoid of myths and ideological connotations. Her lectures began to attract Hungarian students from other faculties as well.³⁶ For her, the publication of the samizdat *Ellenpontok* brought a decisive turn in 1982. When in December that year one of the editors, poet Géza Szőcs, returned home with a plastered leg, Gyimesi initiated a fund-raising action at the Cluj branch of the Writers' Union.³⁷ Not long after, on 17 May 1983, she was questioned by the Securitate about *Ellenpontok* and its editors, and on this occasion she 'confessed' that she agreed with the samizdat's contents.³⁸

She was considered the 'moral author' of the petitions addressed by the graduates of the 1983 class of the Hungarian section of the Faculty of Philology to the Ministry of Education and the Central Committee (CC) of the RCP, in which they protested against the relocations beyond the Carpathian Mountains. The petition was personally sent by Gyimesi through Gusztáv Molnár³⁹ from Bucharest, to be delivered to 'a comrade secretary of the CC of the RCP'.⁴⁰ The graduates' complaints regarding the free places proposed by the ministry began on the first day after they were posted, namely on 3 July 1983, when they drew up and submitted to the Secretary of State Iuliu Furo (Furó Gyula)⁴¹ a collective petition entitled 'Contestation,' signed by each of them. The signatories asserted that all graduates were of Hungarian nationality and showed that only 8 places were offered to them in specialty 'A' (Hungarian language), the others being modern languages and in Romanian-language schools. They reasoned, further, that there were both Hungarian- and modern-language sections, the latter also in Hungarian-language schools, sections that were not declared free. In the end, they requested that the list of posi-

36 == See the proposal of the Cluj County Inspectorate of 25 August 1983 to the Directorate of State Security, the First Directorate in Bucharest, according to which on 20 August a note with a similar content was forwarded to the local party organs, proposing the removal of Gyimesi from higher education. File no. 17980, vol. 3: 56, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

37 == Cs. Gyimesi, *op. cit.*, 44–45.

38 == File no. 17980, vol. 3: 55 (front back), Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

39 == Gusztáv Molnár (1948–), philosopher, political scientist, editor. About his pursuit and relationship with the political police see File no. 64739, *passim*; File no. 236674, vol. 1–4, *passim*, Fond Informativ; File no. 11763/BH, roll 79, Fond Rețea, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

40 == The most eloquent petition regarding the 'relocation' of university graduates is the one addressed on 8 March 1988 to Viorică Nicolau, deputy minister of the Ministry of Education. See File no. 17980, vol. 1: 247–249; vol. 5: 70–73, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

41 == As a result of the minority attraction policy after 1968, from 1969 the Directorate for Nationalities in the Ministry of Education was re-established, the Hungarians being represented by two inspectors and a state secretary, in the person of Gyula Furó, who held the position in the 80s too. See Hencz, *Bucureștiul maghiar*, 204, 225.

tions initially published be amended to include places both according to the specialty in which they trained and their mother tongue. In the second petition, which they drew up on 6–7 July 1983, they noted that they were not satisfied with the answer given to their initial appeal, specifying that they could not accept the distribution according to the published list of places and requested again—unsuccessfully this time too—that their grievances be resolved favourably.⁴²

According to the information of the Securitate, the protesters were also supported by the poet Sándor Kányádi,⁴³ editor of the Cluj-Napoca magazine *Napsugár*. He had been visited by two of the graduates, who handed him a copy of their memoranda. Kányádi told them not to give in, arguing that what was being done to them was against the Party's national policy. He also urged the visitors to enlighten their parents to send letters to top Party and state leadership expressing their displeasure at the inadequate situation their children have found themselves in. The poet also tried to call Géza Domokos,⁴⁴ vice-president of the Ethnic Hungarian Workers' Council,⁴⁵ to ask him about the issue, but without success, the latter being preoccupied with an American delegation.⁴⁶

In the gloomy atmosphere following the abolition of Hungarian-language classes in elementary and secondary schools, compounded by the cancellation of the possibility of taking a degree or final exams or being admitted to universities and polytechnics in the mother tongue,⁴⁷ like in 1983 and 1984 before them, the 1985 graduates wrote a petition and, encouraged by professor Gyimesi, as a sign of protest, they did not show up on the day of the 'relocation'.⁴⁸ Following this abortive attempt, labelled 'instigation' and which later led to the emigration of

42 == File no. 17980, vol. 3: 60 (front back), Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

43 == Sándor Kányádi (1929–2018), Transylvanian Hungarian poet, prominent figure of contemporary Hungarian poetry. About his pursuit by the Securitate from the 1950s until the end of the communist regime see File no. 203447, vol. 1–10, passim, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

44 == Géza Domokos (1928–2007), Transylvanian Hungarian writer, literary translator and politician. See COURAGE Registry, s.v. 'Documentation Centre—Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities,' <http://courage.btk.mta.hu/courage/individual/n20753> (Access on 28 August 2022).

45 == About the activity of this organ see Novák, 'The Intellectuals of Politics,' 90–115.

46 == File no. 017980, vol. 3: 61, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

47 == *Ibid*, 145–146.

48 == Hungarian students of the Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Faculty of Philology, almost exclusively opted for the specialization Hungarian paired with a foreign language, respectively, a foreign language as major paired with a minor in Hungarian language. In 1985 graduates of the department Hungarian and a foreign language (English, German, French, Russian) were offered 5 places in Transylvania (two of these in cities) and 16 positions in the other regions of Romania, all of them in the severely deprived countryside. *Ibid*, 136–144.

the majority of the year, Gyimesi confronted not the Securitate, but the leadership of his own university, with the vice-rector Nicolae Edroiu, with the Party secretary of the university Vasile Vesa, respectively with the dean of the Faculty of Philology, Georgeta Andreescu.⁴⁹

In 1983, Gyimesi published her book *Teremtett világ: Rendhagyó bevezetés az irodalomba* [Created World: An Unorthodox Introduction to Literature], which, due to its non-conformism—the principles reflected in the book being incompatible with the official ideology—made it very well known even in Hungary. Being widely popular professionally made the communist authorities refrain from harassing her, and they limited any countermeasures against her, including public criticism of her work. However, she found herself in the situation where, from 1986, all publishing houses in Romania refused to print her works.⁵⁰

Ellenpontok, like a red line, divided Géza Szócs' life in two: before⁵¹ and after 1982.⁵² After the samizdat case had been closed, the poet stayed in Romania, but for quite a long while he was unemployed and faced existential difficulties. The Securitate followed up on Géza Szócs's persecution with an operational plan with the cover name 'Oponenții-83'. They subjected him to regular interrogations and made him write declarations. Coordinated from Bucharest, the Cluj-Napoca Securitate sought to compromise him under the cover-name of 'Sabău' by means of moral discrediting—inter alia, by letters forged in his name and sent abroad, in which he supposedly declared the problem of nationalities in Romania as solved—as well as by discouragement and isolation both in and outside the country. On 26 June 1985, they searched his parents' house and on 1 October, they conducted a search in his home as well. From time to time, they approved the publication of his works in order to use this as a compromise made with the government. His employment as a researcher at the Cluj-Napoca Institute of Literary History and Linguistics as of May 1985 also divided the Hungarian

49 == Cs. Gyimesi, *op. cit.*, 57–58.

50 == *Ibid*, 62.

51 == He graduated the Faculty of Philology, Hungarian-Russian specialization, within the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca in 1978. His first volume of poems, entitled *Te mentél át a vízen?* [Was it you who crossed the water?] and published in 1975 instantly earned him a place in the frontline of his generation's and the Hungarian poetry in Romania. In his poems he touched upon the major issues of the oppressed Hungarian minority with ever increasing clarity, and his subsequent volumes brought him fame in the universal Hungarian literature as well. See File no. 160234, vol. 3: 236–237 (front back); vol. 4: 50 (front back); vol. 5: 385–388; vol. 6: 211–244, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

52 == About the monitoring of the poet from Cluj since the late 1970s, as well as about his harassment and tracking during the 1980s, see the volumes of the informative files with the code name 'Sabău'. File no. 160234, vol. 1–16, *passim*, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

intellectual elite in Cluj-Napoca.⁵³ Apart from being continuously shadowed, his correspondence was intercepted and his foreign telephone conversations were—as his number was connected directly to the call centre—always interrupted. Moreover, they regularly changed his number without him knowing, in order to make him unavailable.⁵⁴ Dated 2 December 1985, his letter to Ara-Kovács in Budapest conveys his state of isolation and daily humiliation, at the same time denying allegations of his agent activity: ‘I have become aware of the fact that whatever I say makes me a scoundrel, and my silence makes me a scoundrel, too.’⁵⁵

However, Szőcs continued his dissident activity. First, on 14 July 1984, he addressed a 14-page petition to the Central Committee of the RCP, in which he pleaded for the rights of the Hungarian minority and also for the rights of the Germans.⁵⁶ In this petition, in the spirit of ‘political morality and humanism’, he pleaded for the political convicts’ philosophy professor Ernő Borbély, as well as economist László Buzás, who were just serving sentences of 7 and 6 years respectively. The reason for their conviction was not made public, but since their arrests took place on 23 November 1982 and 25 February 1983 respectively, public opinion had it that they were related to the appearance of the samizdat *Ellenpontok*—which was not in fact true.⁵⁷ ‘In this context, their conviction would overshadow the immense generosity with which the case of the editors of *Ellenpontok* was finally closed’, wrote Szőcs.⁵⁸

On 10 February 1985, Szőcs finalised the proposal for the creation of a world alliance of minorities. A few days later, on 15 February, in Bucharest, the writer Dorin Tudoran⁵⁹ joined him and signed the proposal, as did the economist and politician Károly Király, on 27 March 1985 in Târgu Mureş. In April, Szőcs submitted another petition to the Central Committee of the RCP, dated 28 March 1985, to which he also attached the signed proposal regarding the creation of a world alliance of minorities. The petition represented not only an organised action, but also a joint Hungarian–Romanian demonstration. Later, the material also reached Radio Free Europe and became the subject of articles in the Western press.⁶⁰

53 == File no. 160234, vol. 3: 78, 84, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

54 == *Ibid*, volume 4: 13 (front back).

55 == *Ibid*, volume 1: 106.

56 == *Ibid*, 124–137, 372–373 (front back).

57 == About this chapter of the Transylvanian Hungarian civil opposition see Borbély, *Academia politică de la Aiud*, passim.

58 == File no. 160234, vol. 4: 137, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

59 == Dorin Tudoran (1945–), Romanian essayist, poet, journalist, dissident. From his work see Tudoran, *De bună voie*, passim.

60 == File 160234, vol. 5: 71–79, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania; Szőcs and Farkas Wellmann, *op. cit.*, 61–70.

Finally, Szócs reached the conclusion that although it was possible to live (as one should) in Romania, carrying out an intellectual activity was impossible, and, eventually opting for emigration, he left the country on 31 August 1986.⁶¹ Up to the change of regime the Securitate closely monitored his professional and public activity, especially his interviews and speeches related to Romania in various forums and radio broadcasts. They were aware of his excellent contacts with Western Hungarian immigrants and knew that, on 5 May 1987, he was interviewed by the US Senate's Foreign Affairs Committee about the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, Romania. He gave several interviews to Radio Free Europe and it was he who, on 16 June 1989, presented on live broadcast the reburial ceremony of former Prime Minister Imre Nagy. According to the state security archives, his correspondence and phone calls to relatives based in Romania were intercepted, messages delivered through intermediaries and packages were checked. They tried to learn his intentions, control and 'positively influence' him through agent provocateurs, and, in parallel to this, as they wanted to keep up the appearance of him being a Securitate agent, measures were taken, with the help of the informant network and Department D in Bucharest in charge of disinformation, to compromise him in the eye of the world. As a 'precautionary' measure, they subjected his family members and friends to close supervision and occasionally issued warnings to these people and to foreign citizens visiting the country, whom they suspected of carrying out courier missions on his behalf.⁶²

=== The Limes Circle (1985–1987)

The years 1985–1987 are linked with the Limes Circle, which was a sort of debate club for authors denied the right to publish, an inspiring community that provided a public stage and feedback to marginalised intellectuals. The circle was formed under the leadership of the editor of *Kriterion* from Bucharest, the philosopher and political scientist Gusztáv Molnár. In the summer of 1985, he came to the conclusion that, according to the ideology of the Party, they wanted to completely transform the publishing house, in the sense that standalone values in the publishing plan were no longer tolerated, as had happened at the magazine *Korunk*, led

61 == He first emigrated to the German Federal Republic, then to Switzerland. Between 1986–1989 he worked as a journalist in Geneva, and later, between 1989–1990 he held the position of head of the Radio Free Europe's Budapest office. See Géza Szócs's blog page, <http://szocsgeza.eu/hu/> (Access on 28 August 2022).

62 == See File no. 160234, vol. 1: 16–25; vol. 13: 20–25, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

by Győző Rácz.⁶³ Molnár eventually initiated the establishment of a creative community of people, who were his friends and with whom he had been in contact as a publisher for years. The members of the Circle included, among other people, Béla Bíró,⁶⁴ Gáspár Bíró,⁶⁵ Éva Cseke-Gyimesi, Péter Cseke,⁶⁶ Sándor Balázs,⁶⁷ Sándor N. Szilágyi,⁶⁸ Károly Vekov,⁶⁹ Ernő Fábián,⁷⁰ Levente Salat,⁷¹ Csaba Lőrincz⁷² and Imre Pászka.⁷³

During its existence of a year and a half, this community produced about 900 pages. Its members proved to be viable and creative, with their texts published in the 1980s becoming part of the process in which Hungarian intellectuals in Roma-

63 == Győző Rácz (1935–1989), Transylvanian Hungarian philosopher, essayist, literary critic, publisher, university professor. Between 1971–1983 he was deputy editor-in-chief of *Korunk* magazine, from October 1984 being appointed editor-in-chief, replacing Ernő Gáll. His behavior in this position was marked by complete loyalty to the party. See Kántor, 'Birtok és hatalom,' <https://www.helikon.ro/bejegyzesek/birtok-es-hatalom> (Access on 29 August 2022.).

64 == Béla Bíró (1947–), Transylvanian Hungarian journalist. See personal sheet, File no. 0236674, vol. 1: 120 (front back), Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

65 == Gáspár Fazekas Bíró (1958), Transylvanian Hungarian lawyer. *Ibid*, 119.

66 == Péter Cseke (1945–), Transylvanian Hungarian literary historian, journalist, poet, sociographer, university professor. See Cseke and Molnár, *Nem lehet*, passim.

67 == Sándor Balázs (1928–2022), Transylvanian Hungarian philosopher, university professor. About his monitoring by the Securitate, see the informative surveillance file with code name 'The Sociologist': File no. 161638, vol. 1–3, passim, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

68 == Sándor N. Szilágyi (1948–), Transylvanian Hungarian linguist, editor, publicist, university professor. From his scientific activity see Szilágyi, *Mi-egy-más*, passim.

69 == Károly Vekov (1947–2020), Transylvanian Hungarian historian, university professor and politician. From his scientific activity see *Vekov, Istoriografia maghiară*, passim.

70 == Ernő Fábián (1934–2001), Transylvanian Hungarian pedagogue, philosopher, critic. From his scientific activity see Fábián, *Naplójegyzetek*, passim.

71 == Levente Salat-Zakariás (1957–), Transylvanian Hungarian essayist, specialist in philosophy and political science, university professor. From his scientific activity see Salat, *Kulturális megosztottság*, passim.

72 == Csaba Lőrincz (1959–2008), publicist, university professor, politician. Because of his activities in the Limes Circle, he was harassed by the Securitate and as a result moved to Hungary in 1986, where he joined the political movements that preceded the change of regime. Founding member of Fidesz, expert on minorities and foreign affairs and at the same time one of the ideological authors of the Bálványos Free Summer University. About his activity see Lőrincz, *A mérték*, passim.

73 == Imre Pászka (1949–), Transylvanian Hungarian sociologist, university professor. Between 1980–1988 he was an employee of the Timișoara political daily called *Szabad Szó* [Free Word]. From his activity during that period see Pászka, *Struktúrák és közösségek*, passim.

nia formed the identity of their own community.⁷⁴ From the beginning, their debates were organised around a few strong pillars, such as: the opposition and context between Transylvaniam⁷⁵ and the Hungarian view as a whole; ideological orientation, as well as the duality of a purely theoretical, philosophical attitude; the common commitment to the liberal, popular and social-democratic tradition originating from Marxism, in addition to which a new attitude appeared in the debates, which can be called post-ideological.⁷⁶

The CNSAS files mention four meetings of the Limes Circle between 1985 and 1986: between 20–21 September 1985 in Bucharest,⁷⁷ between 2–3 November 1985 in Braşov,⁷⁸ on 3 May 1986 in Braşov,⁷⁹ on 30 August 1986 in Ilieni, Covasna County,⁸⁰ the one of 10 November 1986 from Bucharest being missing from the documents. On 6 February 1987, a meeting was held in Cluj-Napoca by order of Colonel General Iulian Vlad, with the participation of the heads of the I/B Departments concerned with ‘Hungarian nationalists’ from the counties of Cluj, Mureş, Covasna, Harghita, Bihor, Satu Mare and Timiş; of the Securitate of the Municipality of Bucharest; as well as 5 people from the profile service of the First Directorate of Bucharest, on which occasion the informative action ‘Editorul’ [The Editor] was analysed.⁸¹ Subsequently, on the next day, 7 February 1987, Gusztáv Molnár’s apartment in Bucharest was searched by local militia and several ‘materials of operative interest’⁸² were confiscated, an event that marked the end of the Limes

74 == See Fábíán, ‘A LIMES – múlt és jelen időben,’ 6–7.

75 == On the subject of Transylvaniam must be noted the manuscript from that time of Éva Cseke-Gyimesi, entitled *Gyöngy és homok: Ideológiai értékjelképek a magyar irodalomban* [Pearl and sand: ideological value-symbols in Hungarian literature], published in 1992.

76 == See Törzsök, ‘Bretter és a tanítványok,’ 19–40.

77 == Participants in the meeting: Vilmos Ágoston, Béla Bíró, Gáspár Bíró, Ernő Fábíán, Gusztáv Molnár, Károly Vekov. File no. 236674, vol. 4: 3, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

78 == Participants in the meeting: Béla Bíró, Ernő Fábíán, Gusztáv Molnár, Levente Salat. File no. 236674, vol. 3: 62–389, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

79 == Participants in the meeting: Sándor Balázs, Ernő Fábíán, Gusztáv Molnár, Károly Vekov. *Ibid.*, 58–61.

80 == Participants in the meeting: Sándor Balázs, Béla Bíró, Ernő Fábíán, Csaba Lőrincz, Gusztáv Molnár, Levente Salat. File no. 236674, vol. 4: 4–381, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

81 == See File no. 161638, vol. 1: 17, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

82 == See the minutes of the home search, as well as the supplementary note which, among other things, specified that the confiscated items ‘are subject of sorting, translation and analysis to determine their content,’ respectively that ‘control measures are ensured over the objective’s activity and his connections in Bucharest and in the country.’ See File no. 0236674, vol. 1: 13–21, 32 (front back), Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

Circle meetings. As a result, on 16 March 1987 Molnár lost his job, and on 18 April he was also expelled from the Party. On 9 April 1987, he submitted his documents for emigration, and on 30 March 1988, together with his family, he went to Hungary. Later, from November 1988, he also ended up on the black list of persons considered undesirable in Romania.⁸³ The consequences for the other members of the Circle and those who knew about its meetings were expressed especially in the work collectives, in the form of reprimands and warnings, as in the case of the *Ellenpontok* editors, forgoing criminal actions. On 23 February 1987, retired publicist Edgár Balogh⁸⁴ was warned by the first secretary of the Cluj-Napoca Municipal Committee of RCP, Nicolae Preda. On 6 March 1987, Lajos Kántor⁸⁵ was held accountable in front of the *Korunk* editorial team and warned by Ioan Sasu, propaganda secretary at the Cluj County Committee of the RCP. On 10 April 1987, professor Éva Cseke-Gyimesi was invited and warned by Aurel Negucioiu, the rector of Cluj University, which was repeated on 21 October 1987. On 2 June 1987, professor Sándor Balázs was called and warned by Nicolae Preda. This was done in the presence of Petre Berce, secretary of the Party Committee on the University Centre and Constantin Drondoe, secretary of the Office of the Basic Organisation. On 9 January 1988, Balázs was also warned by the rector Aurel Negucioiu. Following a joint analysis between Colonel Gheorghe Rațiu, the head of Directorate I, and Colonel Nicolae Ioniță, the head of Cluj County Securitate, it was decided that Gusztáv Molnár should be issued a warning by the militia. On 25 August 1987 in Cluj-Napoca, Molnár was notified ‘that through his preoccupations he is polluting the social life’ of the locality. On 15 December 1987, retired Ernő Gáll,⁸⁶ former editor-in-chief of *Korunk* magazine, was also called and warned by the first secretary Nicolae Preda.⁸⁷

The documents of the Circle were fully published in 2004 by the founder, after he managed to recover part of them from the Securitate files in the CNSAS archive.⁸⁸

83 == *Ibid.*, 47, 67, 69, 86, 101 (front back).

84 == Edgár Balogh (1906–1996), initially based in Slovakia, later moved to Romania, was a Hungarian publicist, editor-in-chief, university professor and rector. His first, ‘615-day’ arrest occurred in the autumn of 1949. On 30 August 1952, he got arrested again; on 26 April 1954, the Bucharest Military Tribunal sentenced him to 7 years of forced labour on charges of capital treason. He served his sentence in the prisons of Pitești, Jilava, the Oradea and Cluj court prisons as well as in the Văcărești jail. He was released from his ‘1000-day’ confinement on 27 May 1955. See Edgár Balogh’s data sheets, Fond Fișe Matricole Penale, AANP, Bucharest, Romania.

85 == Lajos Kántor (1937–2007), Transylvanian Hungarian philologist, historian and literary critic. From his scientific activity see Kántor, *Titkosan – nyíltan*, passim.

86 == Ernő Gáll (1917–2000), Transylvanian Jewish Hungarian editor, sociologist and philosophical writer. See Földes and Gálfalvi, *Nemzetiség – felelősség*, passim.

87 == See File no. 161638, vol. 1: 55–59, 221–222, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

88 == See Molnár, *Transzcendens remény*, passim.

= = The samizdat *Kiáltó Szó* between 1988–1989

The reunions of the Limes Circle always took place in private homes. The last meeting, scheduled for 20–22 February 1987, was supposed to be held in the house of philosophy professor Sándor Balázs in Cluj-Napoca. However, this did not happen, and the suspension of the Circle created a great vacuum. Balázs, who was familiar with the events, came up with the idea of filling this void and suggested that a samizdat paper be launched. He suggested the title of *Kiáltó Szó*, inspired by the 1921 Hungarian pamphlet of the same name. After discussing the idea with the linguist Éva Cseke-Gyimesi, they reached the conclusion that, unlike the *Ellenpontok*, which was edited in Oradea, this samizdat should be published in Hungary.⁸⁹ After they had managed in autumn 1987 to establish contact, they found Hungarians willing to support the project, mostly through contributions to the technical side. They sent Balázs a Sinclair ZX Spectrum 48K personal computer, which counted as a rarity in 1987-1988. He connected the PC to a small television set, which served as a monitor and to the tape recorder that allowed the storage of data. Then he typed in the collected manuscripts. The small device could not memorise more than a line and a half at a time, so the text had to be saved over and over again onto the tape. After the entire text had been typed, he encrypted it. After encryption, the five-page text turned into a single paragraph of doodle, which became accessible upon entering the code. Balázs copied the encrypted material to tapes containing folk songs. Then the tapes were sent to Hungary through young people whose names he deliberately failed to learn. He did not know who designed the general layout of the samizdat, who transcribed the texts, nor did he know the editors themselves. After the first issue had been printed, in the autumn of 1988, the samizdat material returned to Transylvania and was distributed. Later, in the spring of 1989, a second issue came out, and it is not known whether the next seven were published or not. Since Balázs did not know who was in charge of editing them, he had no one to ask about them. There will probably never be a conclusive answer to this question.⁹⁰

Balázs divided the staff of the samizdat in two categories. One group was that of the editors who performed the actual tasks of sorting manuscripts, translating them, etc. The second category included the so-called external collaborators who simply sent in the manuscripts. The close team of editors consisted of 8-10 people, for the most part university staff and journalists. In this respect mention must be made of Éva Cseke-Gyimesi and her husband; Péter Cseke; Sándor Balázs and his second wife; the philosopher György Nagy;⁹¹ journalists László

89 = = Interview with Sándor Balázs.

90 = = Balázs, *Kiáltó Szó*, 16–20.

91 = = György Nagy (1938–1998), Transylvanian Hungarian philosopher, university professor. See Tonk, 'Nagy György emléke,' 147–148.

Pillich⁹² and Árpád Páll,⁹³ writer György Beke,⁹⁴ the chemist Róbert Schwartz⁹⁵ and his wife Anikó Schwartz. External collaborators included, among others, former members of the Limes Circle, historian Ernő Fábián, literary critic Lajos Kántor, politologist Levente Salat and linguist Sándor N. Szilágyi. Balázs includes also the dissident Doina Cornea⁹⁶ and Marius Tabacu⁹⁷ in this category. As for the former, they translated several of her letters broadcast by Radio Free Europe and also published a personal interview made with her. From Marius Tabacu they published a letter addressed to Cornea.⁹⁸ It must be mentioned that all articles appeared under fake or ‘coded’ names in the samizdat.

In the period after the magazine came out, the Hungarian desk of Radio Free Europe broadcast the *Kiáltó Szó* programme-launching article entitled ‘A Ceaușescu-korszak után’ [After the Ceaușescu Era], in which the editors presented their views of post-dictatorial times. Jointly formulated by the editors, the programme-launching text named as a goal the creation of a society functioning in a multi-party system and based on private property. Balázs and his peers did not see the solution in a single political party, but preferred democracy. They did not elaborate a party programme and had no intention of forming a political party. They were working on a broader scale, which included political issues, matters of the church and a little literature as well, among others. Beyond this, the purpose of the samizdat was to start a dialogue, eliminate isolation, present the situation of Hungarians in Romania and form an alliance with Romanian democratically oriented individuals and groups as far as was possible.⁹⁹

92 = László Pillich (1951–), Transylvanian Hungarian economist, sociographer, journalist, politician. From his scientific activity see Pillich, *Városom évgyűrűi*, passim.

93 = Árpád Páll (1927–1997), Transylvanian Hungarian writer, journalist and theatre critic. From his scientific activity see Páll, *Színházi világtájak*, passim.

94 = György Beke (1927–2007), Transylvanian Hungarian writer, journalist and translator. From his scientific activity see Beke, *Tolmács nélkül*, passim.

95 = Róbert Schwartz (1944–), chemist, publicist, politician. He is the president of the Jewish Community of Cluj-Napoca since 2010. From his activity of publicist see Balázs and Schwartz, *Funár-korszak Kolozsváron*, passim.

96 = Doina Cornea (1929–2018), Romanian university professor, publicist and dissident. About her activity see COURAGE Registry, s.v. ‘Doina Cornea Private Collection,’ <http://courage.btk.mta.hu/courage/individual/n122650> (Access on 30 August 2022.); and COURAGE Registry, s.v. ‘Doina Cornea Ad-hoc Collection at CNSAS,’ <http://courage.btk.mta.hu/courage/individual/n8306> (Access on 30 August 2022.).

97 = Marius Tabacu (1952–2020), Romanian literary translator, film director and pianist. From his scientific activity see Bánffy, *Trilogia transilvană*, passim.

98 = See COURAGE Registry, s.v. ‘Kiáltó Szó – Sándor Balázs Private Collection,’ <http://courage.btk.mta.hu/courage/individual/n75466> (Access on 30 August 2022.).

99 = See Balázs, Sándor. ‘Political Statement, *Kiáltó Szó*, no. 1/1988,’ <http://courage.btk.mta.hu/courage/individual/n49113> (Access on 30 August 2022.).

The collaborators of the samizdat—helped by the short time left until the change of regime—remained unidentified by the political police. According to the CNSAS files seen so far, the Cluj Securitate were the closest to the truth in the case of professor Cseke-Gyimesi, who had been, since December 1988, suspected and investigated for involvement in drafting the samizdat.¹⁰⁰

= = = In lieu of conclusions

Although until now no enlightening works have been published about the Transylvanian Hungarian intelligentsia as a whole during the communist years, there is a tendency among historians of the subject to present some of the left-wing Hungarian intellectuals as opposers of the communist regime in Romania. It is about personalities who, after 1989, sought in their retrospective writings to ‘work’ for ‘posterity’ and thus improve their own image in public opinion. They presented their activity in those years as resistance and tried to make arguments that they served the Hungarian cause better from positions of power than if they had chosen to confront the authorities.¹⁰¹

For a better understanding of what happened in the years 1970–1980, we must be reminded that on 28 June 1968, a meeting of the representatives of Hungarian minority intellectuals with the higher echelons of the Party took place in Bucharest. Later, some of the complaints were accepted, and as a result, Hungarian-language newspapers were established—for example, the Hungarian-language Bucharest social-cultural magazine *A Hét*, the Kriterion Publishing House, broadcasts in Hungarian and German on Romanian Television, etc. Some of these intellectuals ended up occupying various positions, which came with the obligation (at that moment without being very visible) to occasionally express loyalty to Party leadership. Consequently, when the Hungarian Writers’ Union, following a debate at a round table in May 1968, made assessments about the double connection of Transylvanian Hungarian literature—claiming that, on the one hand, it is connected to Romanian literature, but at the same time it is an integral part of Hungarian literature—Bucharest demanded that this be denied. Among those who responded to the request were Géza Domokos in *Előre*, Sándor Huszár in *Utunk*, Zsolt Gálfalvi and Győző Hajdu in *Igaz Szó*.¹⁰²

100 == See the status note of 12 December 1988 drawn up by the I/B Department of the Cluj County Inspectorate in the case of the pursued ‘Elena’. File no. 017980, vol. 4: 72–78; File no. 161638, vol. 1: 40–46, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania.

101 == See in this sense the thematic table of the opposers during the communist regime in the truly impressive traveling exhibition implemented by Blos-Jáni et al., entitled ‘Elmúlt Jelen: A romániai magyarok 1989-90-es rendszerváltása [The past present: the Hungarians in Romania in the context of the regime change from 1989–1990],’ <https://elmultjelen.ro/kiallitas> (Access on 31 August 2022.).

102 == See Novák, *Aranykorszak*, 33–81.

Following this ‘cultural compromise’ of 1968 between the Romanian Communist Party and this generation of intellectuals, the latter wielded power and were fully indebted because of the positions they obtained. It is also true that in the late 1960s and early 1970s they contributed to the enrichment of Hungarian cultural life in Romania and made minority destiny more acceptable. However, as a result of the theses of July 1971 and following the change of Party policies, starting from the mid-1970s, they became tolerated elements on the Bucharest political scene, and even if they were listened to, their suggestions for improving the life of the Hungarian minority were no longer taken into account. This ‘in-house’ status-bearing generation, who protested under the so-called official rules, mostly went with the flow until the regime change, performing questionable activities and rarely managing to openly/publicly confront the Party’s ideology.

On the other hand, those born in the 1940s and 1950s, who in the early 1980s were in their 30s and 40s, were also related to the status-bearing generation. Thus, the young people developed intellectually in the environment of literary and philosophical circles—the Gábor Gaál Circle, the Diótima Circle—or in the Cluj ‘Echinox galaxy’. They found that the ‘in-house’ generation had an ideological commitment, as well as a constant availability and desire to compromise, an attitude that has become the essence of their lives. In these conditions, young people aware that they have a limited margin of manoeuvre, have moved to other forms of expressing their ‘different’ way of thinking.¹⁰³

Under these conditions, it is unacceptable to mention the ‘opposers’ from the generation of status holders—who at the same time enjoyed the graces of the Party and the higher state leadership¹⁰⁴—together with the names of those who, according to certain documentary sources, as a result of oppositionist/dissident activity were forced either to emigrate or, staying at home, endure daily persecution.

103 = Nándor Bárdi distinguishes five different Transylvanian Hungarian generations of elites starting from 1920, attributing to them properties that vary from era to era. For the studied period the 4th and 5th generation elites are relevant, alongside with the generational differences between them. See Bárdi, ‘A romániai magyar elit,’ 41–66.

104 = Serving power can never be an ‘ambivalent discourse,’ a semantic problem. From the 70 volumes of surveillance materials of ‘retired publicist’ Edgár Balogh (see File no. 0259212, vol. 1–70, passim, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania), approximately 60 volumes contain almost exclusively wiretaps documents. The situation is the same with Géza Domokos, who from 1970 was the director of the Kriterion Publishing House, and in whose case out of the 33 volumes of surveillance materials (see File no. 0203541, vol. 1–30, passim, Fond Informativ, ACNSAS, Bucharest, Romania), 29 volumes contain interceptions of all kinds. All this shows that although the Securitate watched their activities with a magnifying glass, and even if they sometimes grumbled, they always received credit and were able to keep their privileges in the regime until the last moment.

These ‘in-house’ individuals must be studied separately, and the researcher who graduated a controversial ‘hero’, must accept that someone will always be able to dispute the correctness of his finding. In this context the question must be asked: why is it so important for those who served the regime and were employed in positions of power to be seen as opposition after 1989? Because in the meantime, communism in Romania, along with its servants, was condemned? Because this is the recipe for keeping a halo over the past, that they were important individuals and therefore can be in the present too? Why is it not enough for them (recognition) that, being good communists (who often believed in this ideology), they defended their community (sometimes successfully) from their position? As a good communist and not as an opposer. Why is it so necessary for them to try to obtain the attribute of ‘opposer’ from posterity?

The 1982 *Ellenpontok* case and other opposition activities must be analysed in this context. In the 1980s they went on to form the backbone of what today we call civic resistance among the Hungarian minority in Romania. Those listed in this study did not go beyond the framework of the democratic opposition, their protest against the Ceaușescu regime being marked by a truly anti-communist and pro-European perspective. In practical terms, their names are associated with the main achievements in the fight for human and minority rights in communist Romania, illustrated by letters of protest, memoirs, pamphlets and samizdats.

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Revolution with human face. Bucharest, 1989.

Fortepan / Nagy Z. László

===== Eszter Kovács =====

/// Informal operation, formal presence

The functioning of the Friendship Art Camp in Gyergyószárhegy in the Ceaușescu era (1974–1989)

This case study is aimed at reconstructing everyday life at the Friendship Art Camp (Barátság Művésztelep, Tabără Artistică Prietenie) founded in Gyergyószárhegy (Lăzarea) in 1974.¹ My objective is to examine the functioning of the Camp, as an institution operating informally throughout the whole year, but formally an event organised just once a year by the Committee of Socialist Education and Culture (hereinafter, ‘Cultural Committee’).² The camp was a comprehensive system of reciprocity and trust, which vitalised economic, social and personal relations in particular. It included *hidden practices*, *open secrets* and *unwritten rules*,³ in other words areas that greatly determined everyday life of the era examined. In my view, quasi-publicity could not only be created in a festive way (that is, making use of the representation of social publicity), but also through informal administration and by mobilising resources necessary to complete these administrative tasks.

The operation of the Art Camp bears the marks of nationwide changes in Ceaușescu’s policy. The population restrictions, introduced in order to repay the

1 = = The study was made in the framework of „Szeklerland self-image building in the 19–20th century”. Number of the project: NKFI 128848.

2 = = When I apply the term ‘Camp’, I mean the entire institution operated by Lajos Zöld. *Art Camp* only refers to the one-month event. The Hungarian and Romanian names of the Committee: Hargita Megyei Szocialista Nevelés és Kultúra Bizottsága, Comitetul Cultural de Educație Socialistă și Culturală.

3 = = Ledeneva, *Global Encyclopaedia of Informality. Understanding Social and Culture Complexity, I.*, 1–3.

international loans taken out during the 1960s and 1970s,⁴ put a great burden on citizens and hampered everyday life. Due to the economic bankruptcy that set in Romania in the mid-1980s and to the state strategy of repaying foreign loans, cuts in public services became continuous, so it was difficult to provide for the everyday needs of the deprived population. The drastic withdrawal of electricity, heating, food and fuel supply forced everyday people into specific survival practices. The answer that the powers that be gave to the economic failure was a series of hard-line ideological campaigns and a personality cult. On the other hand, the theses formed during the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Romania on 6 July 1971 resulted in more powerful political, ideological education and indoctrination in public education as well as cultural life.⁵ It also involved the turning of propaganda into something more spectacular, the selection of cadres and a limitation of cultural and media content coming in from the West.⁶ Due to the ideological rigour, minority institutions shrank and emptied (also in contents).

As far as cultural life is concerned, after Ceaușescu came to power (1965), a new direction of socialist culture appeared: cultural policy was transformed into consumable, mass culture. Public education continued to operate under state funding and control, and the previous network of institutions was expanded to include art schools and Houses of Folk Art.⁷ In this period, public education, entertainment and cultural services came to the fore. Among teachers, so-called cultural work became mandatory, which meant compulsory cultural and folk work outside of school. The *We Sing Romania* festival was founded in 1976, it was held annually, and in this they sought to combine ‘movement-like’ national cultural events under a single unified system, divided by area and genre. It was out to foster ‘socialist consciousness’ and provide ideological lectures with a revolutionary tone. The purpose of the festival was to popularise mass culture and indoctrinate the population. All artistic manifestations in Romania—amateurs and professional alike—went under the name of the *We Sing Romania* movement.⁸ Gyergyószentmiklós and

4 = = The programme pledging Romania to repay all foreign loans by 1990 took effect in 1983. It created problems in the country, as following the oil crisis in 1979, the consumption of electricity, gas and fuel was diminished drastically, and in 1982 the rationing of food (of milk, butter, cheese, fish, vegetables, fruit, meat) forced the population to fight for survival. Novák, *Aranykorszak? A Ceaușescu rendszer magyarságpolitikája I.* 1965–1974, 84.

5 = = The so-called ‘mini cultural revolution’.

6 = = Novák, *Aranykorszak? A Ceaușescu rendszer magyarságpolitikája I.* 1965–1974, 25.

7 = = Novák–Tóth-Bartos, *Társadalmi változások a szocializmus időszakában*, 756–757.

8 = = Ernei, *A román kultúrpolitika evolúciója a Ceaușescu-korszak utolsó két évtizedében*, 428–429; Oancea, *Mass Culture Forged on the Party’s Assembly Line. Poli-*

the surrounding settlements were also active members of the nationwide public culture network, as all state units were required to participate in various national and local cultural events.

Despite all this, the Art Camp had no wish to propagate socialist culture or to attend the festival. Visual artists were out to meet international expectations and participate in the exchange of professional experience from an early age. In the Art Camp people spent free time within an official framework, but had completely different interpretations, depending on the perspective of different groups. The artists saw the Camp as an island where they could create, have fun, and exchange ideas without ideological constraints. It also provided the cultural committee and other county leaders with a space and opportunity to relax away from the public. The following analysis seeks to reconstruct this.

= = Methodological aspects and conceptual framework

In the case study, the everyday life of the Art Camp is reconstructed from semi-structured in-depth interviews,⁹ memoirs,¹⁰ archival documents¹¹ and notes of a field diary.¹² The functioning of the Camp is closely connected to the two oldest buildings of Szárhegy, the Franciscan monastery and ‘one of the peak performances of socialist restoration,’¹³ Lázár Castle.

One of the main concepts of the theoretical framework of the study is *informality*, which marks the application of non-conventional patchworks of behaviour as opposed to formal rules and official procedures, activities going on behind the official scene.¹⁴ Taken in the broader sense, *informality* marks the *open secrets*,

tical Festivals in Socialist Romania 1948–1989, 54–60; Vasile, *Mișcarea artistică de amatori la începuturile regimului Ceaușescu*, 1965–1971, 140.

9 = = Some of the quotes have been anonymised.

10 = = Lajos Zöld's work describing everyday life in the *Art Camp*. Zöld, *A víz szalad, a kő marad. A gyergyószárhegyi barátság művésztelep 25 éve/1974–1999*; Recollection of Albert Májai, chairman of the one-time cultural committee of Hargita county. Májai, *Rezsimek szorításában*.

11 = = Based on protocols and correspondence referring to the *Art Camp*, found in the Hargita County Branch of State Archives, and in the Archives of Archdeaconate of Gyergyószentmiklós at the Archidioecesis of Gyulafehérvár.

12 = = The case study is part of a research conducted within the framework of the the author's PhD dissertation (Kovács, *Informality, self-organization, quasi-publicity. Culture, sport, ordinary discussions, church holidays and entertainment in the Gyergyó-basin in the 1970s and 1980s*), the main subject of which is a reconstruction of everyday life in the Gyergyó-basin during the 1970s and 1980s.

13 = = Kovács, 'Fejedelmi építkezések Erdélyben', 9.

14 = = Misztal, *Informality. Social Theory and Contemporary Practice*.

unwritten rules and *hidden practices* existing in society,¹⁵ that is the ways people deal with their issues in a variety of areas of life.¹⁶ Alena Ledeneva uses the Russian word *blat* as an example for the socio-political and socio-cultural factors of the phenomenon. Informal connections formed due to the shortage economy were called this way in the former Soviet Union. The phrase was used to denote a form of management, the way people dealt with their official issues through their personal connections, in a system of mutual favours. *Blat* helped people gain their basic necessities, like work, housing, helped the kulaks get out of prison, and even provided Party members the opportunity to baptise their children despite prohibitions.¹⁷ Ledeneva's approach—going beyond the works concentrating exclusively on economic motivations—draws our attention to the unique social practices of informal self-organisation and institutions, to the possibility of examining elements appearing in a regional, local or even individual linguistic context.

I chose Ledeneva's informality approach for the analysis of the case study. The informal dimensions and their ambivalences include the following: 1. Informal social relations are at the forefront of *substantive ambivalence*. They are characterised by the sociability of human relationships, social closeness and the instrumental nature of relationships, i.e., the difference between the interest-based use of relationships and the ambivalence of their intertwining. The ambivalence of exchanges in reciprocal relationships is also perceptible, due to their form of being 'neither payment nor gift'. The cases and their context may explain whether the given mutual assistance was for friendly, gift-giving or instrumental, interest-based attention.¹⁸ 2. *Normative ambivalence* points to the open secrets of identities. They consist in representations of identity-based belonging and in the manifestation of related consumption habits, patterns of behavior, ritual practices (religious, music, arts, etc.). Normative ambivalence places participants in the dichotomy of 'we' and 'they', signifying both acceptance and exclusion. This duality helps to see the complexity of identities by pointing to the operation of multiple identity

15 = = In colloquial Romanian, the equivalent of the Soviet *blat* was *PCR*. The acronym seemingly referred to the Communist Party of Romania (Partidul Comunist Român); however, in popular terms it referred to *Pile—Cunostințe—Relații* (ties, knowledge, connections), which was required to deal with administrative issues. Stoica, 'Old Habits Die Hard? An Exploratory Analysis of Communist-Era Social Ties in Post-Communist Romania', 172–175.

16 = = Ledeneva, *Global Encyclopaedia of Informality. Understanding Social and Culture Complexity I*, 1.

17 = = Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking, and Informal Exchange*, 11–38; Id.: "'Blat' and 'Guanxi': Informal Practices in Russia and China', 119–127; Id.: *Global Encyclopaedia of Informality. Understanding Social and Culture Complexity I*.

18 = = Makovicky and Henig, 'Introduction: economies of favours', 125–127.

constructs present at the same time.¹⁹ 3. *Functional ambivalence* has been associated by authors with the informal economy, and its simultaneous supportive and destructive effects. They argue that survival strategies (in the form of the second economy) often compensated for state regulations, while by circumventing the system they depended on it. The gray zone between the formal and informal spheres shows the duality of practices brought to life by needs and the series of irregular action resulting from mere passion, the satisfaction of needs and the ambivalence of greed (need and greed).²⁰ In some cases, combinations of ingenuity, cooperation and tolerance could forge survival into a thriving business.²¹ 4. *Motivational ambivalence* refers to the characteristics of the informal exercise of power. One of the central themes of motivational ambivalence is the case-specific features of the asymmetric, vertical relationship system of patron and client. Each of the definitions highlights the continuous, long-term and short-term exchange of resources, material goods and services between the patron and the client. These relationships are vertical, where the patron has greater power, recognition and resources. The patron-client relationship refers to systems of mutual trust and involves two types of obligations.²² I only use all four ambivalences, when warranted.

Another central concept used to describe communist everyday life is the quasi-public sphere.²³ This space strived to pull out traditional, ethnic values saved in the private sphere of life and place them into the official sphere. It was physically fairly formal, official; however, it also gave space for arranging informal events. On such occasions, in order to keep a lid on it, the event was built from the elements of both spheres, in accordance with possibilities and needs. Since in that era official publicity only functioned as a representative publicity, values smuggled into the public sphere were realised in a festive context, mostly within the framework of festive events. Due to the almightiness of power, everyday life aspired after pulling out its hidden values and intruding them into the official space, or to conquer spaces thus far unknown for itself.

19 == Ledeneva, *Global Encyclopaedia of Informality. Understanding Social and Culture Complexity I.*, 10, 213–217.

20 == *Ibid.* 2, 3.

21 == Radnitz, 'Conclusion: how do tools of evasion become instruments of exploitation?', 151–153.

22 == Semeneva, 'Conclusion: do patron-client relationships affect complex societies?', 403–408.

23 == The concept is defined by Julianna Bodó in her research describing society under communism in Szeklerland in the 1980s. In her work, she discusses the mechanism of the regime and individuals along the lines of various social events. Bodó, *A formális és informális szféra ünneplési gyakorlata az 1980-as években*, 56–63, 106–107.

= = The initial circumstances of the Camp

The idea of an art camp occurred to the organisers Lajos Zöld,²⁴ Árpád Márton,²⁵ and András Gaál²⁶ who had originally imagined it to be somewhere around Csíkszereda (Miercurea-Ciuc); however, all their plans eventually failed. Recollections date the start of the Camp to the visit to Áron Márton, the bishop of Gyulafehérvár (Alba-Iulia), the time when the three organisers agreed with the bishop to rent the building of the monastery for the Art Camp. Renting it would mean restoring the building. András Gaál and Árpád Márton were in charge of the professional work, chose and invited the artists to take part. Lajos Zöld was tasked with providing accommodation, catering and the means to do art. After signing the lease, Lajos Zöld set out to restore the monastery with great enthusiasm.

During the initial phase of the Art Camp, the consequences of the ‘theses’ passed on 6 July 1971 were already significantly felt. Despite this influence, at the very start the founders agreed on the fact that no ideological impulse could stand in the way of art.

‘[...] Everyone paints, draws, carves whatever they wish in Szárhegy. In case something is not to the liking of the present authorities, it will be kept in storage waiting for better times to come.’²⁷

During the entire lifetime of the Art Camp bore the marks of the intergrown, tense relationship of the Catholic church, the Communist Party and the Hungarian minorities. Zöld took the role of the ‘moderator’ in this situation. His position at work provided him a widely accessible social space, and while performing organisational tasks, he created the quasi-publicity balancing between the private and the official spheres. Zöld obtained firsthand information about the operation of large companies and different institutions and the changes going on within them, and he was also on good terms with their leaders and managers.

24 = = 22 December 1932–14 November 2014. Zöld was a journalist originally from Gyergyószárhegy. He was the editor of *Előre* between 1955 and 1957, and later worked for the periodical *Ifjúmunkás* and the regional daily *Hargita*. Following the regime change he went on to work for *Hargita népe* until 2003. Between 1974 and 1995 he was the leader of the Friendship Art Camp.

25 = = Born on 6 October 1940, Márton is a painter from Gyergyóalfalva. He has lived in Csíkszereda since 1964 as an art teacher at the Márton Áron High School. He is a founding member of the Gyergyószárhegy Art Camp.

26 = = 9 March 1936–6 August 2021. Gaál was a painter and graphic from Gyergyóditró. Between 1959 and 1999 he worked as an art teacher at the Márton Áron High School of Csíkszereda; from 1973 he was the graphic designer of *Hargita napilap*, chairman of the regional branch of the National Association of Fine Arts, founding member of the Gyergyószárhegy Art Camp.

27 = = Zöld, *A víz szalad, a kő marad. A gyergyószárhegyi barátság művésztelep 25 éve/1974–1999*, 15.

Between March and July 1974, before the first camp was launched, they set out to restore the monastery building, the primary goal being to provide the basic infrastructure for participants. The storage director of the consumers' co-operative, the manager of the wood plant in Gyergyószentmiklós, the managers of the furniture factories in Gyergyóditró and Galócás, the director of the joinery in Szárhegy, the vice-chairman of the People's Council and the manager of the dry-cleaning workshop in Gyergyószentmiklós were all simultaneously 'moved' to support the Art Camp, to be started in August, with resources (building material, specialists, furniture, food).

'In the part of the monastery, where the building had collapsed, they placed a notice of life danger. The refectory was a total mess, so he renovated that too. He brought in members of the congregation from Gyergyó, who worked day and night, except for Saturday. From March to August they did such a great job, that thirty of us could sleep on the floor, on hay and things like that.'²⁸

Truth be told, the money for the work came from the Communist Party. They had a specific permission for the renovation, since the plant managers had helped the launch of the Art Camp for free or for a minimal pay.'To put out their eyes, jot something down there and leave the rest to me,' said the manager of the wooden engineering works.²⁹ Minor or major maintenance jobs were often performed at the expense of the state. '[...] [T]he legs of some calves in the collective farm of the neighbourhood also broke.'³⁰ The phrase refers to the fact that calves were slaughtered illegally to provide daily meals for the Camp. The pretext was, of course, illness, since in that case animals could be slaughtered and did not have to be surrendered.³¹ The above-mentioned practices could be regarded as *survival strategies*, among which, in order to fulfil needs, there was a symbiotic relation between formal rules and informal behaviour.³²

I consider the Art Camp to be self-organising for two reasons. Firstly, the Creative Camp, organised annually and lasting one month, did not officially function as an institution. It was only considered as a routine cultural event organised once or twice a year by the Cultural Committee of Socialist Education in Harghita County (Harghita Megyei Szocialista Nevelés és Kultúra Bizottsága; Comitetul Cultural de Educație Socialistă și Culturală). However, in day-to-day life it operated as an independent cultural institution. That also was one of the most

28 == Anonymous interview, code: R23.

29 == Ibid. 11.

30 == Ibid. 17.

31 == Hunya, *România 1944–1990*. 93.

32 == Ledeneva, *Global Encyclopaedia of Informality. Understanding Social and Culture Complexity I.*, 2, 3.

worrisome problems of the Camp. Such events were to be approved by the National Cultural Council and the regional Party committee, and that was the only way to finance the event. Lacking an independent status, the Camp could neither have its own employees nor an own leadership. To put the Camp in a legitimate framework would have been a practical decision. However, this would have complicated the functioning of the Camp even more, as it was impossible to reconcile the strict financial regulations with the organisational and purchasing strategies already established. Thus the Art Camp could not be integrated into the economy built according to communist rules.³³

When the Camp opened in August 1974, time thirty artists came and stayed for a month in Szárhegy. At the end of August, they hosted the first exhibition of the Friendship Art Camp, consisting of the works created during that month. The exhibition was held in the Gólyás Bastion of Lázár Castle. The Art Camp was legitimised by the officials of various bodies, who praised it as a symbol of Hungarian-Romanian friendship. Reports of the event were published both in the local and national press.

= = The renovation of the monastery—informal ties

In the following years, just as in the beginning, the development of the Camp was determined by the intertexture of informal reciprocal connections. These covered the plumbing of the bathrooms and toilets) in 1975, the reconstruction of sections of the monastery (patio and stairs) in 1977, the renovation of the refectory, the parquet floors (1978–1979), for which in most cases ‘payment was a “thank you”.’³⁴ For the first time, works of art were given away as presents. This would happen every time they were unable to pay for the work and tools, due to the lack of funds. They would compensate help with a work of one of the painters. ‘If I was hard up, he’d sit down and paint a picture as a gift, without saying a word.’³⁵ Lajos Zöld recalls the contribution of painter József Balla.

‘Now, those who always gave something, would always receive a painting from Lajos, mainly painted by Balla or by me. Lajos would say, “Jóska, we need two paintings today, they’re bringing us dinner.”’³⁶ ‘Laji would go down to the furniture factory in Ditró and say, “I need 20 beds, guests are coming in two weeks, they have to sleep somewhere. We can give paintings in return, Andris Gaál is here, he is yours, you’ll get a painting.” His manners were catastrophic.’³⁷

33 = Szabó, *Kooperáló közösségek*, 58.

34 = Zöld, *A víz szalad, a kő marad. A gyergyószárhegyi barátság művésztelep 25 éve/1974–1999*, 23.

35 = *Ibid.* 24.

36 = Anonymous interview, code: R23.

37 = Anonymous interview, code: R47.

The examples refer to substantive ambivalences of informality disguised in giving gifts³⁸ in exchange for furniture or other fixtures. The paintings were a form of payment, embodying a bestowal of greater value, reciprocating help, in order to maintain a relationship of exchange, one meant to be long-term. So a painting given as payment functioned both as a bestowal and a compensation.³⁹

Zöld endeavoured to provide as much as possible for the leadership of the cultural committee as well, as official transfers (money for the expenses), those that could be accounted for, arrived from them. Informal gatherings, organised for the cultural committee, also served that with purpose,⁴⁰ and the parties, the food and drinks, the elevated mood were all created for the sake of a long-term fulfilment of needs, in the spirit of friendship. In this case, we may also consider the connections maintained with the members of the cultural committee to be both instrumental and sentimental. They had, however, advantages from a financial viewpoint and concerning the legitimacy of official interactions as well.⁴¹

Works of a smaller scale, like the laying of roof tiles or woodwork, were done by villagers. There was a circle friends, an active team consisting of young adults,⁴² who were always ready to help and work.⁴³ The men did the heavy work, while the girls served food and drinks at the dinner following the closing events of the Art Camp.

‘Laji’s gesture of giving us the refectory of the monastery or the Knights’ Hall for weddings or New Year’s Eve—established a system of trust with us.’⁴⁴

In exchange for their help, Zöld was willing to return favours to these young people. According to recollections, the joint efforts were already perceived as a form of entertainment, since back then recreation was largely limited to events organised by the powers that be (in the form of cultural competitions or sport movements). In addition to voluntary co-operative work, they organised small gatherings for themselves, and on New Year’s Eve they were given the use of the refectory and its kitchen, together with the cooking staff. When the Lázár Castle was ready, couples

38 == ‘Substantive ambivalence’ means that, where for the participants it was more the social nature of connections (friendly and family ties) that stood out, outsiders or observers only saw connections of interest. An ambivalence of exchanges included in the reciprocal connections can also be observed in these practices, due to their form of being *neither gifts nor commodities*. Ledeneva, *Global Encyclopaedia of Informality. Understanding Social and Culture Complexity I.*, 1, 9–13.

39 == Makovicky–Henig, ‘Introduction: economies of favours’, 125.

40 == Common New Year’s Eve parties.

41 == Ledeneva, *Global Encyclopaedia of Informality. Understanding Social and Culture Complexity I.*, 1, 9–10.

42 == They were called Young Friends of the Camp.

43 == In 1987, they adopted the name the Community of Young Friends of the Camp.

44 == Note of field diary, 28 December 2019.

could use the Knights' Hall for weddings for free, again, with the cooking staff. The arrangement of these occasions of exchange were kept together by the ties of the regional village community. The integrating institutions were the primary and secondary institutions of socialisation—families and the school community—as well as the church. Also, many of them worked at the same plant or factory involving intimate, personal connections, which strengthened during the work procedure. The members of the group were proud to belong to the social institution associated with Lajos Zöld, which they confirmed by taking part in the work, following the norms required, receiving and giving gifts.⁴⁵ An exclusive group formed, in which the team was given access to the goods and social advantages provided by Zöld. They had a common ethnic, local, religious connection with the sense of belonging and commitment to the Camp. By being able to connect to Zöld's activity, they had to adjust to the norms of a group, which required conformity as well.⁴⁶ Consequently, if help was necessary, they had to be available, and those that were not attracted by that requirement gradually dropped out.⁴⁷

'It was a little privilege too, as not everyone was in this circle of friends. It brought together more skilled young people, so to say, who were more talented than others. They made up a really great circle of friends. We would obviously also get a glimpse of the art world too.'⁴⁸

'It was good to be in touch with him and belong to this company. We saw him living a higher standard of life, better than what we got, but we weren't jealous at all, since he gave a piece of it to us. Just a banal thing, you couldn't get a bottle of good wine, wherever you went those days.'⁴⁹

The relationship of Lajos Zöld and the Young Circle of Friends of the Camp was characterised by reciprocity and redistribution. Lajos Zöld gave free access to the resources of the Art Camp in exchange for the work provided by the youngsters. The other feature typical of the mutual informal assistance of Zöld and the young people was motivational ambivalence.⁵⁰ Zöld, not as a journalist, but as the leader of the Camp (albeit unofficial) exercised informal power, with the goods and possibilities for entertainment he provided, by which he engaged the youngsters in co-

45 = Szabó, *Kooperáló közösségek*, 59, 64, 113.

46 = Ledeneva: *Global Encyclopaedia of Informality. Understanding Social and Culture Complexity I.*, 10, 213.

47 = One person remembers that, although he had belonged to that circle of friends, he did not take part in the 'voluntary work' organised by Zöld, because this mutual, obligatory relationship of exchanges did not apply to him.

48 = Anonymous interview, code: Rg.

49 = Anonymous interview, code: R6.

50 = One of the focal topics of motivational ambivalence include the characteristics of the asymmetric, vertical system of relations of patron and client. All of the definitions highlight the continuous, long-term and short-term exchange of resources, goods and services between patron and the client. These connections are ver-

operation. The young people, aiming to access symbolic and other goods, fulfilled Zöld's needs. Simultaneously, a connection between patron and client lasting for several years, can also be observed. The connection was vertical, due to the political, social and age particularities of Zöld. He had access to the resources young people needed (entertainment, leisure, financial and symbolic goods), and at the same time Zöld was the one to decide on the conditions of the exchange of the 'goods'. Concurrently, we can talk about a mutual system of trust, an interdependency, within which a mutual ethnic, local and small community (the Art Camp) obligations provided a frame of reference.⁵¹

Members of the Young Circle of Friends of the Camp recall the joint potato picking and harvesting as voluntary co-operative work; however, external works also involved dozens of skilled workers. When constructing the patio for instance, in the midst of other, larger projects, Zöld brought in people from the factory. On such occasions, the workers completed their yearly labour service and the women working in the factory cleaned the building of the monastery. They were obviously exempt from their daily duties at their workplace on those days. Labour service or 'patriotic work' (*muncă voluntară patriotică*) meant mandatory community work outside working hours in schools, factories, institutions and the army, and in this case, it was done during working hours. It meant a free human labour force for the socialist economy, especially for agriculture, to ease the effects of inorganisation, bad planning and, on the whole, an ineffective economy.⁵² Feeding such a community workforce was another challenge to deal with. Secondary businesses were created for this purpose. Swampy lands near the Szárhegy railway station were used for growing potatoes, the area had previously been used as a garbage pit by the villagers, who mostly got rid of their building waste there. The potatoes were used to raise the pigs bought by Lajos Zöld, which were kept at the collective farm of the village. A deal of that kind made the operation of the Art Camp similar to that of a farm in the country, where, due to scarce income and in order to cope with the shortcomings of supply, gaps in the official farm were filled in.⁵³

tical, where the patron possesses greater power, recognition and resources. The connections are defined by original inequality. It is normally the patron who decides on the conditions of the exchange of goods. The connection of the patron and client marks a system of relationships of mutual trust, and includes two types of obligations. Firstly, it refers to obligations based on family, religious and ethnic values (or all of them) and, secondly, to official commitments, which have the client depend on the patron. Semeneva, 'Conclusion: do patron-client relationships affect complex societies?', 403–408.

51 = Ledeneva, *Global Encyclopaedia of Informality. Understanding Social and Culture Complexity II.*, 2, 343–344; Semeneva, 'Conclusion: do patron-client relationships affect complex societies?', 403–408.

52 = Dascălu, 'Modelul "Omului nou" în ideologiile totalitare din România secolului XX', 43–47.

53 = Szabó, *Kooperáló közösségek*, 188.

‘[...] [S]uch an amount of work could not be done without a glass or two of wine or pálinka. I exchanged potatoes for wheat, which is where the pálinka came from.’⁵⁴ Potatoes grown on the land of the Camp, as well as those granted by Zöld’s friends were taken to Buzău in exchange for wine.⁵⁵

The Cultural Committee of Harghita County paid the daily allowance of the invited artists, their travel costs and the materials necessary for artwork; however, the daily allowance itself often did not even cover the cost of meals.⁵⁶ So they came up with another source of income: candlemaking.⁵⁷ An additional, alternative source of income for the Camp was the Beauty-Creating Co-operative Work, started in 1978, which suited the phenomenon of folklorism, that had emerged in the 1970s. It was an official requirement to build public cultural education on the foundation of folk culture. The symbolic characteristics of villages and the countryside were widely visualised and thematised.⁵⁸ As the building of the monastery became habitable even during the winter months following its restoration, every year in October folk artists occupied the rooms. They wove, sewed, carved wood, made wrought iron tools. János Kardalus, director of the House of Folk Creations gathered the folk artists of the region, who worked there for a period of one month. The rooms of the monastery and the refectory were furnished with these items of furniture, textiles, and they even sold hundreds of objects. Despite the fact that Zöld and his partners had an argument over the necessity of the Folk Art Camp, it generated a lot of income for the Art Camp. The objects they made there were given as presents to visiting Party delegations.

‘I said we didn’t need folk art, he said we did. There was an artist who said “Laji, all we need now is toothpicks”; however, the women wove vast numbers of rugs. I didn’t even go there when it took place in October.’⁵⁹

The secondary farms operating next to the Art Camp did have official connections to some extent, but the goods were not sold through official channels. According to Töhötöm Szabó Á., from the moment the powers that be are no longer able to control an exchange, regardless of whether cash is used in it, then it becomes informal.⁶⁰ ‘[...] [T]he affairs of the Camp were almost always in-

54 = = Zöld, *A víz szalad, a kő marad. A gyergyószárhegyi barátság művésztelep 25 éve/1974–1999*, 105.

55 = = The first exchange occurred in 1984, when three carts of potatoes were exchanged for wine.

56 = = Májai, *Rezsimek szorításában*, 179.

57 = = It was co-operative work of making candles with the involvement of local women and the workers of the village telephone exchange. They produced decorative candles, which were wrapped and sold.

58 = = Demeter Csanád, *Rurbanizáció*, 135.; Ștefănescu: “Cultură tradițională” în România în perioada comunistă. O analiză din perspectiva studiilor culturale’.

59 = = Anonymous interview, code: R23.

60 = = Szabó, *Kooperáló közösségek*, 191.

extricably hazy.⁶¹ The Cultural Committee confirmed the sources of income at the Camp with official receipts, and Zöld requested payments from the Committee, but they were not always approved. On several occasions, the local plant managers would submit receipts concerning supplies and materials they had donated to the Camp, expecting the Cultural Committee was to pay.⁶² Another point of connection to maintain the appearance of officiality can be read in the reports of the cultural committee, according to which the Camp gained almost as much money from work on the side, as it cost to maintain itself; however, its own its own income cannot be compensated by funds transferred by the Cultural Committee. Consequently, reports mention the Art Camp having its own sources of income, but besides mentioning one or two examples, these are not discussed more broadly. Thus, the secondary farms operated by the Camp were to some extent legitimated. Starting the restoration of the monastery in the 1970s may not have entailed a financial crisis, but the funds transferred for the Camp were not enough to cover the costs. It should also be mentioned that the ‘church-building’ ideas of Lajos Zöld greatly exceeded the financial limits and ideological restrictions. For that reason he was forced to work out strategies to save capital.⁶³ It became an essential part of the Art Camp—not unlike any typical mass sport event in Szeklerland during the 1970s—to accumulate community capital, as well as to create a background of connections of trust.⁶⁴ These bonds at local level unfold in connections maintained with other villagers and the elite of the village (Party secretaries, plant managers, leaders of institutions, teachers, priests, etc.), and a broader level of locality is found in contacts with the managers of plants in the neighbourhood. The next level was a good personal relationship with the county Party committee and Cultural Committee (including the leaders of the intelligence of Transylvania), publishers, editors of periodicals, writers, poets, etc. Systems of connections formed through different social spheres also served to improve one’s personal economic situation. Official institutions provided legitimacy for cooperating, which can be defined as a moral act against the hostile state.⁶⁵ By contrast, the Art Camp, utilised the resources of the regime and was considered collective success. The operation of the Camp, its vision and net of connections show that an informal institution of public

61 = = Zöld, *A víz szalad, a kő marad. A gyergyószárhegyi barátság művésztelep 25 éve/ 1974–1999*, 51.

62 = It must also be mentioned, however, that in comparison to the receipts submitted, the human and material resources weighed a lot more. Májai Albert, *Rezsimek szórításában*, 178.

63 = = Szabó, *Kooperáló közösségek*, 188.

64 = = Péter, *Forbidden Football in Ceausescu's Romania*. 19.

65 = = Szabó, *Kooperáló közösségek*, 194.

utility functioning under communism was operated by means of complex human contributions simultaneously possessing more worldviews and identities.⁶⁶

= = The restoration of Lázár Castle—the use of informal political ties

In 1981, restoration works of the building of Lázár Castle in Szárhegy began in a stricter social atmosphere.⁶⁷ It was a period when renovating and rebuilding a Hungarian monument in the name of preservation was not only impossible but also dangerous.

The restoration of the castle was assisted by managers of plants and factories in the neighbourhood, who also provided help during the renovation of the monastery. Nevertheless, from the point of view of cultural heritage management and from an economic viewpoint, it meant an investment of a much bigger scale. Therefore, in the description of this period, the emphasis concentrated on the exchange opportunities accumulated from the relationship with the Party apparatus and higher bodies in general. I aim to reveal the layers of power, connections with which determined these years, and how and with what purpose the occasions of exchange took place.

It soon became obvious that the Cultural Committee would never foot the full cost of restoration, meaning that other sources of income had to be found, as well as an official building permit. Lajos Zöld's official job as a journalist of *Hargita* and his informal job as director of the Camp, embody a passage between the 'upper' and the 'lower' world. He straight away turned to the highest bodies for help: first to Imre Pataki,⁶⁸ president of the regional People's Council, who transferred 180.000 leus, on the condition that he would for no more help. Despite the fact, that the sum was only a tenth of the total cost, it gave legitimacy to begin restoring a Hungarian monument, which could only have been otherwise achieved with great difficulty or not at all. 'The money I am transferring will be good as a sign-board, indicating that the project is official.'⁶⁹

66 = = Ledeneva, *Global Encyclopaedia of Informality. Understanding Social and Culture Complexity I.*, 213.

67 = = Chronologically: restoring the gate bastion of Lázár Castle (1981), renovating the Knights' Hall (1982), turning the attic above the Knights' Hall into an exhibition hall (1983), tidying up the courtyard of the castle, continuing construction and roofing works of the north-western bastion of the castle (1985) and restoring the Renaissance battlements (1987).

68 = = Imre Pataki was the vice-chairman of the regional Party committee in the 1970s; however, later he was not included in the leadership of the communist Party. Novák, *Holtvágányon. A Ceauşescu-rendszer magyarságpolitikája II.* (1975–1989), 122.

69 = = Zöld, *A víz szalad, a kő marad. A gyergyószárhegyi barátság művésztelep 25 éve/ 1974–1999*, 78.

The birthday party of József Szász, first secretary, thrown in the refectory of the monastery, was also a fund-raising event. After he was greeted with a painting by András Gaál, Lajos brought up the plan of restoring the castle's gate bastion. József Szász promised to support the restoration of the castle to the best of his abilities. While the birthday party was clearly about asking for help, the invitees had not been informed about this.⁷⁰ This was yet another case in point of exercising informal power. Firstly, Zöld achieved his goal through thoughtfulness driven by interests, and, secondly, by laying on pressure.

'The point is, that comrade Szász was regional Party secretary, and they made a big fuss about him. Lajos Zöld then invited the managers of the foundry, the I.U.P.S.⁷¹ and all the factories, and he said, "you will do this and that, won't you?," and everyone looked at him "like at a bloody knife" because no one dared to say "no" in front of comrade Szász.'⁷²

Construction promptly began a week later. Works were suspended for the duration of the Art Camp; however, the male participants of the Folk Art Camp (together with the women they were a hundred and twenty) were already working on restoring and furnishing the gate bastion.⁷³ The wages of the construction workers were paid for by the managers of the Gyergyószentmiklós Mechanical Plant and the Wood Plant and the oak boards were paid for by the Cultural Committee. The Szárhegy bricklayers and electricians worked for free at weekends. The renovation of the castle could only be realised with help from high-ranking Party officials at regional level, so being on good terms with them was crucial. The first task was always to legitimise the activity and single out someone who could be turned to in case of trouble. Imre Pataki, József Szász, Albert Májai, Maria Cofas, János Kardalus—all strengthened the official status of the Art Camp's activities. Not only did the Camp operate in an informal way, but it also provided space for organising other informal events, such as weddings, baptisms, graduation banquets, etc. This formal space was a tool of legitimation of informal events. The regional leaders and the members of the Cultural Committee that appeared at the opening and closing sessions of the Camp served also tools tools of legitimation. Furthermore, it was considered to be a place where identity could openly be expressed.⁷⁴

70 == The plant managers believed that József Szász wanted to meet them. Szász assumed the contrary, so they were all surprised by the gathering and did not dare to refuse the future contribution to the restoration works of the castle by providing material and human resources. Ibid. 78.

71 == Woodworking factory.

72 == Anonymous interview, code: R34.

73 == Ibid. 78.

74 == Bodó, *A formális és informális szféra ünneplési gyakorlata az 1980-as években*, 60–64.

In 1982, they set out to renovate the Knights' Hall in order to make a room for exhibitions, meetings, to have meals and sleep in, to organise conferences, so that after the contract signed with the owner of the monastery expired, the Art Camp and the Folk Art Camp could be continued. Works in in the Knights' Hall went on in 1983. This time the aim was to turn the attic into a hall for exhibitions. The conversion costs and the timber blocking were paid by the Cultural Committee. József Szász, regional first Party secretary paid a visit to Szárhegy again, where, following a friendly discussion, he promised to provide for the restoration of the gate bastion, sketches of which had already been approved by the National Committee of Cultural Heritage Management, and they were only waiting for an approval from above. The visit served as an 'encouragement' for the Cultural Committee concerning the approval. The restoration works of the gate bastion were proceeding with incredible speed, since, as Zöld had suspected, the success of the work could mean a promotion for József Szász.⁷⁵ With this in mind, they even managed to finish restoring the Renaissance battlements within the next two years, by 1987. In his recollections, Zöld describes the people helping him accomplish ideas—that is, members of the regional Party Committee, leaders of the regional Cultural Committee, local plant managers, intellectual leaders of Transylvania—to be members of one community, sober individuals willing to take risks, with a strong identity. Before the wave of dismissals, in addition to Imre Pataki, József Szász was the 'bastion' of the Art Camp. The main role of the regional first Party secretary was to prevent conflicts, and to make sure the regional Cultural Committee approved the events going on at the Art Camp. The ideological rigour—which left no room for compromise—reached its peak in 1989. Under orders from the regional Party committee and the Cultural Committee, the Friendship Art Camp was disbanded. By then, Ion Oancea was the president of the Committee. In November, the Folk Art Camp was organised nevertheless, albeit with very few participants. The 1972 Party conference set out a rotation of cadres, meaning that important county leaders were to be changed every 3-5 years. This percolated down to in Hargita county in waves, and in the 1980s it did not leave the Art Camp untouched. In 1986, Aurel Costea was brought in from Máramaros, replacing János Csorba. Within a few months, first secretary József Szász was moved to Krassó-Szörény county and his position taken over by Aurel Costea. For the first time, a county with a Hungarian majority had a Romanian Party leader.⁷⁶

75 = = Zöld, *A víz szalad, a kő marad. A gyergyószárhegyi barátság művésztelép 25 éve/1974–1999*, 111.

76 = = Novák, *Holtvágányon. A Ceaușescu-rendszer magyarságpolitikája II. (1975–1989)*, 75.

== Summary

The case study sought to sum up the sixteen years of the Friendship Art Camp in Gyergyószárhegy, focusing on the interactions of the regime and individuals. The emphasis was on reciprocal relations (taking the form of cooperation), informality, quasi-publicity and the systems of relations accomplished within.

No history of the Art Camp would be complete without discussion of the person of Lajos Zöld. He was very well connected and well informed on the non-public aspects of public and cultural life. He became acquainted with architect Jenő Németh at the inauguration of the furniture factory of Gyímesközéplök. The construction work could not have been accomplished without his expertise and his workers. The old furniture and carpets were given to him by the manager of the bath company in Tusnád, which would otherwise have been thrown out. He learned from Sándor Bertalan, regional secretary of the People's Council, that the council building was being fitted with a central heating system, meaning that it would no longer be needing its old stoves. Zöld had the stoves disassembled and taken to Szárhegy.⁷⁷ He knew who to approach with requests for help or advice, and was well acquainted with the whole region and local elite.

'[...] [A]s a journalist he knew whom to turn to if he needed fuel, specialists, material, people, as he had visited large local businesses and plants as a journalist, and there were like-minded comrades in the county too.'⁷⁸ 'He also had good connections with the university. Géza Domokos, the director of Polis publisher in Kolozsvár, and Gyula Dávid used to come here a lot, too. They would talk a lot. He also came to meet Károly Király, who spoke of him fondly, saying that although he was a communist, he knew that he was Hungarian and belonged here, and would do so that.'⁷⁹

He considered himself to be an adaptable man in his work, referring in particular to his relationships with the regime. 'I have always been a man of compromises, I have always preferred a dialogue at a white table to bravado.'⁸⁰ However, he never let his ideas be disrupted, and he would not accept refusals of any kind. This involved tough behaviour, though, which often elicited aversion in others.

'I cannot claim that with my dictatorial manners and firm conduct I didn't create a great number of enemies for myself.'⁸¹ Despite these manners, he received appreciation for the institution he ran and the cultural values preserved and created.

77 = = Zöld, *A víz szalad, a kő marad. A gyergyószárhegyi barátság művésztelep 25 éve/1974–1999*, 12, 23, 51, 94.

78 = = Anonymous interview, code: R12.

79 = = Ibid.

80 = = Zöld, *A víz szalad, a kő marad. A gyergyószárhegyi barátság művésztelep 25 éve/1974–1999*, 11.

81 = = *Ibid.* 104.

‘If it was not for Lajos Zöld, it would have long been ravaged.’⁸² ‘I don’t know if anyone else could have accomplished all of this. He had connections, he talked to the artists in one way, with the others in another way. What remained, though, is very valuable, for sure. He exploited his journalist background, as he could have attack, or publish an article that could have caused trouble, but everything he did, he did it for Szárhegy.’⁸³

The objective of this analysis has been to observe the possibilities of those operating the Camp, in relation to the ideological procedures. It can also be established that the social structure of the communist system of Romania cannot be simplified as a dichotomic system of those in power and those lacking power. The same person would possess formal power, and in the same time local elements of identity confined to the private sphere.

Zöld operated a well-functioning second economy, not only for survival and to meet needs, but also for a larger source of income. On the other hand, Zöld and his social circle represent a specific patron–client relationship, revealing his informal methods of exercising power. He was able to convince the factory managers, plant managers and leaders of the Cultural Committee, especially in the cases that proved to be difficult, by approaching people from the county Party committee or asking them to put pressure on the local leaders. He and local leaders like him in the examined period, as Katherine Verdery puts it, were bureaucrats in close contact with the highest layers of the power elite. They prioritised the interests of the community, and were also characterised by a kind of careerism. Their activities attested to personal influence, efficient allocation of resources, and reciprocal relationships, which enhanced their reputation, and they enjoyed a kind of prestige, which was recognised locally as well.⁸⁴ They were also able to use this prestige among locals to carry out new cases. Their activities influenced cultural policy in the opposite direction that of the power.⁸⁵

82 = = Anonymous interview, code: R34.

83 = = Anonymous interview, code: R22.

84 = = Verdery, *Compromis și rezistență: cultura română sub Ceaușescu*, 54–55.

85 = = Kiss Ágnes, ‘Informális gyakorlatok a romániai kommunista cenzúrarendszerben’, 185–221.

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Transcripts and recordings available from author on request.

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Personal, anonymous interview, code: R47, 6 September 2018.



Internal exit. Bratislava, Slovakia.

Fortepan / Barbjerik Ferenc

= Lonesome activists =
////////////////////



Removing past. György Krassó in action, 1989.

Fortepan / Philipp Tibor

===== Gábor Danyi =====

/// Civil rights activist, Centaur or the Thief of Baghdad?

**The identity of György Krassó and the functioning
of his samizdat publishing house between 1982 and 1985¹**

The production and distribution of uncensored—commonly known as samizdat—literature is generally understood as an exercise of one of the most fundamental civil liberties, freedom of expression. The dictatorial context in which samizdat emerges inevitably gives this activity a moral dimension: those involved in samizdat activities are champions of human liberties, resisters of dictatorship, advocates of dissident justice. However, the moral dimension often obscures the former contexts that have given samizdat publishing other meanings. In what follows, I will attempt to disentangle samizdat literature from this moral dimension and examine the phenomenon in its former social contexts, which will allow it to be seen from a new perspective, that of the practices of socio-cultural resistance.

Producing, distributing and receiving samizdat literature was integral to the activities of the opposition and generally to social resistance to state socialism in the 1980s.² In 1981, the ‘second public sphere’ significantly broadened and became institutionalised:³ a so called ‘samizdat boutique’ opened in László Rajk Jr’s apart-

1 == Supported by the ÚNKP-20-4 New National Excellence Programme of the Ministry for Innovation and Technology from the source of the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund.

2 == For more recent literature on samizdat, see the thematic issues of *Poetics Today* (Winter 2008 and Spring 2009), and the following publications: Komaromi, ‘The Material Existence of Soviet Samizdat’; Kind-Kovács and Labov, *Samizdat, Tamizdat, and Beyond*; Kind-Kovács, *Written Here, Published There*; Behrends and Lindenberger, *Underground Publishing*; Parisi, *Samizdat*; Glanc, *Samizdat Past & Present*. On the history of samizdat in Hungary, see the forthcoming monograph: Danyi, *Az írógép és az utazótáska*.

3 == On this process and the impact of the Polish opposition on the Hungarian second public sphere, see: Danyi, ‘Harisnya, ablakkeret és szabad gondolat’.

ment in the heart of Budapest, and the most influential independent newspaper, *Beszélő*, and the AB Independent Publishing House were founded. After these developments, a former 1956 revolutionary and an active figure of the democratic opposition of the time, György Krassó, also became involved in independent publishing under the name of Hungarian October Publishing House. Through this activity he consistently—almost obsessively—advocated the memory of the 1956 uprising suppressed by Soviet troops, historical truth, and civil liberties, all of which challenged the legitimacy of the Kádár regime. The publication of uncensored materials in the harsh conditions of state socialism demanded a high degree of ingenuity and creativity, while at the same time posed a very serious existential risk in the grip of state security. In this way, he represented a form of opposition that was very rare in Hungary. Krassó therefore deserves a special place in the memory of the era.

In the following I will focus on the period between 1982 and 1985, both to shed light on the informal social practices that enabled the effective representation of civil liberties, and to explore the patterns that characterised the identity of the contributors, especially György Krassó. In short, I will critically examine the room for manoeuvre of a committed oppositionist: how he used the possibilities of the second economy, the resources of the public sphere and his contacts to create the financial, technical and material conditions for freedom of expression, and how these practices were linked to identity constructions.

Since the operations that made independent publishing possible and enabled the circulation of samizdat texts are integrated into wider social relations, it seems essential to ‘socialise’ these operations. This can be done in at least two ways. Firstly, by seeing samizdat not as a discursive space or a static medium of texts, but rather as the intersection of practices, procedures and routines that created and operated this medium, which allows us to interpret samizdat culture as a performative act, a complex set of practices carried out by subjects acting in given social relations.⁴ Secondly, inspired by the ‘new economic criticism’, we can see samizdat as a cultural product, which, in its distribution and consumption,⁵ is interwoven with given economic practices and behaviours, creating a specific cultural-literary market.

In the following, I attempt to apply these two perspectives together. In doing so, I will first examine the meaning of samizdat publishing in Krassó’s autobio-

4 = = For this above all see: Komaromi, ‘Samizdat as Extra-Gutenberg Phenomenon’; Zaslavskaya, ‘Samizdat as social practice’.

5 = = On the exchange processes and dissemination mechanisms of samizdat texts, see Komaromi, ‘Samizdat as Extra-Gutenberg Phenomenon’; Danyi, ‘Az ajándékozás művészete’; Danyi, ‘Sztuka obdarowywania’. There are very few studies on the economic aspects and financing of samizdat enterprises. A brief exception is, for example: Machovec, ‘How underground authors and publishers financed their samizdats’.

graphical reflections (which I will return to later in an analysis of Krassó's relationship to money). I then focus mainly on the nature of the financial resources required to run the Hungarian October Publishing House and the informal economic practices that made samizdat publishing possible. Finally, I discuss the prices of individual publications in the light of the complex economic model of the Publisher. The study is predominantly based on state security documents relating to György Krassó, who was treated as the enemy of state socialist system. I matched the 'reality constructions' of the state security documents against information from samizdat materials, memoirs and interviews I conducted.

= = = The identity of a former '56 samizdat publisher

It is worth examining the figure of Krassó in terms of 'narrative identity'. It is well known that, in the theoretical framework of narrative identity, the identity of the self is not created by some core or substantive basis of personality, but by a story of the self that is retold and thus constantly reflected upon and reinterpreted.⁶ In what follows, I will therefore focus on how Krassó's storytelling created his narrative identity, that is the narrative unity of his life, with particular attention to the life narratives that thematise oppositional activity and samizdat publishing.

In several interviews, Krassó described certain recurring elements of his own life as if he were 'guilty' or a 'perpetrator' who 'return[ed] to the scene of action'.⁷ With this turn of phrase, Krassó was referring above all to the repetition of forms of activity such as duplication, printing, leafleting, flyering and posting bills. In Krassó's life, there were three distinct periods involving these forms of activity: firstly, the period of Communist-Party work in the second half of the 1940s; secondly, the 1956 uprising; and thirdly, opposition activity in the 1980s.

At this point, it is also worth shedding more light on Krassó's life. In his early teenage years, Krassó was influenced by communist ideas and even joined the party at the age of 15. In addition to the influence of his brother Miklós Krassó, who belonged to the circle of the Marxist philosopher György Lukács, the hope shared by broad strata of society that a new, more egalitarian world could be built on Marxist grounds also played a role. As a teenager, Krassó took part in Communist-Party work, gaining experience in communist movement activities, including posting bills and leafleting. Prior to this, in the autumn of 1949, Krassó had left school of his own volition and enrolled as an industrial apprentice at the Manfréd Weiss Iron and Metal Works (which was renamed the Mátyás Rákosi Iron and Metal Works in 1950).⁸ In the first half of the 1950s, Krassó gradually

6 = = See Ricoeur, 'Le soi et l'identité narrative'; Ricoeur, 'L'identité narrative'.

7 = = 'A bűnös/tettes visszatér a tett színhelyére'. See e.g. *Krassó György-interjú*, 3.; Csizmadia, *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék (1968–1988). Interjúk*, 49.

8 = = *Krassó György-interjú*, 1.

became disillusioned with communism, mainly as a result of his direct experience of the working class. In early 1953, he was expelled from the Communist Party for destructive behaviour.⁹ It is therefore not surprising that in 1956 he was already enthusiastically involved in the overthrow of the Stalinist dictatorship. He took part in the demonstrations of 23 October 1956, fought with guns at the Hungarian Radio building and was almost court-martialled. After the Soviet intervention, he mostly printed manifestos, produced and distributed leaflets denouncing the new Kádár government supported by the Soviets and calling for a strike by the workers. After decades in prison following the suppression of the uprising, and then decades of justified fear of state repression, these forms of activity returned in the 1980s in the framework of the Hungarian October Publishing House, founded by Krassó.

In Krassó's interviews, linking of elements of the Communist-Party work of his youth with the forms of anti-regime activity in the eighties functioned above all as a self-ironic and deheroising rhetorical figure. At the same time, the figure of 'returning' to the scene of the action in the context of oppositional activity in 1956 and the 1980s was saturated with meaning in several ways.¹⁰ It is obvious that 'return' can be understood as a performative-operational action, since it implied the restoration of the former space of operation, and the repetition of specific forms of action. This means that the 1980s, when the samizdat publishing house was run, saw the return of the same—or at least very similar—practices as in 1956. It is also clear from the publishing 'portfolio' of 'Hungarian October', Krassó's samizdat publishing house founded in 1983, that he also reached back to the 1956 activities in terms of the politics of memory. As an actor cultivating and socialising memory, his aim was to rehabilitate the repressed memory of the uprising. It is characteristic that Krassó not only named his samizdat publishing house, but also his later enterprises—his telegraph office, established in London in 1986, and his party, which was established legally in 1989—after the Hungarian October of 1956.

Moreover, the topos of 'the perpetrator returns to the scene of the act' suggests that Krassó had fully managed to incorporate the 1956 experience into the narrative of his own life. It is characteristic that this rhetorical figure does not present Krassó as a traumatised victim of the post-1956 reprisals (which Krassó would have had 'every right' to do after his long years in prison), but as an active agent of the revolution (all the more so because Krassó was averse to 'martyrdom').¹¹

9 == *Krassó György-interjú*, 25.; Csizmadia, *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék (1968–1988)*. *Interjúk*, 50.

10 == For this see Krassó, 'A "Magyar Október" előzményei'.

11 == On this point, I dispute Gabriella Kinda's assertion that Krassó's 1956 trial 'shows the struggle of a powerless man against the immense repressive machine', and that although 'Krassó did not surrender, he should not be made a victim, or even

Victims of trauma are unable to make the untold trauma part of their identity and biography, where memories return again and again in the form of compulsive and passive action, as if the victims were unable to detach themselves from the scene of the act and were involuntarily stuck in the moment of trauma.¹² In contrast to the traumatised victim, the ‘perpetrator’ is able to act as a conscious and active agent, who is more the agent of his memories than the sufferer, and whose return may be motivated by the positive emotional state he or she has experienced, or by the anger caused by a damaged sense of justice. In Krassó’s case, this ‘return’ was therefore an imaginary act of a conscious and capable subject, which, firstly, made it possible to relive the euphoric, adrenaline-fuelled days of the 1956 uprising and, secondly, was linked to the need for recompense for the former grievances: revenge. Including both emotional and cognitive elements and which can be understood as ‘the first manifestation of a sense of justice’,¹³ this vengeance was enacted in Krassó’s case ‘as a kind of diverted legal defence mechanism’. Since revenge against the repressive regime was not part of the regime’s playbook, it was displaced and took on a form of critical resistance: the act of samizdat publishing. In the summer of 1984, according to a state security report, Krassó expressed his motivation for this by saying that he had been ‘imprisoned for a few leaflets, got 10 years, served seven of them, and now feels like he is retaliating for this long prison sentence, and [it] is fair and that is why he is doing it’.¹⁴ This is reinforced by the fact that in the phrase he repeatedly quoted, he ironically referred to himself as ‘guilty’.

Krassó thus succeeded in creating a narrative construction—or rather a narrative identity—which reflected both permanence and change, continuity and discontinuity. In addition to linking the revolutionary acts of 1956 with the oppositional activities of the 1980s, his life narrative integrated and resolved the tension between Communist-Party work and oppositional activity, without jeopardising the narrative unity of his life. In the life narratives that he retold again and again, certain elements of his life were reinforced and the fault lines bridged: for example, the totality of action established a link between agitational work and the samizdat publishing.¹⁵

a hero’. (Kinda, *Krassó György 1956-os pere*, 120.) In my view, Krassó was clearly a victim of the post-1956 repression, a sufferer of political injustice, who at the same time did not rebuild his identity according to the narrative of victimhood.

12 == Cf. Pintér, *A nem múló jelen*, 41–42.

13 == Hadik, *A bosszú*, 11. Quoted in Kuminetz, *Egy tomista jog- és államböloset*, 313.

14 == Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 18 June 1984, 348., O-19619/9., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

15 == Krassó formulated the ‘totality of action’ in such a way that one ‘devotes absolutely all one’s time to this purpose and that it pervades one’s whole life’, by which he meant both agitational party work and samizdat publishing. *Krassó György-interjú*, 1.

= = The activity of the Hungarian October Publishing House

Imprisoned for his participation in the 1956 uprising and released by amnesty in 1963, György Krassó¹⁶ remained the focus of the authorities' attention for many decades. Almost from the moment of his release, on 10 September 1963, the state security service kept him under operational control, under code-name 'Lidi', as part of the interception of persons convicted of crimes against the state, and thirteen massive dossiers were compiled on his activities and daily life up to December 1985. Over the decades, he was prosecuted several times, placed under police supervision or cautioned by the authorities. Numerous secret agents worked to obtain as much reliable information as possible for the authorities in order to prevent or at least limit his 'anti-state' activities. It is also telling that there have been instances of several independent agents staying at the same time in Krassó's apartment and reporting on each other.¹⁷

Although Krassó never hid his (political) views, which were 'not exactly in line' with the system,¹⁸ his oppositional behaviour became more open and public from the second half of the 1970s, in parallel with the emergence of the Hungarian democratic opposition. In the summary reports,¹⁹ it was noted that in 1979 he signed a solidarity declaration with the members of the Czechoslovak opposition movement, Charter '77; that he was the organiser and supporter of several symbolic actions in support of the Polish Solidarity movement, and even sought to establish contacts with representatives of the Polish independent trade union; at the end of 1981, he organised a solidarity action in support of Tibor Pákh, who protested against the unlawful withdrawal of his passport by going on hunger strike; and he regularly attended lectures at the unofficial Flying University organised by the opposition. The authorities deeply resented that some of his writings

16 == For literature on György Krassó see: *Krassó György-interjú.*; Hafner–Zsille, *Maradj velünk!*; Modor, *Célkeresztben Krassó*; Keresztes, 'Krassó György kizárása a Közgazdaságtudományi Egyetemről 1955-ben'; Pécsi, 'Baklövés'; Kinda, 'Krassó György 1956-os pere'; Kinda, 'A Nádor utca-akció'; Nagy, 'Krassó Györgyről'.

17 == On 14 March 1984, and again on 22 March 1984, for example, secret agents with the code-names 'László' (civil name Gyula Lugossy) and 'Költő' (civil name Lajos Mózes) were in Krassó's apartment at the same time. (Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 28 March 1984, 148., O-19619/9., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.; Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 12 April 1984, 224., O-19619/9., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary. See also Modor, *Célkeresztben Krassó*, 233).

18 == According to Ferenc Kőszeg, a member of the democratic opposition, 'Krassó did nothing but berate the system. It was simply impossible to catch a single ten-minute moment in his agenda when he wasn't berating the system.' (*Kőszeg Ferenc-interjú*, 306.)

19 == See e.g. Összefoglaló jelentés [Summary Report], 29 November 1984, 129–142., O-19619/11., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

were sent to the West and published there—including his article on the violations of travel and passport policy, which appeared in the Parisian émigré journal *Magyar Füzetek* in 1981, and Bill Lomax's book *Hungary 1956*, which Krassó translated into Hungarian and annotated. To add to his list of 'crimes,' in 1981, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the 1956 uprising, he organised a commemoration in a private apartment in Budapest, and two years later, in June 1983, on the 25th anniversary of the execution of Imre Nagy, the former communist prime minister of the uprising, he also held a commemoration. The authorities were also aware that he had started his own publishing activity under the name of 'Hungarian October', publishing 'six different enemy samizdat materials' by October 1984, according to their records.²⁰ The number of these publications multiplied the following year.

Between 1982 and 1989, György Krassó's initiative, sometimes called Hungarian October Publishing House [Magyar Október Kiadó] and sometimes called 'Hungarian October' Freepress [„Magyar Október” Szabadsajtó], brought out more than thirty publications, and in addition, there were publications that Krassó reproduced and distributed without a publisher's label. The publisher's profile was mainly dominated by works related to the memory of the 1956 uprising, but Krassó also 'launched' other banned works that did not belong to the genre of political history, and historical works. Between 1982 and 1985, Krassó was engaged in compiling, reproducing and distributing unofficial publications, amidst increasing attention from state security and at great existential risk to him. From 1986 onwards, after Krassó had emigrated to London,²¹ publishing activities were

20 = = Intézkedési terv [Operational Plan], 16 October 1984, 279, O-19619/10., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

21 = = At the end of 1985, Krassó received a telegram with the news that his brother Miklós Krassó, who had been living in London since 1956, had set fire to his apartment while smoking a cigarette and was hospitalised with severe burns. In order to visit his brother, who was hanging between life and death, Krassó applied for an emergency passport to Western countries on 10 November 1985. Unlike in previous cases, this application was not immediately rejected by the authorities, but the possible consequences were considered. They found that while Krassó would mobilise international public opinion and launch a 'propaganda campaign' against the Hungarian political leadership if his passport was refused again, his departure would result in the Hungarian October Publishing House's 'activity being reduced to a minimum,' while they also reckoned that Krassó would return to his subversive activities with a wider network of international contacts and more favourable opportunities. (Jelentés [Report], 11 November 1985, 214–216, O-19619/13., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.) In the end, the threat of an international press campaign was more important to the authorities, and Krassó was granted the first Western passport of his life at the age of 53. (See Modor, *Célkeresztben Krassó*, 246.) Ágnes Háy and György Krassó—as accurately recorded in a State Security daily report—'left the country by train at Hegyeshalom at 18:42 on 22 November 1985.' (Napi jelentés [Daily Report], 25 November 1985, 251., O-19619/13., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.) In London, Krassó decided that he could better help the opposition from abroad, and did not return home for the next few years.

relegated to the background, but he still tried to organise the publication of samizdat works in Hungary from abroad.

In contrast to the samizdat publishers using homemade techniques,²² most of the publications of the Hungarian October Publishing House were produced on the black market, in state-operated printing factories.²³ In the midst of the increasingly severe economic crisis of the 1980s, workers in state-operated printing factories (e.g. in factories or state companies) were keen to take on illegal printing jobs for the 'black market' as a form of wage supplementation. By using more professional printing techniques, the publications of the Hungarian October Publishing House undeniably brought a breath of fresh air to the second public sphere in that 'both in terms of their editing and their technical execution, they demonstrated a quality that was previously unusual in independent publishing'.²⁴ The pursuit of 'good quality', 'good design' and 'cheapness' were part of the publishing programme.²⁵ Many of the over thirty publications published by Krassó approached the quality of products of official publishing. The publishing programme of 'Hungarian October' required basic capital to run the publishing house, as well as the skills to exploit the resources of the second economy.

22 == Until the 1980s, Hungarian samizdat consisted almost exclusively of typewritten texts copied using typewriters and carbon paper (Danyi, 'Az ajándékozás művésze'). However, the early 1980s saw the emergence, largely under Polish influence, of home printing techniques that resulted in larger print runs: the so-called 'ramka', screen printing and stenciling—to which the underground art scene also contributed significantly with their skills (Danyi, 'Harisnya, ablakkeret és szabad gondolat'). In addition, the emergence in the 1980s of officially licensed copying shops in Budapest and larger cities, open to the public, created further opportunities for the reproduction of unofficial documents, as previously only state institutions or factories were allowed to use copy machines (Dalos, *Vizlát, elvtársak!*, 78).

23 == Krassó's preference for illegal professional printing over homemade techniques was also influenced by a previous experience. In 1979, Krassó's partner, the artist Ágnes Háty, wanted to publish a book of her prints entitled *Sex—40 drawings*. The way to do this, at Krassó's suggestion, was to publish it privately, for which an application had to be submitted to the General Department of Publishing. To facilitate a positive decision on the application, Háty asked the highly respected psychologist, Ferenc Mérei to write a foreword. The application also had to specify the printing costs of the publication, so Krassó simply walked into a printing house to ask for a quote. After 'the letter of the competent review committee refused to publish the work' (Feljegyzés [Note], 17 October 1978, 34, O-19619/5., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary), Krassó went back to the printing house, where he managed to arrange for the book to be printed without permission. It was then that it became clear to Krassó that 'the printers were very happy to print for money, illegally' (Interview with Ágnes Háty by the author, 21 June 2021).

24 == Kőszeg, 'Az M. O. kiadó', 67.

25 == 'Bemutatkozik az M.O.', 38.

= = The financial situation and incomes of György Krassó

There are many indications that Krassó had the necessary capital to run the publishing house smoothly. Krassó could pay for the materials he bought from abroad in the currency of his choice: he would ask the purchaser ‘whether he would give the amount requested in dollars, Deutschmarks or French francs’.²⁶ Krassó regularly lent money to other samizdat ‘enterprises’.²⁷ In addition, ‘he repeatedly stated that he had an advantage over his ‘co-publishers’ because he could pay printers immediately and in cash.’²⁸ On several occasions, Krassó gave the printer ten thousand Hungarian forints in advance.²⁹ The printing costs of an average publication were about three to four times higher than the advance paid by Krassó: around 30-40 thousand forints.³⁰ This also meant that Krassó had (at least) enough working capital to cover the entire printing costs of a given publication. To put this in perspective, in the 1980s, this meant an average income of about one year, and Krassó’s official disability pension was well below average.³¹ It is clear that Krassó would not have been able to generate the financial resources to run the publishing house on his pension alone.

It is therefore worth taking a closer look at Krassó’s sources of income—which, trying to catch him, is just what the state security services did. Krassó is known to have been perfectly happy to receive a disability pension, and did not wish to take on a full-time job, either because of his lifestyle or because of his convictions. Krassó considered the political and economic system to be corrupt and immoral,³²

26 == Jelentés [Report], 12 June 1984, 333, O-19619/9., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

27 == Interview with Ágnes Háby by the author, 21 June 2021.

28 == Értékelő jelentés [Evaluation Report], 17 June 1985, 239, O-19619/12., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary. Krassó’s assertion that, unlike other samizdat publishers, he was immediately solvent did not mean that he did not often run into financial difficulties, partly due to his passion for horse racing, partly due to his business adventures.

29 == Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 9 January 1985, 242, O-19619/11., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.; Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 22 January 1985, 253, O-19619/11., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

30 == Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 9 January 1985, 242, O-19619/11.

31 == In 1982 the average monthly income per person was 3385 forints, while by 1987 it had risen to 5262 forints. (Andorka and Harcsa, *A lakosság jövedelme*, 97–117. Krassó’s pension in December 1982 was 2218 forints (Jelentés [Report], 3 December 1982, 92, O-19619/8., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.)

32 == Jelentés [Report], 19 June 1979, 53, O-19619/5., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary. It is important to note that Krassó made this statement in connection with János Kenedi’s satirical sociography *Tiéd az ország, magadnak építed* [‘You own the country, you build it yourself’], which exposed the shadow side of the real socialist economy and casted light on the mechanisms of the illegal ‘black economy’. Kenedi, *Tiéd az ország, magadnak építed*; Kenedi, *Do it Yourself*.

and to the state security services he ‘seemed to be a principled non-worker, not wanting to participate in the “building of socialism”’, and ‘often jokingly annoyed his acquaintances who were employed by making similar statements’.³³ In addition to his disability pension—which he received as a hearing impaired person—Krássó also earned some income as a technical translator, with a specialisation in English.³⁴ Krássó also worked on Fridays and Sundays at the Lottery Board, where he was involved in the evaluation of lottery tickets, a job he had done since his university days.³⁵ In 1980, the state security services hatched a plan to deprive Krássó of his income and thus make him existentially vulnerable: they wanted to attack his pension payments under the existing legislation³⁶ and to exclude him from the evaluation of lottery tickets.³⁷

However, making a targeted person completely bankrupt was not so easy, as Krássó had other sources of income. It is worth noting that Krássó had not only an innate affinity for finance, but also a background in economics: he wrote his dissertation on the redistribution of money. It is therefore not surprising that he also seems to have put his knowledge to good use as a ‘businessman’, alert to market failures and exploiting the opportunities offered by the second economy.³⁸ Anna Vágner, a typist who also worked for Krássó, remembered him thus: ‘Because you could always do business with him. So he was always open for business. [...] He had a thousand business things that he did.’³⁹ And the ‘business’ included everything from gambling and betting on horse races to selling smuggled jeans and privately produced toys and distributing samizdat.

Some of Krássó’s business transactions can be reconstructed from state security documents. The state security services suspected that Krássó also traded in quartz watches, which he bought at the Keleti Railway Station, among other places,

33 = Szubjektív jelentés [Subjective Report], 28 May 1980, 131, O-19619/5., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

34 = Interview with Ágnes Háty by the author, 21 June 2021. Until the late 1970s, Krássó received these assignments partly from the philosopher Jenő Nagy, who worked at the Institute of Philosophy of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Szubjektív jelentés [Subjective Report], 28 May 1980, 132, O-19619/5.). At that time, Jenő Nagy used the opportunities of his position to provide translation and documentation work to many marginalised intellectuals and dissidents without a livelihood, in an extremely selfless way. (For this see Osizmadia, *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék (1968-1988)*. *Interjúk*, 297–298.)

35 = Értékelő jelentés [Evaluation Report], 9 August 1979, 59, O-19619/5., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

36 = Összefoglaló jelentés [Summary Report], 16 July 1980, 143, O-19619/5., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

37 = Összefoglaló jelentés [Summary Report], 16 July 1980, 144, O-19619/5.

38 = Comp. Vágner Anna-interjú, 174.

39 = Vágner Anna-interjú, 173.

and then, after some minor repairs and maintenance, sold at a profit in the State Commission Stores [Bizományi Áruház] or within his circle of friends.⁴⁰ One state security source was also aware that Krassó had ‘on previous tourist trips to socialist countries, bypassing tax authorities, imported large quantities of jeans’.⁴¹ The smuggled jeans were sold by Krassó in Budapest, at the Second-Hand Market (commonly known as Ecseri market)—and he was caught.⁴² The smuggling and sale of the jeans was a one-time operation, notable for the fact that Krassó tried to make a side profit from his journey abroad. In 1983, Krassó was considering having a yo-yo-like toy, modelled on a toy from the West, made on a small industrial scale and launched on the market—that is, sold on stalls—in the days before New Year’s Eve.⁴³ Krassó hoped to make a big profit from the deal, which he commented would ‘at least earn the opposition some money’.⁴⁴ Krassó also made some cash by selling inherited family possessions. These included the collection of stamps inherited from his father, all of which were of great value. Krassó sold the stamps in line with market trends: when he felt that the price of stamps was low, he stopped selling them, hoping that he would be able to sell them at a better price later, when the price of gold rose.⁴⁵ According to his partner, Ágnes Háý, when he was short of money, he would pawn family jewellery to get cash.⁴⁶

40 == Szubjektív jelentés [Subjective Report], 28 May 1980, 131., O-19619/5.

41 == Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 23 December 1977, 7, O-19619/5., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

42 == Kőszeg, ‘Elkéssett vita Eörsi Istvánnal’, 236.

43 == Interview with Ágnes Háý by the author, 8 July 2021. The state security source also claimed to know that ‘on New Year’s Eve, 600 of the 5,500 Chinese yo-yos [sic!] were sold, which means a revenue of around 10 000 forints compared to the 35 000 forints invested. (Jelentés [Report], 19 January 1984, 27, O-19619/9., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.) A similar statement was made by Róbert Szúts Pálkás, member of the Inconnu Group, who said that the game did not live up to market expectations (A rendszerváltás lelkiismerete: Krassó György). These sources contradict the recollection of Anna Vágner, the typist in charge of the sale, who says that they made good money. Ágnes Háý, who also sold the toy, shares the latter view, saying that the state security source is exaggerating the production costs, since all that was needed to make the toy was a loop stick, tracing paper and a drilling machine (used to roll up the tracing paper) (Interview with Ágnes Háý by the author, 8 July 2021). It is conceivable that after the unsuccessful 1983 campaign, the following year the goods were sold not only before New Year’s Eve, but also at Christmas markets, such as Marczibányi Square, where they were more popular (*Vágner Anna-interjú*, 173–175). The final balance, however, is further affected by the fact that Krassó also paid the workers: he paid them 50–100 forints per hour, stating that ‘in his opinion, you should neither work nor employ anyone below that.’ (Jelentés [Report], 2 December 1983, 397, O-19619/8., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.)

44 == Jelentés [Report], 2 December 1983, 397, O-19619/8.

45 == Szubjektív jelentés [Subjective Report], 28 May 1980, 131, O-19619/5.

46 == Interview with Ágnes Háý by the author, 8 July 2021.

= = Informal practices: kombinowanie, znajomości, expropriation

Typically, running samizdat publishing houses, including raising the necessary capital and resources to publish samizdat texts, involved a whole range of informal practices. As far as the concept of informality is concerned, it would be difficult to provide an exact definition, given the diversity of research directions (mainly sociological and cultural anthropological) and the local characteristics they reveal. It is worth noting, however, that the rise of research focusing on informality was accompanied by a structural change following the economic crisis of the 1970s, which on a global scale disrupted the hegemony of formal institutions and valorised the resources that were not regulated by the state, were locally available and could be exploited for livelihoods, and the practices and networks that provided access to them.

In the communist countries of Eastern Europe, informal forms of activity can be classified first and foremost as social responses to the shortage economy. In the midst of the deepening economic crisis of late communism, the role of the 'second' or 'informal' economy significantly grew,⁴⁷ with some estimates suggesting that in the 1970s and 1980s nearly 75% of Hungarian society was involved in some form of second-economy income making.⁴⁸ As early as in the 1960s, the practice of 'fusi' or 'fusizás' flourished, i.e. informal work or services performed by workers during or after official working hours, avoiding taxation, for 'personal, family or friendly' use, utilising state resources.⁴⁹ So called 'maszekolás', i.e. working without a trade licence, was also a common practice, as was 'trükközés', i.e. circumventing the rules in some way. Economic activity outside the state-organised economic framework was above all a wage supplement, helping households to manage, accumulate and earn a living. Informal practices also required the ability to navigate or to find a way around the conditions of the shortage economy, knowing where resources could be found, where goods should be resold, who should be bribed, etc. In the case of the smuggled jeans, Krassó's activities also fitted in well with the phenomenon of the 'tourism trade' in which large numbers of citizens of socialist countries travelled as tourists to sell their relatively easy-to-obtain goods in countries that did not have them.⁵⁰

The practices used by Krassó played a major role in the running of the samizdat publishing house. Without exception, the publications required raw materials:

47 = = Danyi and Vigvári, 'Túlélés, ellenállás, adaptáció'.

48 = = Valuch, *Magyarország társadalomtörténete*, 290.

49 = = Bezsenyi, 'Enyém, tied, mienk'. For this see also Miklós Haraszti's famous sociography, *Darabbér* which revealed the conditions in the Red Star tractor factory, Budapest. The manuscript reached the West where it was published under the title *A Worker in a Worker's State*. The book was also published by György Krassó in samizdat form in 1985.

50 = = Kochanowski, 'Pioneers of the Free Market Economy?'

above all, large quantities of paper, printing ink, metal staples and glue. State security documents show that, from 1982 onwards, Krassó increasingly turned to his acquaintances for printing materials and reproduction possibilities. The agents meticulously recorded that Krassó asked for stencil paper,⁵¹ black ink,⁵² paper cutting machines,⁵³ staplers and staples for bookbinding,⁵⁴ while he was also interested in duplicating machines and their parts,⁵⁵ and tried to find out about photocopying and printing possibilities.⁵⁶ Certain materials, such as staplers and staples for stapling thick blocks of paper, were only available in the West, and Krassó tried to mobilise his contacts in Vienna. For home reproduction, the ‘publisher’ had to obtain all the materials, but in the case of illegal printing carried out in state-operated printing factories, the printer usually had the materials at his disposal.⁵⁷ These printers often fulfilled orders to private customers at the expense of state companies.⁵⁸

51 = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 30 January 1984, 163, O-19619/9., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary; Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 19 October 1984, 255, O-19619/10., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

52 = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 10 May 1982, 199, O-19619/7., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary; Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 18 October 1984, 242, O-19619/10., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

53 = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 13 September 1984, 175, O-19619/10., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

54 = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 6 February 1984, 43, O-19619/9., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

55 = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 19 April 1983, 188, O-19619/8., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

56 = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 15 February 1984, 57, O-19619/9., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary; Jelentés [Report], 17 August 1984, 118., O-19619/10., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

57 = The failure of a state security operation is a case in point. When state security, through their contact ‘Frederich’, offered a large amount of paper to Krassó, who by then favoured professional printers, in the hope that the operation would lead them to the printing site, Krassó gave the contact person the address of Jenő Nagy, who ran the ABC Independent Publishing House and favoured the stencil technique. The failure of this operation was resignedly acknowledged by the state security. (Jelentés [Report], 17 December 1984, 165, O-19619/11., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary; Jelentés [Report], 18 December 1984, 170–171., O-19619/11., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary. (It is worth noting that, of course, Krassó could not have known that his acquaintance who offered the paper was an agent of state security. And Jenő Nagy had done the printing at home without any conspiring, so such a ‘delivery’ was not unusual for Jenő Nagy.)

58 = The testimony of one of the printers who was caught reveals that the paper and AGFA plates used for Krassó’s publications were also the property of the cooperative, with a purchase value of around 14 thousand forints. (Jelentés [Report], 24 October 1984, 323., O-19619/10., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.)

In keeping with the public morality of the 1980s, Krassó did not consider such practices of expropriation and misappropriation to be a crime. ‘[N]icking from the state is certainly a useful thing’, he once declared, ‘and it can be facilitated by small-scale thefts’.⁵⁹ In fact, for Krassó, the film entitled *The Thief of Baghdad* was, according to Ágnes Háý’s recollection, ‘a metaphor for the natural alliance of those who suffer economic and political injustice’.⁶⁰ Produced by Sándor Korda and released in 1940, the English film was also popular in Hungary.⁶¹ It was screened in cinemas after the Second World War and in the following decades it was often shown as a TV film on Hungarian television. In the film, which evokes the world of the Arabian Nights, the entrapped Prince Ahmed—the victim of political injustice—and Abu, the little thief from Baghdad—the victim of economic injustice—join forces to fight Jafar, the evil, usurping sorcerer who, not least, wants to captivate Princess Jasmine, Ahmed’s love. Krassó probably identified with both characters at the same time, but with different intensities: he saw Prince Ahmed as the victim of political injustice, but his opposition to the elites also made him suspicious of such a figure; while Abu, who came from the lower strata of society, was a clearly positive example for Krassó. In this context, it is of particular importance that the thief in the story became a hero by being himself: Abu saved Ahmed’s life by stealing the last thing he ever stole: the flying carpet. In the tale of the thief who became a hero and the prince who regained the power he deserved, Krassó saw a justification for his own practice: he, as the politically marginalised former 1956er, joined forces with economically marginalised workers, the small-scale industrialists in the private sector, the ordinary citizens who were able to make a living in the second economy, in order to exercise their freedoms.

Alongside the Baghdad thief, another metaphor emerges for the intertwined practices of (illegal) informal practices and civil rights activism: the centaur from Greek mythology. This is how Miklós Haraszti introduced János Kenedi, a member of the Hungarian democratic opposition, to readers in an interview published in the pages of a samizdat publication: ‘In the second economy, you circumvent the state and in the second public sphere, you accumulate the moral capital to do so. In short, you’re a centaur yourself [...] a civil rights champion from the trunk up, and your hooves are for treading the illegal roads.’⁶² It seems that this metaphor can be used without irony in the context of Krassó’s activities. It is these hybrid patterns of identity that have allowed practices of misappropriation, theft and the black market to become intertwined with civil rights activism in the independent publishing activity.

59 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], BRFK 64/3/3 April 1981, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

60 == Ágnes Háý’s email sent to the author, 18 June 2021.

61 == ‘Megérkezett Budapestre Korda Sándor új filmje’, 8.

62 == *Egy főkolompos délelőtti*, 1.

This approach, which presented theft as a legitimate means of undermining the ruling power, can be paralleled with the social practices that characterised certain Eastern European countries during the deepening crises, which were embodied, among other things, in the private use and misappropriation of state properties. In the disastrous Polish economic situation, for example, a sharp distinction was drawn between private property and public property—the latter, because of its abstract and undefined nature, was seen by people as a form of property belonging to no one, or not considered as property at all.⁶³ These social practices, which thus provided access to otherwise inaccessible goods, also played a major role in the samizdat culture, which was constantly struggling with resource shortages. Krassó acknowledged in relation to one of his samizdat publications that it was ‘produced on semi-stolen paper’ and regretted that ‘these resources have now dried up’.⁶⁴

The strategies employed by Krassó are also eerily reminiscent of the social practices that the dysfunctional economic system in Poland had brought to life. Faced with a much more drastic shortage of goods than in Hungary, Poles were also forced to develop practices very similar to those of Hungarian *fusi*, *maszekolás* and *trükközés*. In Poland, the social practices of *kombinowanie* and *znajomości* gained access to otherwise inaccessible resources and goods.⁶⁵ The term *kombinowanie*, which can be translated into English ‘as ‘to scheme’, ‘to finagle’, or simply ‘to sort out’,⁶⁶ meant ‘to scheme up an ingenious, creative, often semi-legal or illegal solution’,⁶⁷ describing ‘the process of manipulating legal, political or cultural rules in order to access a resource’.⁶⁸ *Kombinowanie* in this way allowed access to resources, including food, goods, labour, information or even power. In the case of *znajomości* (acquaintance, connections), which can be described as ‘networks of horizontal exchange relationships among a circle of intimates’, where the individuals ‘use their personalized connections with one another to gain access to goods in shortage and to exchange information’.⁶⁹ In other words, ‘when one uses *znajomości* to ‘arrange things’ (*załatwiać sprawę*), one is using personal connections to manoeuvre around immobile obstacles’.⁷⁰

63 = = Tarkowska and Tarkowski, ‘Amoralny familizm’, 263–281. For a summary of the question in Hungarian, see: Danyi and Vigvári, ‘Túlélés, ellenállás, adaptáció’.

64 = = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 30 January 1984, 163, O-19619/9.

65 = = For a summary of the question in Hungarian, see: Danyi and Vigvári, ‘Túlélés, ellenállás, adaptáció’.

66 = = Makovicky, ‘*Kombinowanie*’, 1.

67 = = Kusiak, *The Cunning of Chaos*, 296–297.

68 = = Materka, ‘*Kombinacja*’, 222.

69 = = Dunn, *Privatizing Poland*, 119.

70 = = Dunn, *Privatizing Poland*, 126.

From this point of view, Krassó himself, who was exploring exploitable state resources and taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the second economy, was also engaging in the practice of kombinowanie, while at the same time trying to influence the world around him through his assertive behaviour and personal relationships. It is easy to trace how, as an agency, Krassó constantly sought to use his connections to get things done, whether it was buying materials, managing printing capacity, typing headlines, smuggling Western publications or other things. Meanwhile, he was aware of the ‘power of money’:⁷¹ he used his solvency to make his affairs prosper.

Several motives could be linked in terms of the identity of the printers who undertook the job of illegal printing, and the motivations for their activities. Printers were state-sector workers who also benefited from the second economy.⁷² This tendency intensified after the introduction of the 1968 new economic mechanism in Hungary, when the printing presses were transformed into profit-making state enterprises, while lower prices were set for book and newspaper publishing, in respect of their cultural and political role. This encouraged printers to concentrate on more profitable work (such as printing corporate brochures, calendars, etc.) thus reducing the printing capacity available for book and newspaper publishing, which caused considerable tension in the system.⁷³ The shift in the interests of the printing industry towards free pricing also opened the way for informal, ‘black’ and ‘illegal’ printing. The printing of samizdat texts in state-operated printing factories can therefore best be seen as an individual strategy of ‘symbiosis with the formal socialist planned economy’, ‘a self-evident daily practice of survival and wage supplementation’.⁷⁴ Krassó’s uncovered contacts stated during police interrogation that they had taken the job for economic gain and that they were not motivated by any political motive. In the case of one of Krassó’s printers, who happened to be a father of three children, who ‘always did this fusi work after working hours’,⁷⁵ it was apparently for supplementary income, a ‘combination of formal and informal resources’ that allowed for the maximisation of income, thus helping to accumulate household savings.⁷⁶ However, it is also true that printers may sometimes have been motivated by political convictions in undertaking such work. For example, another printer in Krassó’s sights, who was ‘not known for his left-wing leanings’, enthusiastically accepted a request to reproduce illegal materials and expressed ‘how happy he was that there was written opposition [sic!] in Hungary’.⁷⁷

71 == Interview with Ágnes Háby by the author, 21 June 2021.

72 == Andorka, ‘A magyar társadalom rétegződése és mobilitása az 1930-as évektől napjainkig’, 46–63.

73 == Takács, ‘A kultúra reformja – a reform kultúrája’.

74 == Danyi and Vigvári, ‘Túlélés, ellenállás, adaptáció’, 15.

75 == Jelentés [Report], 24 October 1984, 324, O-19619/10.

76 == Danyi and Vigvári, ‘Túlélés, ellenállás, adaptáció’, 15.

76 == Jelentés [Report], 20 March 1985, 67, O-19619/12., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

= = = Money as a game: circumventing the system

Looking through the bewilderingly diverse forms of Krassó's business activity, one would be forgiven for assuming that Krassó's business transactions and his relationship with money were driven by profit. But this relationship was much more complex than that. For example, Krassó's passion for gambling, which took the form of betting on horse races and buying lottery tickets, significantly nuances the picture, as he attached very specific meanings to money.

In the 1980s, with his 'shaggy grey hair and striped t-shirt', Krassó was part of the crowd at horse races.⁷⁸ In addition, Krassó had a close relationship with a jockey, István Papp, who often gave him advice on which horses to bet on at the races. Since the rules of the Horse Sport Company prohibited all employees from placing bets, the drivers, jockeys and other insiders often participated in the gambling through outside operators. This was probably the basis of the relationship between Krassó and István Papp. In January 1984, Krassó noted that he had 'big plans for him [the jockey] for the spring and summer' and 'hopes that they will be able to cooperate better than last year, which was a very loss-making year.'⁷⁹ The manipulation of betting or gambling conditions through personal contacts—a practice, incidentally, widely used throughout the history of horse racing under socialism—mirrored the practices of kombinowanie and znajomości discussed earlier.⁸⁰

It is important to note that the social practices of gambling, both in terms of social reality under communism and the monetary function of money, have become vehicles of subversive meanings. After 1945, horse racing was a marginalised social practice deprived of state subsidy, as the socialist system, despite its nationalisation, could not cope with the aristocratic past and self-sustaining nature of horse racing. It is also true that, after the 1956 uprising, the various social practices of gambling were considerably strengthened, since 'gambling allows one to expect something even in the most unpromising situation'.⁸¹ It is no coincidence that a sociographical book published in 1972 noted the following about the public attending horse races: 'These five thousand people in Budapest are professional miracle makers. Every minute, they grab the elusive by the cauldron and shakes it until it drops a hundred forints.'⁸² It could be said that the horse-racing public's sense

78 = = Ungvári, 'Talpra magyarok, hí a hazátok', 13.

79 = = Jelentés [Report], 20 February 1984, 63, O-19619/9., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

80 = = Tamás Ungvári also claimed to know that 'when his tip came in, [Krassó] took the money out in a brown paper bag and gave it to his opposition colleagues after careful counting', to finance the purchase of paper for publications (Ungvári, 'Talpra magyarok, hí a hazátok', 13).

81 = = Hammer, ...*nem kellett élt vasalni*, 48.

82 = = Csurka and Rákossy, *Így, ahogy vagytok!*, 5–6.

of reality was detached from objective reality, leaving behind the Freudian sense of the 'reality principle', and in essence creating the phenomenon of fantasising.⁸³ This social phantasy can be understood as 'a way of taming a hostile environment',⁸⁴ or in other words, as a 'defence against painful realities'.⁸⁵

In parallel to this social practice of 'miracle-making',⁸⁶ for Krassó, horse racing and lottery were a symbolic rewriting or manipulation of the post-1956 socio-political reality, which could be interpreted as an imaginary transformation of the essentially hostile, oppressive and bleak communist environment. It is important to note that in the context of horse racing, the imaginary-symbolic meanings of money came to the fore:⁸⁷ in the sense of 'miracle-making', money itself was fictionalised, its value changing from race to race in the light of the losses and calculable gains, sometimes taking on grandiose, sometimes almost intangible dimensions. Krassó referred to these practices of betting and 'miracle-making' as 'taking revenge on money' and 'humiliating money by making it into a game'.⁸⁸ In the process of playing with the existence of resources, where it oscillated between the extremes of reclassifying money as a plaything (i.e. ignoring it as a valid monetary instrument) and its potential multiplication as a means of payment,⁸⁹ 'the intermediary reality if this sort of "survived world"' or, to another way, a 'mental reality' came into being, creating 'fragile and fantastical shapes of the world'.⁹⁰ This 'mental reality' could function as 'a sense of contact with the outside world'.⁹¹

83 == Here I follow Tomasz Rakowski's train of thought based on Agata Bielik-Robson's and Hanna Segal's works, among other texts. This interpretation is included in Rakowski's cultural anthropological analysis on the practices of managing economic and social crisis, occurring during the post-socialist transition in Poland (Rakowski, *Hunters, Gatherers*, 163–172. See also Bielik-Robson, *Duch powierzczeni*, 154–157).

84 == Rakowski, *Hunters, Gatherers*, 170.

85 == Segal, *Marzenia senne*, 32. (Quoted in Rakowski, *Hunters, Gatherers*, 169.)

86 == This practice of 'miracle-making' was 'immortalized' in Róbert Koltai's 1993 film *Sose halunk meg* [We never Die].

87 == Comp. Hites, 'Gazdaság, pénz, piac', 481–482.

88 == Interview with Ágnes Háby by the author, 6 July 2021.

89 == Comp. 'That part of the Hungarian currency which has once entered the environment of a horse-race arena, as long as it circulates in this environment, is not simply a change, a pecunia, a currency, but a cell that is eternally dividing, a self-breeding kelp-animal, which is incessantly hovering between life and death, ready to multiply and disappear at any moment.' (Osurka and Rákosy, *Így, ahogy vagytok!*, 57–58).

90 == Bielik-Robson, *Duch powierzczeni*, 152–153. (Rakowski, *Hunters, Gatherers*, 170–171).

91 == For this social practice, see: Rakowski, *Hunters, Gatherers*, 163–172. As Rakowski writes: 'Our precise aim is not to separate phantasy from reality. The mechanisms of phantasy, defense, and projection are, in this case, far more problematic. They serve rather to engender a sense of »contact with reality«, or, in general, a sense of contact with the outside world.' (Rakowski, *Hunters, Gatherers*, 170.)

However, Krassó treated both horse racing and lottery as separate systems, for which he devised winning strategies. In the case of lottery, Krassó's theory was that there are popular numbers that the majority of lottery players prefer to play, and there are less popular numbers. Since the prize was equally distributed among the lucky tippers, the amount of money that could be won for the popular numbers was much smaller than for the unpopular numbers.⁹² So Krassó tried to play the unpopular numbers using statistical data.⁹³ As for horse racing, Krassó's theory was based on his own experience, but he also drew inspiration from István Csurka and Gergely Rákósy's book *Így, ahogy vagytok!* [Just as you are!], which paints a sociographic picture of horse racing after 1945.⁹⁴ Krassó's theory was based on the fact that horse racing itself was a fraud: jockeys who participated in the betting through their intermediaries and who talked to each other from time to time would bring out the horse that the bettors could not expect as the winner. Krassó thus sought to place bets by following the thinking of the jockeys, or rather by predicting it.⁹⁵ What is remarkable about these strategies is not their degree of efficiency (Krassó lost a lot in horse races),⁹⁶ but the common feature that they essentially sought to identify and exploit the weaknesses of the system. For Krassó, gambling thus took on the connotations of both an intellectual game and a symbolic way of exploiting and circumventing the system.

To clarify Krassó's relationship with money, it is also important to add that he regularly lent various sums to his friends, acquaintances and business partners. Krassó kept regular accounts of these, ensuring that the amount lent was repaid. However, in some cases he was also able to forget the 'recovery' of debts. One of the notorious borrowers was the economist Tamás Lipták, who was known 'to owe half the world', including Krassó. In order to relieve the tension of unpaid debts, Krassó came up with an imaginary Christmas donation to Lipták, so that the next time he borrowed money, he would actually receive the money Krassó had imagined giving him. With this theoretical transaction, Krassó transformed the business of lending into a gesture of friendly gift-giving, or, to put it another

92 == This logic also applied to horse racing: 'If the favourite wins: the amount is divided into many shares, if the outsider wins: less, and the dividend is bigger'. (Csurka and Rákósy, *Így, ahogy vagytok!*, 17.)

93 == Interview with Ágnes Háy by the author, 8 July 2021.

94 == Csurka and Rákósy, *Így, ahogy vagytok!*. Compare: 'the horse race was already gutted, so there was not much to win, because everything was basically cheated. I had the sense to see that everything was being cheated all the time. I didn't go into the little details of how and why it was worth it for who and why it wasn't worth it, when to hold back, why to hold back the horse, but you could know and you could see it' (Hadas, 'Férfitempó', 14.).

95 == Interview with Ágnes Háy by the author, 8 July 2021.

96 == Interview with Ágnes Háy by the author, 8 July 2021.

way, he playfully changed the valid frame of reference of money, debt and loan without the knowledge of the other party.

The above statements can also be paralleled with the operation of the samizdat publishing house set up and run by Krassó, which was simultaneously integrated into the informal economic forms of activity and took on the meanings of ‘playing with the system’ and ‘circumventing the system’. Samizdat publishing, which was closely linked to Krassó’s identity as a 1956er, has already been discussed earlier, but this time it is worth focusing on the economic aspects. It is not an exaggeration to say that, after the sale of Krassó’s publications, the costs invested were in principle recouped and could even have resulted in higher profits—but the risks were considerable, as the balance sheet could have been heavily affected by printing press busts, confiscations and fines imposed by the authorities. To better understand the operation of the Hungarian October Publishing House, it is worth taking a closer look at the nature and pricing of its publications.

== Pricing

The pricing of samizdat publications was a (context-)sensitive and not at all self-evident operation. Generally speaking, it is true that from the moment a price tag was attached to a samizdat text, production costs made it much more expensive than the products of state publishing, which received a substantial state subsidy. This was true even if only the typists (in the typewriter era of samizdat texts) and the printers (after the samizdat publishing houses were established) were paid for their work, and in neither case was there a royalty for intellectual work. Customers were generally sensitive to the price of the materials, and this was something that the gradually emerging independent publishers had to take into account.⁹⁷ The price of a publication was the subject of a series of debates, and several models of pricing emerged. The price of some of the publications sold in the ‘Rajk boutique’, including the magazine *Beszélő*, was set at production-cost price,⁹⁸ i.e. reflecting the average price ‘one page/one forint’.⁹⁹

97 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], BRFK-56-87/4/30 April 1982, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary. Published in Krahulcsán, ‘A hazai samizdat “hóskora”’, 323.

98 == In the case of the production cost price, it was common practice to increase the price of shorter publications by a few forints, so that the resulting profit could reduce the price of larger publications (Sajtórendészeti vétség ügyében folytatott eljárás dokumentumai [Documents Relating to the Procedure for a Press Offence], 14 December 1982–18 April 1988, 218, A-1361, Background materials for state security work, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary).

99 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], BRFK-56-87/4/30 April 1982. Published in Krahulcsán, ‘A hazai samizdat “hóskora”’, 323.

The pricing of the AB Independent Publishing House, founded by Gábor Demszky in 1981, was a shift from production-cost pricing, as the price of publications included a profit margin of about 20% in addition to production costs. The reason for this was, above all, that Demszky did not want to slow down the pace of publication by waiting until all the copies of a previous publication had been sold out, thus creating the financial resources for the next publication. The profit margin was also justified by the increase in production costs, caused, firstly, by rising inflation and price increases, and, secondly, by the attention paid to samizdat publications by state security and the related political danger (the higher risk taken by printers also pushed up prices). The economic risk of house searches and confiscations also justified the creation of reserves. Of course, these factors also had a major impact on the operations of the other samizdat publishers that were set up in the 1980s.

Jenő Nagy, the founder of ABC Independent Publishing and the publisher of the samizdat journal *Demokrata*, believed in the principle that samizdat publications were in short supply, so the price could be named freely.¹⁰⁰ This meant that the publishers could ask for their publications essentially as much as they were not ashamed to, or as much as people were prepared to pay for them. The profit orientation was justified by the service of the ‘sacred ideal of press freedom’ and the fact that the profits could be reinvested in the publication of new publications.¹⁰¹ It should also be remembered that Jenő Nagy and his wife, Mária Véték, ran the publishing house full-time, with no other regular source of income.¹⁰² The combination of ‘serving a sacred ideal’ and possible ‘profit’ can be paralleled with the term of the Polish historian Mateusz Fałkowski, who described the production and distribution of unofficial materials in Poland as a ‘patriotic business’, since it was both a way of making a living and a way of opposing the existing system.¹⁰³

Krassó, who was ‘not a hypocrite’ when it came to finance, fully agreed with these principles. He wanted to run a profitable publishing house, so his publications were not sold at production-cost, but included a profit margin. At the same time, the economic model operated by Krassó was a new one. Although the translators and authors did not usually receive a remuneration (as in the case of other samizdat enterprises), Krassó not only paid the printers but also gave the distributors a commission of around 10-20%, thus giving them a vested financial interest, albeit modest, in the distribution of the publications—unlike, for example,

100 = Interview with Jenő Nagy by the author, 16 August 2021.

101 = Csizmadia, *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék (1968-1988)*. *Interjúk*, 309.

102 = Interview with Jenő Nagy by the author, 16 August 2021.

103 = Fałkowski, *Biznes patriotyczny*.

the system of the *Beszélő* journal or the *Hírmondó*, which did not pay a commission for distribution.¹⁰⁴

The need to be profitable has pushed the focus on high-interest, best-selling publications. A state security report noted that ‘György Krassó is almost constantly thinking about what else could be published (reproduced) that would sell well, for two reasons. Partly for his own profit, and partly to cover other important political samizdat publications.’¹⁰⁵ The sale of commodities which, due to their high demand, were sure to make a profit, and which above all had an ‘economic’ or ‘commercial’ value, thus helped to promote works for which ‘political value’ was the primary consideration. The application of the dual value system greatly increased Krassó’s scope for publishing.

The two values rarely coexisted, but in Orwell’s emblematic work, for example, the ‘commercial’ and ‘political’ aspects were closely intertwined. Krassó, who was fond of pointing out the political significance of Orwell’s 1984,¹⁰⁶ according to some sources, ‘expected to get about 200 thousand forints net from the sale of 1984’ and ‘hope[d] to solve his financial problems’.¹⁰⁷ Krassó wanted to print one thousand copies of Orwell’s work for 50 thousand forints,¹⁰⁸ and would have probably asked around 250-300 forints per copy.¹⁰⁹ (For comparison: the price of a best-selling Western in Hungarian at the time was between 50-90 forints).¹¹⁰ In this case, he would have been able to sell the publication at a very high profit margin, which—not counting the additional costs over and above printing—could have been as high as 70-75%.

104 == Compare with the words of Béla Gondos (Gulyás, ‘Szamizdatos évek I’, 119); Ágnes Háy recalled that according to Krassó’s system, after ten copies, the eleventh was free (Interview with Ágnes Háy by the author, 21 June 2021). This system was also adopted by Jenő Nagy, the founder of ABC Independent Publishing, who distributed his periodical *Vakond* [Mole] along similar principles: ‘whoever buys more than 5 copies, gets a 20% discount or an honorary copy’ (*Vakond*, 2).

105 == Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 14 December 1983, 420, O-19619/8., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

106 == Comp. e.g. Jelentés [Report], 16 April 1985, 140, O-19619/12., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

107 == Kombinációs terv [Combination Plan], 29 January 1985, 254, O-19619/11., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

108 == Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 12 December 1984, 159, O-19619/11., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

109 == Krassó charged 300 forints for a typed, Hungarian-language copy of Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. (Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 5 October 1984, 198, O-19619/10., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.)

110 == The 1984 Hungarian edition of Robert Merle’s historical novel *En nos vertes années* cost 85 forints, Hermann Hesse’s *The Glass Bead Game* 71 forints, and Agatha Christie’s *The Pale Horse* cost 48 forints.

A good example of the ‘commercial’ aspect of publishing is the volume of the French poet François Villon’s ballads containing adaptations by the Hungarian poet, György Faludy, which was very popular reading and had been legally published several times before 1945. Krassó tried to sell the book of poems through private distribution chains and antiquarian bookshops ‘between a lower limit of 120 forints and an unspecified upper limit’.¹¹¹ The latter could reach 300 forints.¹¹² According to information from a secret agent under the code-name ‘Költő’ [Poet], the production cost of these Villon volumes was around 30 forints, but Krassó sold them for 100. So, the deal was ‘quite profitable’, according to a state security source,¹¹³ as the profit margin could be as high as 60%. ‘Költő’, i.e. writer Lajos Mózes, reported that on the last Sunday before Christmas in 1983, for example, Krassó sold 30 of them, and ‘he could have sold more, but that was all he had’.¹¹⁴

From 1983 onwards, Krassó published a number of documents, memoirs and analyses relating to the 1956 uprising, which were essentially important from a ‘political’ point of view.¹¹⁵ These included reconstructions of the newspapers published in the days of the 1956 uprising: the issues of *Népszabadság* and the *Irodalmi Újság* from 2 November 1956. This issue of *Népszabadság* was extremely important because it contained a speech by János Kádár, Minister of State in the

111 == Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 14 December 1983, 420, O-19619/8.

112 == R-ő, ‘Faludy György bűne’, 78–79.

113 == Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 30 January 1984, 167, O-19619/9.

114 == Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 30 January 1984, 166, O-19619/9. Although Krassó believed that ‘up to 100,000 copies of Faludy’s Villon could be sold, the interest in it is so great’ (Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 30 January 1984, 166, O-19619/9.), by the summer of 1984 distribution had begun to falter, so Krassó decided to ‘no longer sell them for 100 forints, but for as little as 80’ (Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 18 June 1984, 347, O-19619/9.).

115 == The Hungarian October published the following publications related to the 1956 revolution: *A magyar forradalom hangja* [cassette tape]. Budapest: ‘M.O.’, 1982–1985; *A forradalmi város (Budapest, 1956. X. 23.–XI. 3. Hús amatőrfénykép.* [no data available]; *A harcoló város (Budapest, 1956. X. 26.–XI. 11. Hús amatőrfénykép.* [no data available]; *A lerombolt város (Budapest, 1956. XI. 4-e után. Hús amatőrfénykép.* [no data available]; *Irodalmi Újság. 1956. november 2. Emléknymomat.* ‘M.O.’; *Népszabadság. 1956. november 2. Emléknymomat.* Budapest: ‘M.O.’; *Mi történt 1956-ban? Az ENSZ Különbizottságának jelentése. (A magyar felkelés rövid története).* Budapest, 1983; Bibó István. *A magyar forradalomról.* Budapest: ‘M.O.’, 1984; Woroszylski, Wiktor. *Magyarországi napló* [translated by Grácia Kerényi]. Budapest: ‘M.O.’, 1984; Szász Béla. *Minden kényszer nélkül. Egy műper kórtörténete I–II.* Budapest: ‘M.O.’, 1984; Pongrácz Gergely. *Corvin-köz—1956.* Budapest: ‘Magyar Október’ Szabadsajtó.

second Imre Nagy government, which called the events of October 1956 a ‘glorious uprising’ and subsequently exposed the ‘betrayal’ of its author. The journal of the Writers’ Union, *Irodalmi Újság*, owed its significance to, among other things, the fact that it published Gyula Illyés’ poem *One Sentence on Tyranny*, written in 1950, which became an emblematic text of the Hungarian uprising (and was no longer allowed to appear in the official press). Also, it was the last issue of *Irodalmi Újság* to be published in Hungary before the journal was forced into exile. In the spring of 1984, Krassó completed a reconstruction of the issue of *Irodalmi Újság*, which, as he told a state security informant, ‘took him a year to complete because he had to compile it from several incomplete copies.’¹¹⁶ Krassó worked for a similar period—almost a year¹¹⁷—on a samizdat publication entitled *On the Hungarian Revolution*, which mainly consisted of the 1957–1958 writings by István Bibó, a Hungarian political thinker who was imprisoned after 1956 and marginalised after his release in 1963. Krassó sold copies of Bibó’s publication for 60–80 forints,¹¹⁸ and copies of *Irodalmi Újság* for 20 forints.¹¹⁹ In these cases, the profit margin was also much lower, and the compilation of the publications required much more investment (as in the case of the Villon volume, for example).

Analysing the data obtained on Krassó’s business plans, Hungarian state security concluded that Krassó ‘saw a good business opportunity and source of income in samizdat’.¹²⁰ Given that state security sought to criminalise Krassó’s activities and was also looking for evidence to prosecute him for economic crimes, it is worth treating the sources with some distance. There were several contradictions to the mere profitmaking from samizdat. Firstly, the profit margins for many of Krassó’s other publications were much smaller: their publication was motivated more by a mission of political conviction and the discovery of historical truth than by profit. Secondly, Krassó also made a special effort to make his publications as cheap as possible ‘despite the difficult conditions of samizdat production’.¹²¹ Thirdly, Krassó was extremely meticulous in his business practices,

116 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/III-83-87/7/4 May 1984, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary. See also Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 28 April 1984, 249, O-19619/9., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

117 == Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 29 March 1984, 200, O-19619/9., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

118 == Jelentés [Report], 17 May 1984, 284, O-19619/9., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary; Jelentés [Report], 12 June 1984, 325, O-19619/9. ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

119 == Jelentés [Report], 19 April 1984, 210, O-19619/9., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

120 == Értékelő jelentés [Evaluation Report], 17 June 1985, 238, O-19619/12., ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

121 == ‘Bemutakozik az M.O.’, 38.

keeping regular accounts and trying to pay his staff fairly, which reduced his own profits.¹²² Fourthly, as mentioned earlier, there was the risk of being caught and of confiscation, which made the samizdat publishing extremely risky from a business point of view. All in all, the business model of Krassó's samizdat publishing house was a curious mix of socially engaged non-profit and profit-oriented activities that allowed sustainability.

It is also clear that the samizdat publishers of the 1980s operated different business models and economic strategies. Further research may be motivated by the issue of the extent to which these differences coincided, or, to put it another way, shaped or deepened the political-ideological fault lines within the broadly defined democratic opposition.¹²³ It is enough to point out here that in the historical memory of the period, Krassó often appears as the 'internal opposition' of the democratic opposition and thus as a radical, dissident figure on the periphery of the democratic opposition, while the narrative of a circle of former samizdat activist operates the division into a plebeian/elite opposition.¹²⁴ It is perhaps not an exaggeration to argue that an economic perspective on the activities of the democratic opposition can make a major contribution to a more complex understanding of the oppositional culture and its internal relations of the period.

== Contexts of samizdat publishing

In the above article, I have tried to show, firstly, how, in the context of György Krassó's samizdat publishing, independent publishing took on meanings in terms of the identities of the actors involved in the production and distribution of the publications, and, secondly, the practices surrounding samizdat publishing. As we have seen, in Krassó's case, samizdat publishing can be interpreted as a personal revenge, in other words, as a manifestation of a sense of justice triggered by the post-1956 repression. This was closely linked to the profile of Krassó's publishing house, which aimed to revive the memory of the revolution as a social memory, and so samizdat publishing was in a sense a utopian social vision. It is also true that symbiosis with the second economy, in which the Hungarian October Publishing House drew resources from the state sector, took on the not-so-innocent connotations of both creative coexistence with the system and 'exploiting and circumventing the system', while for its participants, as we saw in the case of betting on horse races, it was able to transform the grey reality of state socialism in an imaginary sense.

122 == 'He paid people well, so he wasn't that stingy,' recalled Anna Vágner (*Vágner Anna-interjú*, 174).

123 == For this see Csizmadia, *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék (1968–1988). Monográfia*.

124 == A striking example of this is the documentary film by János Gulyás, for the script of which see Gulyás, 'Szamizdatos évek I.:' Gulyás, 'Szamizdatos évek II.:'

The hybrid forms of identity that underpin the practices of both ‘circumventing and opposing the system’ and the metaphors that express them—the ‘centaur’ or the ‘Thief of Baghdad’—can be understood not so much as moral categories, but as effective forms of social resistance, creative adaptations to the socialist system, and effective advocacy of civil rights. It is worth adding that the symbiosis with the second economy, the income opportunities and hybrid forms of identity can be generalised to a certain extent, as they have also characterised other samizdat initiatives. Finally, Krassó’s bottom-up business model, with its profit orientation, which sought to satisfy real demand, also represented a shift towards a market economy. György Krassó’s independent publishing activity can thus be understood not only as a story of social resistance under state socialism, but also as a post-history of the 1956 revolution and a pre-history of the market economy and democratic transformation—although Krassó, as a socially sensitive, anti-elitist and radical intellectual, would certainly have some critical words to say about these developments leading up to today.

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Separate worlds. Mitrovica, Kosovo.

Fortepan / Szigetváry Zsolt

==== *Attila Novák* =====

/// The single majority

The Salom Peace Group or Jewish opposition voice at the end of the Kádár regime in Hungary

== Introduction

The Kádár era, which lasted from the suppression of the 1956 Hungarian uprising until the regime change of the late 1980s, was relatively moderate among the communist/socialist regimes of Central and Eastern Europe. Still, various degrees of repression were experienced by religions and minorities in Hungary, including Jews. This also means that the regime's policy towards religious minorities, while repressive, was nowhere near as oppressive as that of the majority of the Eastern Bloc. Nor did it engage in an anti-Zionist campaign after 1967, and the Kádár-regime did not allow for social unrest on such a matter.

Our study examines the circumstances of the emergence of Salom, a Jewish group that emerged within the decaying regime of the late Kádár era (then considered illegal), and analyses the debates that took place within the democratic opposition (considered one of the most important opposition groups of the late Kádár era) about the nature of the organisation.

In this paper, we shed light on the process by which, almost out of nowhere, an independent voice of opposition (from the dissident opposition) emerged, which sought to embrace Jewish identity while representing democratic values: Jewishness and democracy (or longing for a more democratic society) went hand in hand in this group.

Among the historical sources, the main emphasis is on archival sources that have not yet been researched. The material held in the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security relating to György Gadó¹ (the 'founding father' of Salom) and György Krassó (a leading personality of the opposition) are included in

¹ = György Gadó (1930–), journalist, translator, politician. After the regime change he became a member of the Alliance of Free Democrats (Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége, SZDSZ) in the first freely elected parliament, then he left the party.

the daily operative reports of the Ministry of Interior, and Krassó has separate files. In the Hungarian National Archives (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár), the materials relating to Salom can be found among the materials of the State Office for Church Affairs (Állami Egyházügyi Hivatal, ÁEH), which was a state organisation that supervised the Hungarian churches. The OSA Archives and the National Széchenyi Library (Országos Széchenyi Könyvtár) have the group's manifestos, statements and debates in the samizdat.

In the early 1980s, the well-established Kádár regime went into agony, which lasted for years, with temporary regressions. Taboos that had been taken for granted (such as the Socialist nature of the Hungarian state and the future of society) were being questioned (mainly by members of the opposition), and the emerging dissident 'media' (the illegal press or samizdat) gave an outlet for some social, religious and ethnic communities (or minorities), as well as to those who were members of the mainstream churches (loyal to, and controlled by, the party state), but had different, autonomous voices.²

Manifestations of Jewish identity in Hungary up to that point had been channelled exclusively through the official Jewish representation, initiated by the party-state in 1950, a Jewish umbrella organisation called National Representation of Hungarian Israelites (Magyar Izraeliták Országos Képviselete, MIOK). It was the Hungarian communist state that forced this unity, not Jewish religious channels. The communists simply wanted, when dealing and negotiating with the Jewry, to deal with one organisation only. The Jewry represented by the MIOK was acceptable only within the walls of synagogues: the suppression of over-expansion was not only the responsibility of the State, but also of its leadership, which included a large number of State Security agents. Any secular Jewish sense of identity (including Zionism) that went beyond the official religious-synagogue identity was not tolerated by the state, which nipped any initiative in this direction in the bud. The Hungarian state, careful to ensure that Jewish community leaders could only be appointed on the basis of prior approval, managed this situation in its own interests. The number of Jews in Hungary at this time was estimated at 100,000-150,000, but since 1949 it had not been possible to ask about religious affiliation in the census, so this figure is not entirely accurate. A much smaller proportion of this Jewish population attended synagogue and belonged—to some extent—to the official Jewish community, and in the 1970s there was even a low point, when, for example, very few children enrolled in the Jewish community's grammar school or married in a traditional Jewish ceremony.

² = In addition to one of the most important open letters of SALOM, Otilia Solt's article on the 'Gipsy question' was published in the same issue of *AB Hírmondó* in May 1984, and even immediately after SALOM's Letter. *AB Hírmondó* (1984), 362-0-2/6. Collection of Philipp, OSA. Budapest, Hungary.

= = The emergence of Salom

Although the situation has improved over the years, the basic structure has remained the same. This state of affairs in the 1980s is well illustrated by the fact that, on 16 September 1984, when the MIOK held its plenary session, its president Imre Héber³—who painted a positive picture of the situation of the Jewry—remarked (to be highlighted on the front page of the MIOK newspaper *Új Élet*) that the main task of the organisation *was to serve the religious needs of the Hungarian Jewry*.⁴

It was in this situation that the open letter of the Salom group appeared in the Hungarian ‘second public sphere’ on 25 December 1983.⁵ This appeal ran through the channels of samizdat in the first half of 1984 and announced and also symbolised a sharp break with the old policy of the official Jewish representation, the MIOK. The appeal, signed by an ‘independent peace fighting group of Hungarian Jews’, was on several levels in opposition to the controlled and official opinion of the Hungarian Jewry, which forced into an official and sectarian existence.⁶ The text begins by suggesting that there was a great ambition to ‘stir the still water of Hungarian Jewish public opinion’. It argued that the relationship of the Jewry with the Soviet Union, progress, Hungarian society and history, Jewish tradition and anti-Semitism had to be reconsidered. At the same time, the paper raised the question of the Hungarian Jewry across the borders and its relation with Israel. The text—which was officially addressed to the MIOK Presidency and the editorial office of its official newspaper *Új Élet*—was inspired by the fact that the 15 December 1983 issue of the newspaper announced the formation of the Inter-church Committee of the National Peace Council, with Chief Rabbi László Salgó elected as vice-president and Imre Héber, the president of the MIOK, as president.⁷ This was in fact an inter-church peace committee, with the president of the National Rabbinical Council (Országos Rabbitanács) as Vice-Chairman (since its meeting on 7 December) and the presidents of the MIOK and the Budapest Israelite Community (Budapesti Izraelita Hitközség, ВИИ) as its board members. Tibor Bartha, a bishop of the Reformed church, was appointed as chairman of the committee, and Zoltán Aranyosi, a synod councillor, was appointed secretary general. They issued a joint declaration, which mixed elements of the ‘Christian’ desire for peace with current politics reflecting Soviet interests, stated that ‘We protest with

3 = Imre Héber (1923–2008), Jewish community leader, President of MIOK from 1977 to 1985.

4 = ‘A magyar zsidóság vallási igényeinek az ellátása a legfőbb feladatunk’

5 = The ‘second (i.e. the illegal literary) public sphere’ is a term which is used for describing the independent sphere of the Socialist state’s cultural-political system.

6 = A SALOM nyílt levele. [Open letter of SALOM], 25 December 1983. ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-19619/9, ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

7 = ‘Megalakult az Országos Béketanács egyházközi békebizottsága’.

all our strength against the world domination efforts led by the United States government.’ In its clear anti-American and anti-Western rhetoric, the Peace Declaration condemned the US-motivated arms race, which ‘is driving the governments of the Western European peoples, traditionally under Christian influence, to further accumulate nuclear weapons’. They also objected to the ‘imperialist forces’ trying to ‘deceive’ people of faith by ‘misleading’ them into believing that they were defending the faith against ‘a threat to the socialist social order.’ They also condemned the deployment of first-strike nuclear weapons in Western Europe.

The author of the Salom Declaration was justifiably outraged by the unilateral anti-American statement signed by also Jewish representatives and was sympathetic to the duplicity of the Declaration, which accused the United States exclusively of arms trafficking and the financial gain it generated. He also rightly pointed out that the Soviet Union was supplying arms to the Third World.⁸ Nor did the Salom writer fail to mention that the Arab arms against Israel came mainly from Soviet sources.

The open letter went on to raise fundamental objections against the leaders of the MIOK that were on the minds of many Hungarian Jews: where were they in 1967 and 1973 when Israel was attacked? Why did they not point out how the leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) were colluding with far-right and far-left groups in Western Europe? Why were the organisers of the attack on Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics (1972) not condemned in similarly specific terms? An even stronger criticism was the historical parallel that Salom drew by equating Samu Stern (the leader of the Jewish Council after the March 1944 German occupation of Hungary) and the Jewish Council with the leaders of the MIOK, indirectly saying that the leaders of the MIOK are (as much) collaborators with a totalitarian power as the Sterns were in 1944. With pathos, Salom’s text called for Jewish solidarity on behalf of the Warsaw Ghetto fighters and the Maccabees, and at the very end reverted to a more emotionally balanced tone: ‘This lesson, this teaching, is by no means contrary to the demands of the peace movement. If we do not want to be pawns in the games of foreign powers,

8 = = ‘Between 1950 and 1975, the Third World countries received a total of 14.2 billion dollars worth of Soviet military equipment, which was 730 million, or 5.5 percent, more than the value of US arms shipments in the same period. (Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 6 April 1977). Between 1973 and 1979, the developing countries -the value of Soviet military supplies to the developing countries (including supplies from other Warsaw Pact countries) amounted to \$20.7 billion (to be exact) 72.6 percent of all (?) was supplied to the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. (Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 13-14 September 1980). And as far as revenues are concerned, between 1972 and 1982 the Soviet Union received about twice as much revenue from military equipment supplied to developing countries as the United States. (Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 4 August 1982).’. See: A SALOM nyílt levele [Open letter of SALOM], 25 December 1983. ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-19619/9, ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

we must, as a small nation, distance ourselves from all the aspirations of great powers. And this applies just as much to the small Hungarian people as it does to the small Jewish people, and therefore applies equally to the Hungarian Jewry. The major conflict of our time demands independent political power and civil courage from our social leaders. And if the leaders of the MIOK do not have the courage to express solidarity with Israel and the millions of Soviet and American Jews, they should at least have the courage to refrain from unilateral and prejudicial declarations.’

Salom’s open letter, which clearly signalled the loosening of the political constrictions of the Kádár era (many such pro-Soviet statements had been made by Jewish community leaders in the past, but these had not provoked any reaction from the public), fundamentally changed Hungarian Jewish reality, as the text clearly rejected the portrayal of Judaism as a mere religious group, alongside a strong claim to autonomy, pledged solidarity with the Jewish state.

One of the paradoxes of this period was that while this completely new and innovative oppositional declaration was being drafted, and while State Security continued to harass the opposition, the Political Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt, MSZMP) adopted a resolution on Hungarian-Israeli relations on 20 December 1983, which included several innovations.⁹ Although the intention to establish links was explained by the desire to improve the deteriorating Hungarian economic situation (the level of debt had become enormous), compromises were made. As a sign of the slow thaw, individuals were allowed to travel to Israel (as tourists), but for Israelis group travel was compulsory. However, the last point of the resolution was precisely to warn the press not to change its tone on Israel and to avoid reporting on Hungarian-Israeli relations. As the Soviets had not yet agreed to establish (diplomatic) relations with Israel, the official Hungarian leadership was very careful not to show signs of rapprochement to the wider public.

György Gadó, who is associated with Salom—and who actually came into contact with the democratic opposition through György Krassó¹⁰—admitted early on that he too was behind the initiative. A Holocaust survivor, the journalist and translator became a communist after the war, and after the 1956 uprising he accepted the Kádár regime, so he was slow to become an oppositionist.¹¹

9 = = See Kovács, *A Kádár-rendszer és a zsidók*, 226–230.

10 = = György Krassó (1932–1991) was one of the most important figures of the Hungarian opposition movements of the Socialist period. He took part in the 1956 revolution and freedom struggle, for which he was sentenced to 10 years in prison in 1957. He was released on amnesty in 1963. During the Kádár era, he was active in a wide range of political opposition activities, for which he was constantly harassed by the police, arrested several times and not allowed to travel abroad until 1985.

11 = = ‘A Gadó’.

He left the MSZMP after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and was fired from his job in 1970 after a few years at the Central Statistical Office (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, KSH). He was temporarily employed on a part-time basis at the Institute of Popular Education, but that too changed. He was outraged by Hungary's press coverage of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. 'Long live Israel! I threw leaflets with the slogan "The press is lying!" into letterboxes, stuck them on billboards of institutions and wrote similar slogans in chalk on walls and slates at night,' he said later, in 1995.¹² He was caught, prosecuted for incitement and released from prison in early 1975 after 9 months.

= = = Opposition in opposition

Salom, however, not only came into conflict with the Hungarian state and its Israelite 'branch' (and Hungarian State Security), but its actions divided the democratic opposition early on. At the beginning of January 1984, György Krassó, one of the most prominent Hungarian oppositionists with a huge claim to autonomy, told one of the agents shadowing him from the Ministry of Interior (who called the group 'SOLON', demonstrating that the authorities had not yet 'domesticated' the name of the organisation, not knowing where to put it) that in several places (i.e. in opposition public forums), but it was blocked everywhere, so a separate newspaper would have to be set up for it.¹³ This tension—which will be discussed later –accompanied Salom throughout its existence, and ambivalence towards the group has been palpable in the opposition.¹⁴ On 18 January, Radio Free Europe broadcast Salom's call for a new group on the radio, and this launched its international career.¹⁵ Another report, referring to the Romanian-language Radio Free Europe broadcast, states that Salom's appearance on the radio is seen as a sign that for the first time Jews are appearing as members of the opposition in Hungary.

The authorities took Salom's emergence seriously. They began monitoring its domestic postal circulation. An operational report of 25 January 1984 highlighted the fact that an open letter signed by Salom had been pulled from domestic postal circulation and that it had been handed over to the III/III Directorate of

12 = = A few things have changed slightly in 2016: „Éljen Izrael!” Ezért kapott börtönt Gadó György'.

13 = = Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], BRFK-221-64/7/16 January 1984. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

14 = = Ervin Csizmadia also refers to this: See: *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék*, 285.

15 = = Another source claims that the Romanian-language Free Europe announced this. Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/II-9-19/27 January 1984. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

the Ministry of Interior.¹⁶ According Krassó, the material had been mailed to 200 Hungarian Jewish intellectuals.¹⁷ Another operational report said that Salom had tried to send the open letter to 80 well-known Hungarian public figures.¹⁸ It also stated that 126 letters (copies of Salom) had been ‘intercepted’ and withdrawn from circulation.¹⁹

The ambivalence within the democratic opposition was constantly felt by György Krassó (György Gadó’s main opposition ally), as *Beszélő*, the main samizdat newspaper, did not actually publish the material, and the *Alulnézet Kiadó* in 1984 began to distribute duplicates of the three-page manifesto.²⁰ The publishing house had been founded in the autumn of 1983 and its declared purpose was to ‘satisfy’ the publication needs of independent Hungarian peace initiatives (of course, the staff remained anonymous).

The difference of opinion was felt in the way *Beszélő* treated Salom, since in the issue of 9 February 1984 they did not present the letter on its own, but together with two other pieces from the *Alulnézet Kiadó*. In addition, they condemned the text for being biased and pro-Israel and for blaming the arms race exclusively on those that it criticised. ‘SALOM is saying the reverse of what the leaders of the MIOK said in the wake of the peace council—but it does not go beyond the false circle that the peace movement criticises,’ they wrote.²¹

The impact of Radio Free Europe, however, proved to be lasting: according to State Security, the MIOK protested to the World Jewish Congress and Israel Singer, the organisation’s director, promised to take steps with the US president and secretary of state to ensure that the radio would not ‘interfere’ in the ‘peaceful life’ of the Israelite denomination and would not broadcast ‘defamatory’ reports.²²

The Salom Peace Group issued another important document: an open letter to Hungarian society in May 1984.²³ The target audience of the text was no longer the Jewish community and its press, but a much wider audience. Although the

16 == See Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/3-72-5-7/25 January 1984. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

17 == Jelentés [Report], 17 February 1984. O-19619/9, ‘Lidi’, Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

18 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/III-11-20/34/20 February 1984. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

19 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/3-72-5-12/20 February 1984. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

20 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/III-11-20-24/6 February 1984. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

21 = ‘Bemutatjuk az Alulnézet Kiadót’.

22 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/III-11-20/34/20 February 1984. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

23 == ‘Nyílt levél a magyar társadalomhoz és a magyar zsidósághoz’.

letter was circulated exclusively in samizdat circles, it had an enormous impact. The text was first published in the May-June issue of *AB Hírmondó* (the newspaper of another important oppositionist personality, Gábor Demszky²⁴), but was also distributed separately.²⁵ The long essay turned the Hungarian Jewish assimilation paradigm on its head, but at the same time made Judaism intelligible on cultural, historical and ethnic grounds. The letter, written on the fortieth anniversary of the deportation of Hungarian Jews, saw Judaism as a political factor in its own right and detected major changes in two respects: it raised the responsibility of Hungarian society for the fate of the Jewish people during the Second World War (from 1920), but also articulated the responsibility of the Hungarian Jewry in relation to the Socialist/Communist era after 1949. This text, which was equally open to Hungarian society as a whole, gave a completely new dimension to the situation of the Hungarian Jewry. Instead of assimilation, it proposed integration, which simply meant that Jews should be integrated into Hungarian society by preserving and not denouncing their own values.

Public policy itself was in a constant state of flux, and despite police harassment, the meltdown was underway. The editor of the *Hírmondó* himself noted after Salom's new article that the rebuilt Jewish Museum had opened, Raoul Wallenberg's name was mentioned at the commemoration on 13 May (but not his fate),²⁶ a memorial plaque for Hanna Szenes (the Hungarian Jewish paratrooper who was taken then executed by the Hungarian authorities at the end of the WWII) was unveiled, and a book containing a study by István Bibó²⁷ on the 'Jewish question' was published.²⁸ In parallel with Salom's action, a kind of détente began:

24 == Gábor Demszky (1952–), Hungarian lawyer, sociologist, politician, former member of the democratic opposition and then the SZDSZ, mayor of Budapest for five terms between 1990 and 2010.

25 == Nyílt levél a magyar társadalomhoz és a magyar zsidósághoz [An open letter to Hungarian society and the Hungarian Jewry]. *AB Hírmondó* no. 6–7. (1984). 23–37. 362-0-2/6. Collection of Philipp, OSA. Budapest, Hungary.

26 == Raoul Wallenberg (1913–1947?) was a Swedish diplomat sent to Budapest during the summer of 1944. Wallenberg issued exemption documents for thousands of Jews and was also connected with the Hungarian resistance movements. In January of 1945 he was dragged by Soviet authorities and probably died in Moscow in 1947.

27 == István Bibó (1911–1979), lawyer, philosopher, sociologist, politician, university professor. After 1948-49, he was excluded from public life. Between 1951 and 1956 he was a staff member of the University Library in Budapest. On 31 October 1956, he was elected a member of the Executive Committee of the National Peasant Party, which was reorganised as the Petőfi Party. He was briefly Minister of State in the Imre Nagy government.

28 == They add: 'However, we believe that the most important messages of the open letter are not affected by this' Nyílt levél a magyar társadalomhoz és a magyar zsidósághoz [An open letter to Hungarian society and the Hungarian Jewry]. *AB Hírmondó* no. 6–7. (1984). 37. 362-0-2/6. Collection of Philipp, OSA. Budapest, Hungary. It is about the book Bibó, *Zsidókérdés, asszimiláció, antiszemitizmus*.

the party state started to give up important positions and the channels of communication opened up even more.

Salom's May letter provoked a lively reaction. One of the most important one was an article by the leading figure of the 'democratic opposition', the philosopher János Kis^{29, 30}. The 'democratic opposition' was one of the most important parts of the opposition movements of the Kádár era. They issued samizdat and were subject to numerous persecutions. Kis, while agreeing that the Hungarian Jewry represented a kind of added value and should not be assimilated but integrated, also raised serious objections to Salom's idea. He considered the call for a position in favour of the minority Jewry in Hungary to be meaningful only to those who themselves agreed with it and wanted it. Salom does not adequately explain the problem of 'Jewish belonging', he points out, that in our 'one-sidedly modernised society' there are Jewish and non-Jewish cliques: social mechanisms recreate mutual prejudices. Although Salom applies the same yardstick to non-Jewish and Jewish Hungarians (thus drawing a parallel between Hungarian responsibility for the deportations and Hungarian social responsibility after 1945), he loses the yardstick when he does not judge the parties equally in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. János Kis repeated his criticism—somewhat sterile, but honest, from today's perspective—when he bid farewell to György Gadó, who left his political career (he was a member of parliament for the Alliance of Free Democrats (Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége, SZDSZ) after 1990) following the change of the regime.³¹ He praised Gadó, who expected minority rights to be part of the democratic transformation of Hungarian society, but accused him of intolerance towards assimilationist Jews who did not see their own history as part of the history of world Jewry. János Kis's writing was symptomatic in that it indicated that a part of the democratic opposition of Jewish origin does not want to get involved in any Jewish politics (ethnic or minority) and sees itself as an unmarked part of Hungarian political life. The political loneliness of György Gadó—who accepted in the 1980s that the people around *Beszélő* did not want to deal with the Jewry in a specific way and to engage with world Jewry and Israel (if it goes beyond the fight against anti-Semitism and towards any particular solidarity)—was also due to this specific, multiple minority and marginalised position.

A Hungarian from Czechoslovakia under the pseudonym Sándor Balázs (his real name was László Öllős³², also expressed his thoughts on Salom's open let-

29 == János Kis (1943–), philosopher, political scientist and politician. Leader of the SZDSZ (1990–1991).

30 == Kis, 'A Salom nyílt levele a magyar társadalomhoz és a magyar zsidósághoz'.

31 == Kis, 'Gadó'.

32 == László Öllős (1957–), political scientist, philosopher, president of the Forum Minority Research Institute (Fórum Kisebbségkutató Intézet, Fórum Inštitút pre Výskum Menšín) in Slovakia.

ter.³³ He emphasised the role of the Hungarian and Central European Jewry in civilisation, modernisation and cultural mediation. On behalf of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia, he expressed his support for the awakening of Hungarian Jews to self-consciousness in the face of discriminatory nationalism. It was entirely predictable that a considerable part of the Hungarian intelligentsia across the border would support any awakening of ethnic consciousness (even within Hungary)—they saw good chances and model for their own minority group's aspirations for autonomy.

= = = The influence of Salom is spreading

The existence of an independent, oppositional Hungarian Jewish organisation began to interest the foreign press. One of the agents who had been put in charge of György Krassó reported that not only had a film crew visited him, but in July 1984 he had also received two foreigners, whom he had intensively informed about the situation of the Hungarian Jewry and the Salom letter. Gábor Demszky, another leading opposition figure and founding editor of *Hírmondó*, also joined the conversation.³⁴ One of Krassó's agents, when he visited him on 10 August, said that although he agreed with much of the article, he condemned the writing of the 'Salamon' (meaning 'Salom'; 'Salamon' was Gadó's State-Security nickname) organisation. The Hungarian opposition is regarded as a 'Jewish gang' by the 'spiritually oppositional' Hungarian masses, and reading the manifesto only confirms the extreme right-wing view that Jews cannot be assimilated, says the informant.³⁵ Krassó defended Salom, explaining that he was of Jewish origin and that Judaism was not a race but a community. There was a need to arouse the sympathy of Hungarian Jews for Israel, which is the bastion of the West in the Middle East, he argued. 'The rise of anti-Soviet sentiment in Jewish circles will help to increase sympathy for the State of Israel and to develop a Jewish consciousness,' Krassó said, according to the informant. A radical oppositionist and a highly impulsive movement politician (and far from being a tactical thinker) Krassó identified with Salom's aims and methods with a natural instinct.

Krassó sold Salom's open letter, among other publications, in his apartment on Fő utca in Budapest, while the authorities triumphantly announced in August that they had again withdrawn from postal circulation 9 items of Salom material—

33 = = 'A Salom Nyílt Levele egy kisebbségi magyar szemével'.

34 = = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről és Demszky Gáborról [Report on György Krassó and Gábor Demszky], 26 July 1984. O-19619/9, 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

35 = = Jelentés [Report], 13 August 1984. 10. O-19619/9, 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

written to Hungarian and Swiss addresses—and photocopied pages from the *Hírmondó*.³⁶

Salom's second open letter provoked a number of reactions, the most important of which was Pál Szalai's³⁷ visceral response.³⁸ We can regard these reactions as visceral because rational perception is often interrupted by personal recollection, and the conclusions often cannot be generalised and political action cannot be inferred. Such was the case when Szalai challenged the conception of 'Jew' in Salom's statement. At the same time, he offered the position of Jewishness in a cultural-ethnic sense to Salom. He also notes that the Salom speaks of the 'Jewish' members of the democratic opposition, thus adding fuel to the fire of the 'red' and 'white' reaction, which to this day speaks of the democratic opposition in this way. However, an important integration of the supportive position on Israel is that Szalai not only recognises the founding of the state of Israel as one of the most important events in modern history, but considers the 1967 war against the 'Arab dictatorships' to be comparable in ethos and heroism to the Jewish Warsaw Uprisings of 1943 and the Polish Warsaw Uprisings of 1944; the Hungarian workers' councils' struggle of 1956; the Prague Spring of 1968; the Solidarity revolution of 1980–1981. What is more, Israel gave a boost to the democratic-socialist movements in Eastern Europe with this self-defensive struggle.³⁹ Although Szalai argues that national self-defence in Israel after 1967 had eclipsed the struggle for social justice and that Israel's war in Lebanon is against one of the democracies of the Middle East (and therefore he does not approve of it), his position is fundamentally supportive. In his assessment of the contemporary situation in Hungary, Szalai is more empathetic than Salom himself, noting tangible signs of a slow thaw, but also detecting semi-official anti-Semitism in the Hungarian public sphere.

The interest of the Hungarian authorities reached a new level when a confidential investigation was launched against Salom on 10 October 1984.⁴⁰ 'We would inform you⁴¹ that, on the basis of the permission of Comrade (Ministry of Interior)

36 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/III-72-5-58/15 August 1984. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

37 == Pál Szalai (1935–2003), writer, journalist, member of the democratic opposition, who before and after 1989 was and remained an advocate of Bibó-inspired democratic Socialism.

38 == Megjegyzések a "Salom" független magyar zsidó békemozgalom második nyílt leveléhez [Comments on the second open letter of the 'Salom' independent Hungarian Jewish peace movement]. *AB Hírmondó* no. 10. (1984). 27–34. Box 3/8. OSA 355-0-1. Collection of János Kis. Budapest, Hungary.

39 == *Ibid.*, 29.

40 == See Információkérés [Request for information], 10 October 1984. O-19619/9, 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

41 == The address was: Gyula Hanusz, Police Lieutenant Colonel, Head of Department III/III-3, Ministry of Interior.

Department III of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, we have launched a confidential investigation to identify the members of the group known as 'Salom' (the independent peace group of Hungarian Jews) and to prevent and disrupt their hostile activities. We ask you to hand over to our department any information and documents previously obtained concerning the 'Salom' group. At the same time, we ask you to assist in the detection of the members of the 'Salom' group by using your existing and deployable operational positions in the interdiction areas. According to the assessment of the primary information, further information is expected to be generated mainly in the framework of the 'Lidi' codename confidential investigation. Please continue to send information generated in this case to our department', they wrote.⁴² The III/III-4-c Subdivision (countering the 'national' opposition) was contacted with a request for information.

The author of another Salom piece caused some confusion, since the informant called 'Aspirant' thought he recognised the author, 'who, according to him, was a Rabbinical Seminary graduate, a prison inmate, and now a small-scale plastics manufacturer.'⁴³ The description, which perfectly fitted Ivan Beer, a former rabbinical student convicted of Zionism⁴⁴, was not true of Salom, since Beer had no connection with the group.⁴⁵

The authorities harassed György Krassó and György Gadó. On 18 October, a search was carried out at Krassó's apartment and various materials were confiscated.⁴⁶ Gadó's place was searched on 1 November,⁴⁷ while other sources put the so-called residence search on 12 November.⁴⁸ In the 'announced' search (the police

42 == The signatories: Lajos Forgács, Police Major Head of Division and Ernő Udvardi Police Captain, Head of Subdivision

43 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/III-11-20/194/15 October 1984. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

44 == Ivan Beer was sentenced to 16 months in prison in 1970. See Joó, 'Állambiztonsági eljárás Beer Iván rabbinövendék és baráti köre ellen. Az "Exodus" fedőnevű ügy előzményei és következményei.'

45 == On other occasions, too, they were groping in the woods: in the autumn of 1984, an unknown person named Friedmann forwarded a written message to 'Kormos' asking him to send his paper to SALOM in the usual way, because it was to be published in December, together with other papers. The authorities are asking for a writing expert to reveal Friedmann's identity. See Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], BM III/III-11-20/196/17 October 1984. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

46 == A record was also made: 23 Salom 'Open Letters' and 73 Salom envelopes were seized. Jegyzék a Krassó György lakásán megtartott nyílt házkutatásról [Note on the open perquisition of György Krassó's apartment], 18 October 1984. O-19619/9, 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

47 == 'Újabb hatósági támadások a független sajtó ellen.'

48 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/III-11-20/213/12 November 1984. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

never conducted a search on the basis of a prosecutor's warrant), where Gadó's past behaviour was also described as 'Jewish nationalist activity', many items were seized. It was concluded that he was actively involved in the editing and distribution of samizdat.⁴⁹ György Gadó was charged with a press offence, fined and the seized material was 'permanently' confiscated. The authorities launched a confidential investigation to 'further investigate and disrupt' Gadó's activities. Gadó, meanwhile, has become an important element in the Hungarian second public: the Italian news agency ANSA has already reported that he has called for the establishment of diplomatic relations between Hungary and Israel, while Gadó himself has denied any involvement with the opposition Jewish grouping.⁵⁰

In the so-called 'flying universities' (where members of the opposition and other gave lectures and research reports at private apartments), which already existed in the democratic opposition, the topic was also discussed, as on 10 December sociologist András Kovács and social psychologist Ferenc Erős gave a lecture (at the apartment of opposition writer János Kenedi⁵¹) on their major Jewish sociological-social-psychological research, in which they investigated the Jewish identity of Hungarian Jews by conducting and analysing in-depth interviews. In front of an audience of about 40 people, 'Solomon' (i.e. György Gadó) spoke and said that he considered it more important to take a political approach, for which the platform was Solomon's open letter.⁵² János Kenedi was interested in the matter and wanted to start the new season of the flying university on 4 February 1985 with a discussion of Salom's letter, but they could not find a place for it to be held for 3-4 more sessions.⁵³

The year 1985 was a turning point in many ways. György Krassó was forced to leave Hungary after a year in police custody. György Gadó was exposed as someone who also used his name in his writings as 'Győző Ravasz'.⁵⁴

As mentioned above, Salom's activities also divided the public of the opposition: at an internal meeting in late August—which may have been informed to

49 == 'Among the materials discovered and confiscated are, among other things, a draft letter and draft statutes of an organisation called the "Hungarian Democratic Rights Organisation"'. Ibid.

50 == See Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/I-67/52-1/228/ 21 November 1984. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

51 == János Kenedi (1947–), writer and critic, former member of the democratic opposition.

52 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/III-11-20/236/13 December 1984. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

53 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/III-11-20/39/15 February 1985. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

54 == See Napi jelentés [Daily report], 5 May 1985. O-19619/12, 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

the authorities by Tamás Mikes (aka ‘Micsinay’⁵⁵), who was present—the Jewish organisation was the subject of discussion and they said they did not want to join it because they considered it too radical.⁵⁶ In the summer of 1986, the authorities tried to intimidate the various civil Jewish ‘table companies’ (there were at least three such groups in Budapest), counting about 25 people. Allegedly the civilians informed the World Jewish Congress of the events and (also allegedly) promised to raise the matter with the Hungarian government, but we know nothing more.⁵⁷

Salom sparked further press controversy, operating in the press. The Salom peace group’s opinion on the state of the Jewish Community was published in the *Hírmondó* with Leviticus’⁵⁸ signature.⁵⁹ The text was sharply critical of the MIOK, namely in connection with the election of its new president, Dr András Losonci, a senior physician, on 15 December 1985 (at the MIOK’s elective plenary session).⁶⁰ Losonci, who for the first time in the history of the MIOK had been self-critical and had spoken of mistakes, gave the Salom letter-writer an excuse. Leviticus had just quoted the words of the president of the MIOK, who spoke of the need to eliminate anomalies and restore moral reputations. ‘The public speeches refer to the moral crisis of the denomination, but they stubbornly ignore the fact that the causes of this moral crisis are not simply material problems or abuses, but primarily the leadership’s failure to face up to the contradictions of domestic social develop-

55 = = Mihály Andor wrote a book about Mikes: *Szegény Micsinay—Egy besugó élete*.

56 = = See Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/II-11-162/28 August 1985. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

57 = = Interview with György Gadó by the Viennese Jewish newspaper *Die Gemeinde*. In K. Pfeiffer interjúja Gadó Györggyel a Zsidó Világkongresszus végrehajtó bizottságának legutóbbi bp-i ülése alkalmából [K. Pfeiffer’s interview with György Gadó by the occasion of the last meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Jewish Congress held in Budapest] 3-11. A-3358, ‘Tematikus összeállítás az antiszemitizmusról és a zsidóságról’ [Thematic compilation on anti-Semitism and Jewry], ÁBTL, Budapest Hungary. See also ‘Szóval azt mondja, aki zsidó, tartsa magát zsidónak? Mihancsik Zsófia interjúi Lovász Ferencsel és Rácz Andrással’.

58 = = Leviticus is the third book of the Pentateuch, in the Hebrew canon it is called Vayikra.

59 = = Valódi válság, hamis megújulás [Real crisis, false renewal]. *AB Hírmondó* no. 1. (1986). 46–48. The issue is available at the National Széchényi Library. Representing the ‘internal’ opposition were György Gadó, Miklós Tamás Gáspár, Tamás Molnár, Péter Bokros, Ferenc Kószeg, Gábor Demszky, Miklós Sulyok, Jenő Nagy, Róbert Pálinkás, Sándor Radnóti, Tibor Philipp, Miklós Haraszti, Olga Diószegi, József Talata (punctuated by Mikolta Bognár and Gyula Bartók).

60 = = Dr Alfréd Schőner, Chief Rabbi, President of the Budapest Rabbinate, then became Deputy Chairman of the National Rabbinical Council. See: ‘Felekezetek együtt a békéért’ and ‘„Előttem csak az a cél lebeg, hogy hazámat és ezen belül a felekezet érdekeit szolgáljam”’.

ment and domestic political life. The MIOK had taken loyalty to the communist state to its very core', the article stated.⁶¹ It did so at a time when the weaknesses of that state were already apparent. Nor did the MIOK condemn the PLO for 'killing Jews' with Soviet weapons, and it was a major event when it wrote off the name of Israel. Not once in its assembly does *Új Élet* mention the ordeals of the Soviet Jewry or Israel—understandably, because they exist not because of the democratic initiative of Hungarian Jewish society, but 'at the mercy of the communist state negotiating with Arab terrorists.' Referring to an interview in a German Jewish newspaper with Gézá Seifert, Secretary-General of the MIOK, Leviticus noted that if things continue as they are, in twenty years there will be no Jews in Hungary.

= = Israeli detour: debate with a radical

This statement by the Salom Peace Group also reached the Hungarian-speaking public of Israel. On 8 May 1986, the Israeli Hungarian newspaper *Hét Tükre* published an article by Mose D. Braun, the paper's correspondent in Budapest, in which he described the article. Orthodox journalist Naftali Kraus (belonging to the Chabad movement) strongly criticised Leviticus in the 29 May issue of the Hungarian-language Israeli newspaper *A Hét Tükre*. György Gádó responded separately, and the *Hírmondó* published Kraus's article and his response side by side.⁶² This undoubtedly strong democratic gesture did not obscure the sharply polemical nature of the debate. Naftali Kraus made it clear that the Hungarian Jewry was in its final hours, and that everyone must do everything possible to prevent this from happening.⁶³ Kraus also criticised Salom because, in his view, if the 'regime in Pest' does not hinder the life of the Jews (in the areas of education, religious life, culture, spiritual life and development) and supports Jewish emigration (he cited the Romanian Jewry and its Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen as a positive example), then 'we have nothing against it'. It is the missed opportunities of the Jewish leadership in Pest that should be addressed, that could be criticised, but that is not the business of the *Hírmondó*. Kraus declared that 'we' should give the new leadership of the MIOK the opportunity and only criticize the organisation if it fails to fulfil its responsibilities. Kraus further claimed that this is none of the business of the *Hírmondó* or of various fictitious or non-fictitious opposition groups in Hungary.

61 = 'Valódi válság, hamis megújulás' [Real crisis, false renewal]. *AB Hírmondó* no. 1. (1986). 47. OSZK.

62 = Igenis van közünk egymáshoz. Válasz Naftáli Krausnak, Izraelbe. [We do have a connection. Reply to Naftali Kraus, Israel.] In *AB Hírmondó* no. 3. 1986. 45-49. OSZK.

63 = Még 'Hírmondónk' sem marad... Megjegyzések a pesti Hírmondó zsidó vonatkozású cikkéhez. [Not even our "Hírmondó" will remain... Memos to the article in the Jewish section of the Pest Hírmondó.] In: *ibid*, 46-47.

Moreover, he attacked the democratic opposition—with completely distorted optics—by claiming that they were personally descendants of those who had assisted in the deportation of the Hungarian Jewry in 1944 and who ‘now’ wanted to exploit the existing Jewish question. In his reply, György Gadó rightly pointed out⁶⁴ that Kraus did not seem to know any opposition members personally, although even the Western media had managed to find them. He vehemently rejected the idea that Jewish freedom could be imagined without freedom for Hungarian society at large. ‘The survival of the Jewry in Hungary does not depend on its cooperation with the existing regime, but on its breathing with the nation, with the broader part of the nation.’⁶⁵ He called Kraus’s refusal to help non-Jewish Hungarians an outrageous speech, and Gadó was also outraged that he called the democratic opposition, which included so many Jews, the successors of the Holocaust collaborators.

This debate—not so much because of the weight of the arguments put forward in it—was very important from the perspective of the years after the regime change, since for the first time the Hungarian (second) public was confronted with a pure ethnocentric Jewish opinion (Kraus’s), which was not only not bound by linguistic taboos and other self-limitations, but also considered it possible to express and represent a position for which democratic values do not exist in themselves and does not want to conform to any so-called external reference. This position was completely at odds with the left-wing universalism which (at least formally) was still represented in socialist Hungary and which, now endowed with the rights of man, was also considered by a large part of the democratic opposition as its own.

= = The change of regime is coming: the last years of Salom

In 1987, the Salom Peace Group was once again the focus of public attention. An opposition artist, Gábor Zrínyifalvi, had converted the garage of his family home on the outskirts of Budapest into an alternative cultural centre. The centre was opened on 8 May 1987 with a two-room exhibition paying tribute to Wallenberg, and a US embassy report discussed the events there.⁶⁶ Wallenberg, who had saved the lives of many Hungarian Jews, was arrested by the Soviets in Budapest in January 1945, then taken to the Soviet Union, where he died—under uncertain circumstances—in a prison. His deportation was considered taboo in the countries of the Soviet bloc, as his death was not caused by the German Nazis, but by the Soviets, who also had Hungary in their sphere of interest.

64 = = Ibid. 47–49.

65 = = Ibid. 49.

66 = = Kávássy, ‘A talapzatára fellépő szobor. Raoul Wallenberg személyének exponálódása a magyar belpolitikában 1987-ben’.

Three opposition members read at the opening, Miklós Tamás Gáspár⁶⁷ and Tamás Molnár⁶⁸ (a member of the Inconnu Group⁶⁹), along with György Gadó. Gadó spoke (briefly in English and at length in Hungarian) as co-editor of the *Demokrata* and on behalf of those who had set up the Salom peace group three and a half years ago. He spoke about the growing and long-standing Hungarian anti-Semitism in a context of deteriorating economic conditions. Gadó briefly described the activities of the Salom Group, the history of their ‘persecution’, and then read the ‘Salom appeal.’⁷⁰ Tamás Gáspár, who made anti-Soviet and anti-Communist statements, compared the ‘oppression’ of Hungarian Jews to the situation of Hungarian national minorities living across the border. The event was reported in detail by the State Security services. ‘The opening programme was attended by some 30 people, including the BBC, REUTER, AFP, DPA, Voice of America correspondent, Austrian journalist Karl Pfeiffer and an anonymous delegate to the World Jewish Congress.’⁷¹

Salom’s declaration was entitled ‘Against anti-Semitism, for democratic change’.⁷² The text, which was aimed at the erection of the Wallenberg statue and the meeting of the World Jewish Congress, detected a sense of disorder in Hungarian economic life and also reported the strengthening of anti-Semitism. Their problem is not with the Hungarian people, but with the exercise of power, they wrote, while also criticising Hungarian Jewish illusions, such as confidence in the Soviet Union. They also criticised the MIÖK, which ‘echoes the voice of the Party and the government as much as the Party or the trade union.’ The MIÖK does not talk about harassment of Jews, Salom claimed. The manifesto also stated that this was not the way of Jewry, while calling on the Hungarian government to act to free Raoul Wallenberg.

67 == Miklós Tamás Gáspár (1948–2023), Marxist philosopher, politician, public and journalist, university lecturer, one of the most influential and internationally recognised figures of Hungarian philosophy at the turn of the millennium.

68 == Tamás Molnár (1955–), artist, writer, publicist.

69 == Inconnu was an independent group of artists at the end of the Kádár regime, see <http://cultural-opposition.eu/registry/?uri=http://courage.btk.mta.hu/courage/individual/n37721> (Access on 21 June 2022)

70 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/III-76/7/11 May 1987. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

71 == Representing the ‘internal opposition’ (that’s how State Security called them) were György Gadó, Miklós Tamás Gáspár, Tamás Molnár, Péter Bokros, Ferenc Kőszeg, Gábor Demszky, Miklós Sulyok, Jenő Nagy, Róbert Pálincás, Sándor Radnóti, Tibor Philipp, Miklós Haraszti, Olga Diószegi, József Talata (punctuated by Mikolta Bognár and Gyula Bartók. Ibid.

72 == The declaration is available online: https://watson.sk/NZONLINE/docs/szamizdat_116_20191022.221227.pdf (Access on 29 June 2022)

Gadó sent the Salom statement to the writer István Csurka⁷³ and asked him to sign it. This was a very important gesture towards the so-called Hungarian ‘national’ or ‘popular’ opposition of which Csurka was one of the most important figures. This kind of collaboration was very positive in the fragmented Hungarian intellectual-opposition (or semi-opposition) milieu, where the democratic opposition, considered to be urbane, and the ‘national’/‘popular’ wing (consists of writers mainly), which considered themselves the intellectual descendants of the people’s movement had a huge distrust, which deepened over time.

The State Security’s daily operative report of 7 May reported on events of fundamental importance.⁷⁴ According to the report, Csurka had consulted the writer Sándor Csoóri⁷⁵ (also a leading intellectual of this opposition) and they had come to the conclusion that its content was a ‘Jewish internal matter’, but on the other hand it described political problems in a ‘peculiar way’ with which they could not identify and therefore could not sign it. At the same time, they thought that, if only to avoid accusations of anti-Semitism, they should react to the declaration by condemning anti-Semitism, but also by denouncing the accusation of anti-Semitism. It was also suggested that, in addition to the two writers accused of anti-Semitism, ‘two of them, Ferenc Sánta⁷⁶ and Gyula Fekete⁷⁷, should also have János Kis and János Sánta sign the text, which would also be a gesture by the ‘popular’ opposition towards Kis and his friends.’⁷⁸ Although in the note behind the report they write that they do not know whether this statement is identical to the one they wanted to have read out with Sándor Radnóti⁷⁹ at the Inconnu evening on 8 May (but it was György Gadó himself who read it out), the text ‘Resolution against hatred’ was eventually signed by István Csurka, Gyula Hernádi and György Konrád⁸⁰. The text was essentially conflict-ridden, with Salom’s manifesto being described as one of the manifestos towards ‘the fulfilment of freedom, the purification of souls’. Referring throughout to Raoul Wallenberg, the text described the Salom’s declaration as a ‘sober voice’ against the national hatred and incitement of peoples to hatred and incitement to hatred that was ‘once again destroying’

73 == István Csurka (1934–2012), Hungarian writer, journalist and far-right politician.

74 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operational Information Report], III/III-75/a-7/7 May 1987. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

75 == Sándor Csoóri (1930–2016), poet, essayist, prose writer, politician.

76 == Ferenc Sánta (1927–2008), Kossuth Prize-winning Hungarian writer, his works have been published in many languages.

77 == Gyula Fekete (1951–2119), writer, sociographer, journalist.

78 == See Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/III-75/a-7/7 May 1987. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

79 == Sándor Radnóti (1946–), essayist, critic, philosopher, literary historian, university professor.

80 == György Konrád (1933–2019), writer, essayist, sociologist.

Central and Eastern Europe. ‘We feel it is our inevitable human duty to take this opportunity to voice the need to create a common homeland where there is finally no “anti”, where there is only “pro”, where history happens for everyone whose mother gave birth to it’—concludes the declaration.⁸¹ The joint declaration, which was obviously a compromise—and in which the ‘popular’ opposition did not want a confrontation—was drawn up almost at the last moment before the opposition (the ‘popular’ and the ‘urban’) fragmented, but realistic political considerations also prevailed, precisely in order to preserve unity, at least on the surface.

In the meantime, a very important event was taking place in Budapest, where the World Jewish Congress (WJC) Executive Committee met for the first time in a socialist country since 1967—starting on 7 May.⁸² The officials of the WJC had imposed two conditions: Israeli delegates should be allowed to travel freely to the country and that the organisation should be free to choose its own themes for the event: the Hungarian government agreed to both conditions. At the event’s dinner, US Ambassador Mark Palmer, probably in return for the Hungarian authorities’ leniency, not only mentioned the need for continued political pressure on the Soviet Union (to allow Jewish emigration to Israel), but also described the human rights situation in Romania as deplorable, with a special emphasis on the situation of the Hungarian minority.⁸³ The press also played a part in shaping the situation, as a correspondent from *Le Monde*, one of the French newspapers present at the event, was interested in the ‘Salom movement’, among other issues relating to church politics and the Hungarian economic situation (they were interested in the situation of small cooperatives and private shops).⁸⁴

György Gadó was pleased with the Salom statement, which was timed to coincide with the WJC meeting and the unveiling of the Wallenberg statue, and one operative report (by the State Security) stated that the Jewish secular aspirations it symbolised had gained ground. Gadó, moreover, wanted to develop Salom into a ‘Jewish-Christian’ reconciliation group, as it would not only be associated with his name.⁸⁵ He also wanted to start two new newspapers, *Salom* and *Szabad Polgár*,

81 = ‘Nyilatkozat’

82 = <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/05/07/world/a-jewish-parley-in-budapest.html> (Access on 21 June 2022.)

83 = The Waldheim case also had been raised: ‘Edgar M. Bronfman, president of the congress, opened the talks by asking for unanimous adoption of a motion of congratulations to Attorney General Edwin Meese 3d for the action of the Justice Department in barring President Kurt Waldheim of Austria from entering the United States.’ Ibid.

84 = See Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/III-76-7/11 May 1987. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

85 = See Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/III-94-7/4 June 1987. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

the first of which would deal specifically with Jewish issues.⁸⁶ The measure at the end of the report on this matter states that, once the information had been completed, a ‘operational plan’ would be drawn up to prevent the activities of ‘Solomon’.

Independently of the Salom group, György Gadó launched his newspaper *Magyar Zsidó* (3 issues) in the autumn of 1987, which was supported by the Hungarian (urban) opposition and (as usual) attracted the interest of State Security. The paper, whose staff—Gadó later admitted—consisted of fictitious persons, represented an independent and well-edited organ representing a democratic Jewish voice radically different from the МЮК *Új Élet*. In many ways, *Magyar Zsidó* was an interesting, individual voice. This is evidenced by its publication of the May 1987 statement of the three writers (quoted earlier) in connection with the May 1987 Salom manifesto. It then took a stand on the famous poem by the writer György Spiró entitled ‘They are coming’, which caused a huge storm at the time. György Spiró, predicting the emergence of the Hungarian extreme right, described the phenomenon in unsearchable terms, which led several literary figures belonging to the popular opposition to take offence and accuse the author of insulting Hungarianness. The *Magyar Zsidó* article stated that, although Spiró’s position is understandable, it is not true that the majority in Hungarian society is ‘afraid’ of the haters.⁸⁷ The paper also reported on a new exhibition in the Goldmark Hall (a festive place of МЮК), in collaboration with the Nachum Goldman Diaspora Museum in Tel Aviv.⁸⁸ It criticised several aspects of the exhibition, such as the lack of presentation of modern Zionism, and said that the museum’s technology left much to be desired. The paper reported on the May meeting of the JWC Executive Committee (‘What was left out of *Új Élet*’), mainly on issues (e.g. the situation of the Soviet Jewry) that were left out of the official Jewish denominational newspaper.

The publication was of keen interest to State Security and was the subject of daily operative reports. It even attracted the attention of the leadership of the АЕИ.⁸⁹ A report on *Magyar Zsidó* was made as early as 1 November, and on 6 November the content of the publication were specifically mentioned. According to

86 = = Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/III-99-7/11 June 1987. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

87 = = Kik félnek és mitől? [Who are afraid and of what?], *Magyar Zsidó* no. 1. (1987). 12. Box 5. 302-0-2. OSA, Budapest, Hungary.

88 = = ‘Kiállítás a magyar zsidóság történetéből’ [Exhibition on the history of the Hungarian Jewry], *ibid.*, 13–14.

89 = = I rely heavily on Bence Csatári’s unpublished work titled ‘Szemelvények a magyarországi zsidóság pártállami történetéből’ [Sections from the history of the Hungarian Jewry in the party-state], written for Hungarian Jewish Cultural Association (Magyar Zsidó Kulturális Egyesület, MAZSIKE).

this, 700 copies were distributed, and a special section was devoted to the situation of the Soviet Jewry. Béláné Mészáros, the deputy head of Department III/III-7, whose name appeared at the end of the report, saw it as her task to prevent the next issue from being published. They also tried to prevent its distribution by post, and a copy was seized in a letter sent to the Netherlands. Another report claimed that György Gadó wanted to obtain a printing press from the new Jewish Emmanuel Foundation.

Magyar Zsidó was also covered by the foreign press: the German-language daily *Kurier* in Vienna on 14 December 1987 even published a facsimile print of the paper. According to the article, the slogan of the new Hungarian Jewish paper was 'We condemn anti-Zionist propaganda campaigns, which only serve to disguise the traditional anti-Semitism of totalitarian regimes'. The report of 26 January 1988 stated that the second issue had already been published. The circulation of the Hungarian Jew had increased from 44 to 66 pages and 1,000 copies. Gadó allegedly encouraged by the American diplomats in Budapest, gone ahead: he published the third issue. Further reports told of where and when issues of the paper had turned up, including at the Sasad farmers' cooperative (Mezőgazdasági termelészövetkezet, MGT SZ)⁹⁰ and the Young Artists' Club (Fiatal Művészek Klubja, FMK) in Budapest.⁹¹ They also mentioned in a report that they had learned that Syrian intelligence was investigating the financial backing behind the newspaper.⁹² Dated 8 May 1988, the report, stated that a search had been carried out in Zamárdi (a village near Lake Balaton), during which 700 copies of the third issue of *Magyar Zsidó* were seized, along with other samizdat publications. The high-performance Rotaprint printing press in Zamárdi was reported to have been in the hands of Gábor Demszky's partners. The authorities, of course, confiscated the samizdat publications, together with large quantities of paper, ink and a stapling machine, also of high capacity, and set themselves the new target of eliminating or at least reducing the distribution of illegal newspapers. This had some effect, as the 3rd issue was published in stencil reproduction of poorer quality than the previous ones.⁹³

On 4 January 1988, Imre Miklós, the State Secretary of State and President of the ÁEH, sent a short analysis of the paper to high MSZMP functionaries including

90 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], BRFK-36/5/1 March 1988. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

91 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/II-44/3/3 March 1988. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

92 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/II-57/1/22 March 1988. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

93 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/III-127/3/5 July 1988. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

János Berecz⁹⁴, Ernő Lakatos⁹⁵, Gyula Horn⁹⁶, and to Károly Grósz⁹⁷ and Harangozó (probably Szilveszter⁹⁸).⁹⁹ According to György Vass, the analyst of the Office, the nature of its introduction and the whole paper tells a different story—the professed and unconfessed aims of the organ: to discredit the МГЮК and the Hungarian People’s Republic, to promote Zionism, to oppose communism and the Soviet Union, to show that the democratic opposition is the real ally of the Hungarian Jewry—these are the aims. The summary is a ‘timed provocation’, a diminution of the growing international prestige of the Hungarian People’s Republic’s church policy and its achievements in the field of human rights. It is interesting that the proposals made at the end of the text reveal a great deal of uncertainty, e.g. to take the wind out of the sail by consulting the Új Élet on a more flexible and courageous policy of journalism, ‘a more sophisticated journalistic theme could take away some of the publication’s themes.’ A short report by the АЕН, signed by Imre Miklós and dated 3 January 1988, made similar observations.

On 1 August 1988, the АЕН also made a proposal for the so-called illegal journal *Magyar Zsidó*, which they said had improved in quality, even though it was a one-man publication, Gadó himself writing it alone. According to the memo, ‘The general political orientation of the journal—as was to be expected—was openly, aggressively hostile, its tone had become extremely harsh. Socialism is portrayed as a dead end in world history, the Party as a rotting corpse, our country is referred to as a servant and henchman of the Soviet Union, the press management is said to be run by party satraps and barrack-room hirelings, a general national unity (including party members) is called for to overthrow the system, etc. It is likely that the official measure on the third number will be used to prove that the regime is also

94 = János Berecz (1930–2022), Hungarian politician in the Kádár regime. In the 1980s, he was a leading official, member of the MSZMP Central Committee, Secretary of the Central Committee of the State Party in charge of ideological and propaganda affairs, one of the most influential politicians of the time, and member of the Political Committee in 1987.

95 = Ernő Lakatos (1930–2018), Communist journalist, politician and diplomat. Between 1982 and 1988 he was head of the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the MSZMP Central Committee. In 1988 he was transferred to the foreign service and became ambassador in Berlin, the capital of the GDR. He retired after the regime change in March 1991.

96 = Gyula Horn (1932–2013), politician, economist, candidate of economics, last Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hungarian People’s Republic, Prime Minister between 1994 and 1998.

97 = Károly Grósz (1930–1996), politician, President of the Council of Ministers, General Secretary of the MSZMP.

98 = Szilveszter Harangozó (1929–2011), held positions in internal affairs and state security before the regime change.

99 = A *Magyar Zsidó* című kiadvány tartalmi elemzése [Content analysis of the publication *Magyar Zsidó*]. S-36-8/1987. XIX-A-21-a. MNL OL, Budapest, Hungary.

anti-Semitic [...] He stated that in Hungary “Jewish culture is living under severe restrictions” and that this must be fought against. The secular, social cultural [sic!] institutions of the Jewry must be established, and an independent but legal newspaper must be founded. [...] He also praises the work of Tamás Raj and the book on the Jewish Museum.¹⁰⁰ His opinion of the MIOK was that it did not represent the Hungarian Jewry. According to György Vass, the ÁEH rapporteur, ‘the quality of the journal (paper, typesetting, typography) is strikingly good. The production of this quality cannot be covered by the revenues from its sale. It would not be uninteresting to know who could cover the costs’.¹⁰¹ The ÁEH suggests that the paper should continue to be monitored, no doubt through the Ministry of Interior’s network of informers, and that the MIOK should be alerted to the ‘slander and distortions’ they have been subjected to in the *Új Élet* columns.

In May 1988, Tamás M. (probably Molnár) presented a statement edited and distributed by György Krassó on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of Israel.¹⁰²

As the turn of events approached, the practice of State Security *reporting on interviews in legitimate newspapers became increasingly bizarre*, including the interview with György Gadó in *Magyar Nemzet*.¹⁰³ They also reported on his interview in Hungary, in which Salom was described as an initiative of a ‘narrow group of intellectuals’.

The reason for this bizarre situation is that the democratising public already published Salom’s views in legal newspapers, but State Security, not knowing how to deal with this new publicity, used them as illegal sources. But now they were no longer, and slowly State Security was becoming obsolete and views of Gadó were becoming a legal part of life.

Alongside the actions against the opposition, the state has slowly started to change direction, especially in terms of foreign policy. Alongside the fight against Zionism, or ‘Zionist propaganda’, which was considered an act of persecution by State Security, Hungary and the Jewish state began to move closer together in the early 1980s.¹⁰⁴ Cornerstones of this were, for example, the establishment of contacts between the National Bank of Israel and the National bank of Hungary (Magyar Nemzeti Bank, MNB) in 1983. At the end of 1984, an official Hungarian delegation travelled to Tel Aviv for the opening of an exhibition on the Hungarian Jewry at the Bet Hatefutsoth, the Museum of the Jewish Diaspora. Most of the exhibits came from the Hungarian National Museum (Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum) and the

100 == Csatári, ‘Szemelvények a magyarországi zsidóság pártállami történetéből’.

101 == Ibid.

102 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/III-99-7/25 May 1988. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

103 == Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/III-237-7/12 December 1988. ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

104 == Govrin, ‘Egyszerre csak egy lépés. Izraeli–magyar kapcsolatok, 1967–1989’.

Jewish Museum (Zsidó Múzeum) in Budapest. When the delegation of the World Jewish Congress visited Hungary in early 1985, it was accompanied by Moshe Gilboa, head of the Diaspora Affairs Department of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, who was the first official who met with Hungarian officials of the local foreign ministry. At the UN General Assembly—in September 1985 and 1986—Hungarian and Israeli Foreign Ministers Péter Várkonyi and Yitzhak Samir met each other, and the initial Hungarian demands—which included direct negotiations with the Palestinians and a kind of peace conference—were gradually toned down until full relations were established. This was first signalled in September 1987 by a reciprocal agreement on the establishment of diplomatic representations, and in September 1989 by the full establishment of relations.

The Hungarian government also established contacts with the American Jewry, for example, large-scale Orthodox Jewish pilgrimages to Hungary began, and in the autumn of 1988 Prime Minister Károly Grósz received the world leader of Satmar Hasidim, Rabbi Moses Teitelbaum.

This may have been the open world that György Gadó dreamed of, but the democratisation of Hungary and the Hungarian Jewish organisational world was still to come. Although a multi-party system has replaced the one-party system in the country and the MIOK became Mazsihisz (Magyarországi Zsidó Hitközségek Szövetsége, Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities) in 1991, it was still a long time before democracy was integrated into the denominational life, even though Jewish life continued outside also the walls of synagogues, without the close control of the state, in a large number of civil organisations.

== Summary

While it marked a change in the trend in the relationship between the Jewry and state power in Hungary, the Salom Peace Group was in fact the work of *one personality*, the journalist György Gadó. ‘As long as it existed, I was the “group”. There was nothing to be ashamed of, I could not find any companions’, he later said.¹⁰⁵ The same was the case with the three-issue magazine *Magyar Zsidó*, which he also wrote and edited alone and which popularised Salom’s aims.¹⁰⁶ His relationship with the so-called democratic opposition, although he was personally an integral part of it, was good, but he had to respect the fact that this opposition did not, for a number of reasons, wish to take up an oppositional and distinctly Jewish political position. Firstly, not because the majority of those of Jewish origin in the democratic opposition did not want a policy of dissimilation, and deeply agreed with the achievements of Hungarian assimilation, so that they could be expected to accept ethnic

105 == ‘A Gadó’

106 == It was around this time that Gadó, together with Jenő Nagy and Tamás Mikes, who was later identified as an agent, started the newspaper *Demokrata*.

self-awareness to the maximum. Secondly, the democratic opposition also did not want to give the so-called national opposition, who identified themselves as Jews in the eyes of the opposition, a brand that they were not interested in the fundamental problems of the wider Hungarian society and that their attachment to the Hungarian nation—as well as their commitment to dual identity—was not so firm.

In any case, it is symbolic that Salom's last public appearances were on 15 March 1989, where it was listed alongside a number of other organisations—as one of the organisers of the independent 15 March meltdowns and peaceful demonstrations in Budapest, and at the demonstration in Transylvania on 27 June 1988 and 15 November 1988, when they showed solidarity with the protesters in Brasov a year earlier.¹⁰⁷ The latter demonstration was crushed by the Hungarian police.

Salom continued its activities under very difficult circumstances, in the face of several obstacles, which really meant the drafting of a few declarations, and György Gadó even made sure that he has a separately Hungarian opposition(ist) being that was completely separate from his Jewish Salom. Yet the existence and the principles of the Salom group only showed that there was not only a great distance, but also serious tensions between the official Jewish position, as demanded by the communist state party, and the opinions and individual/political identities of some Jews in Hungary. The Salom group's work and its principles reinforced the secular Jewish identity that was able to find a form for itself after the regime change and that was already characteristic of the broad strata of the Hungarian Jewry, especially in Budapest, that survived the Holocaust.

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All eyes on them.

Fortepan / Kerei Sándor

= Cultural frontlines =
////////////////////



West meets East. Paryż, Poland.

Fortepan / Szűcs Lóránd

===== Béla Nóvé =====

/// West meets East

The European Cultural Forum and Counter-Forum of Budapest in 1985

Ten years after the Helsinki Accords of 1975 had been signed by all the European states (except for Albania), together with the us and Canada, Budapest hosted the European Cultural Forum from mid-October to the end of November 1985. The event followed a series of conferences in Belgrade and Madrid, themselves designed to monitor compliance with the Helsinki commitments. The theme of the Budapest fete was freedom in culture and art, which formed the ‘third basket’ of the Helsinki Accords. The conference promised to be challenging, in view of the fact that open and disguised censorship were practiced in the communist countries, in contradiction with the principles of the Helsinki Accords, thus offering an easy target for the Western delegations.



Memorial coin produced for the official Cultural Forum Budapest, 1985.

== Introduction

The events and debates of the Cultural Forum and Counter-Forum of Budapest in late 1985 well reflected on the major changes which had just begun at the time in East-West relations, politics, and diplomacy, together with the challenging concept of cultural freedom as a basic part of human rights.

The time itself—the middle of the tumultuous 1980s—offers a great historical perspective for an analytical case study. After all, at half-time we can see a series of epoch-making changes from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 to the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Compared to the dynamically pros-

perous West, Central and Eastern Europe was increasingly falling apart, the economy and technology were not competitive, and the Soviet power bloc was led by dying out party general secretaries one after another (Brezhnev 1982, Andropov 1984, Chernenko 1985). The beginning of the decade is dominated by the depressing nuclear rivalry of the 'Little Cold War' across Europe, with the freezing of the SALT negotiations, the stiffened confrontation between the Soviet SS 20 and the American Pershing nuclear arsenal. Compared to this, the emergence of the new, energetic Party Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev, who came to power in March of 1985, warrants cautious hope from the point of view of domestic and foreign policy. Although substantive reforms: 'glasnost' (openness) and 'perestroika' (restructuring) had not yet come about, it was already a great achievement that he was ready to seriously negotiate with President Reagan at the Soviet-American summit in Geneva at the end of November 1985—actually the closing period of the Cultural Forum in Budapest!—among other things, by agreeing on Soviet-American cultural and scientific exchange. (The bipolar power confrontation later eased further with the Reagan–Gorbachev summits in Reykjavik, 1986 and in Washington, 1987.)

At the same time, in the late autumn of 1985, the vassal states of the Soviet empire were still ruled by rigid and orthodox communist leaders everywhere, including the 'happiest barracks in the East', i.e. the stagnant Hungary of the Kádár regime, which nipped all kinds of reforms and domestic political changes in the bud. In Poland, the state of emergency and the military government of General Jaruzelski were still in full swing. The GDR, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Bulgaria, and even the 'separate-way' communist Yugoslavia, were ruled by one-party police states, trying to hide the complete lack of freedom and prosperity with primitive propaganda and terror. At the same time, the leaders of these severely repressive puppet states were stubbornly guarding their common 'Stalin heritage', the Yalta status quo conchain, could not foresee that in another five or six years the Soviet empire itself would collapse spectacularly, the two German states would unite, the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia disintegrated, as did Tito's legacy: the communist federal Yugoslavia, with a series of bloody and protracted wars.

The contemporary relations of culture, literature and the press also show far-reaching changes during the decade of the 1980s. These are partly structural and therefore bound by legal and institutional conditions, and partly formed as a result of brave individual and community initiatives, such as the censorship-rejecting samizdat press and book publishing, independent artist groups and underground countercultures, minority protection, free church or human rights movements. All of these, although suppressed from time to time, already had significant social traditions in the Soviet Union as well as in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The only thing missing was to show themselves publicly, get to know each other, and develop freely. In the autumn of 1985, the Counter Cultural Forum in Budapest provided an exceptional opportunity for this, with the wide interna-

tional press coverage that accompanied it. Mainly to the Hungarian democratic opposition movement, but also to similar Russian, Polish, Czech, Romanian and other initiatives through their advocates.

The main focus of my case study is to reveal the motives and impact of this. In other words, I am researching what the one-time actors expected or hoped for the deliberations of either the official or the alternative forum, and how did they evaluate their results and shortcomings. I wish to reconstruct authentically all of this from a variety of sources, e.g. from the news reports of the Hungarian official and independent press, as well as from the additions of the international press, memoir literature, oral history sources or from the extant minutes of the meetings of the Hungarian party leadership. In my work, in addition to the bibliography, I refer to more than sixty actors of the time, quoting their words and providing their brief biographies in footnotes. At the end of my study, I will describe in detail the three main source collections of my work: (1) the documents of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF), (2) my relevant findings in Hungarian Archives of State Security (Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára, ÁBTL), (3) and the Hungarian Samizdat Collection of Petőfi Literary Museum (Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, PIM). (All three archives are freely researchable in Budapest.) At the end of my work, I also provide a brief overview of the history of Hungarian samizdat movement for those interested abroad.

I cannot hide the fact that I myself was present at the Counter Forum as a member of the Hungarian democratic opposition movement, and I have maintained friendly relations with many of its Hungarian and foreign participants ever since, including some leaders of the IHF. Here is but a brief footnote about my own samizdat activity.¹



Provoking sticker and flyer printed by the Art Group Inconnu, 1985.

¹ == Samizdat works by Béla Nóvé (1956–): *Az utcaseprő királysága* (The Kingdom of a Street Cleaner), Tale, 1977; *A kurtizán esküvője*, (The Wedding of a Prostitute), Play, 1978; *Kötéltánc* (Rope Danse), *Poems*, 1979; Translation, and illustrations to Hungarian edition of Orwell's *Animal farm*, entitled *Állati gazdaság*, 1984, *Kétség és remény közt—Erdélyről sokadszorra* (Hopes and Doubts: Once Again on Transylvania), A selection of studies and documents, 1989.

= = What happened—and did not happen in Budapest in autumn 1985?

For the official Forum, some 850 participants were accredited to Budapest, thus the city was home for six weeks to a legion of diplomats and experts. However, instead of the protocol-like programme of the official Forum, the real novelty which caught the attention of the world was the Western public, samizdat press, and dissidents from the East (not to mention the communist secret police and its informers, were busier than ever) was an open dispute among writers and intellectuals from both East and West that was held at the poet István Eörsi's² flat and then in film director András Jeles's³ apartment, which lasted altogether three days in Budapest. The rich and versatile collections survived contain many exciting documents which may well be interesting both for Hungarian and international researchers as well as the larger public.

Hosts and guests, official and unofficial groups had long prepared for the event, which was expected to meet with a great deal of attention in the press. Dissidents, human rights activists, agents, secret police, party bureaucrats, and journalists were all ready to do their best. Even some artists were busy preparing for the Forum, for instance those of the Inconnu Art Group, Budapest, the young and inventive talents with daring political messages. They printed a large numbers of stickers depicting Mona Lisa in a Hungarian police uniform, and these stickers were posted all over the city during the conference: on buses and trams on public telephone cabins and shop windows, suggesting a bizarre but rather realistic image of Hungary as a 'charming police state.' A samizdat poster was also printed with the same design of 'Constable Gioconda,' with the slogans: 'Culture without Police!—Art without Censorship!' Few people knew that the young artist, Péter Bokros,⁴ who had designed the image, had been forcibly conscripted to the army right before the Forum started and spent several days in 'splendid isolation' in a military jail.

2 = István Eörsi (1931–2005) was a Hungarian poet, translator, and journalist. He took part actively in the 1956 revolution, and then was imprisoned for 4 years. He was one of the most devoted followers and the translator of György Lukács the reform-Marxist philosopher of the 'Budapest school'.

3 = András Jeles (1945–) is a Hungarian film and theater director. His first feature *Little Valentino* (1973) became an alternative cult film. However, *Dream Brigade*, shot in 1983, was only screened publicly in 1989. His son, a film director himself, László Nemes Jeles received an Oscar Award for Best Foreign Film in 2015 for his film 'Saul's Son'.

4 = Péter Bokros (1957–2017) was a Hungarian graphic artist and founding member of Inconnu Group, the most active underground art formation, that organised the exhibition banned 'The Fighting City' in 1986, and in 1989 made wood carved memorial columns for the graves of all executed 1956 victims. He finished his life in poverty in a small vilage.

= = The case of the 'cheetah won in the lottery' with communist cultural diplomacy

The official Hungarian preparations began in the autumn of 1983, shortly after the Madrid decision, in fact more than two years before the opening of the European Cultural Forum in Budapest. Following the decision of the Political Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party (Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt, MSZMP) in September 1983, the Ministerial Council established a National Preparatory Committee (Országos Előkészítő Bizottság) to chair the top-level political goals and coordinate the tasks of the host role, chaired by the Minister of Culture, Béla Köpeczi.⁵ A year later, in the autumn of 1984—the long-awaited sinister 'Orwellian Year'—experts from the 35 participating states also held a preparatory meeting in Budapest to develop the Forum's agenda and organisational framework. The top party leadership, the Hungarian 'Politburo' was informed of all this by the end of 1984, and it took a decision on further tasks of the preparation. Finally, the Politburo at its meeting on 24 September 1985, discussed the report presented by Katalin Radics⁶ on the preparations, and set out its last decision three weeks before the Forum opened. On this session, party leader János Kádár,⁷ the man of 'careful punch', and the master of 'two-front tactics', said:

'I welcome the report and propose that the Committee of Political Affairs take note of it.

I join those comrades who appreciate that our organisational staff is preparing carefully for this event. However, this report already reflects concerns in a sense, and I think we went like someone who won a cheetah or a flea circus in the lottery and didn't know what to do with it, when they took it home. I would say, comrades, that we need to get back to our basic principle, and stick to it. [...]

As for the [Western] "monitoring" groups... Let us accept the report's recommendations. So those on the blacklist cannot get a visa, and the ode to it must be taken. Others will need to be issued a visa under the normal procedure, but we have to reckon with the fact that they might prepare to do some minor actions

5 = = See Köpeczi's interview he gave in the Mass Communication Center right before the Budapest Cultural Forum opened. 'European Culture—Hungarian Heritage. Conversation with Minister of Culture Béla Köpeczi'. As a minister, he accurately reflected the wishes of the Hungarian party leadership.

6 = = Katalin Radics (1945–) was a communist politician and a member of administration. During the 1980s she worked as the Head of Department for Science, Education, and Culture, an operative body assigned to the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party MSZMP.

7 = = János Kádár (1912–1989) was a Hungarian communist leader and from late 1956 General Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, a position he held for 32 years. Declining health led to his retirement in 1988, and he died on 6 July 1989, the very day the Hungarian High Court declared Imre Nagy and all revolutionary martyrs innocent.

here. In the right place, even four people can do spectacular things, and there will soon be eight Western reporters who are just eager to record that. And then what would happen? Little crappy things don't have to be dealt with, but dating should be radically prevented! We can safely take on all the ode to this. After all the governance of Hungary cannot be taken over by the Cultural Forum.⁸

What concerns were falling on the foreheads of domestic party leaders and culture cadres, and what kind of prestige gains, political and lucrative benefits did they hope for by 'the cheetah won in the lottery'⁹, being asked to host the European Cultural Forum? As Kádár's comments behind the padded doors of the Politburo's Danube panoramic meeting room reflects: the Hungarian party leadership did not really know what to do with the honor that Hungary was granted the right to organise the European Cultural Forum as the first and last of the Warsaw Pact member states in the very jarring role of the host. It is typical that most of the headaches of the Hungarian forum organisers who eagerly nurtured the image of Hungary as the 'happiest barracks in the Soviet block' were caused by the issues of the third 'Helsinki basket': the free flow of information, free press, religion and culture and the more and more challenging common ground of all these: the human rights. They feared not only the Western diplomats and the Western press, but also the meetings and joint protests of active Hungarian political emigrants and the Hungarian democratic opposition. At the same time, they hoped for another prestige gain, and last but not least for more Western loans, if they successfully fulfill their hospitality role and the appearance of Hungarian 'liberal' cultural policy.

The Hungarian security forces were well aware of the preparations many months prior to the planned event. In the last moment, it therefore secretly instructed the management of Hotel Intercontinental in the downtown of the city to refuse to make the reserved banquet room available and deny all new requests for rental of similar conference spaces. Thus, the Helsinki Federation was denied the chance to hold a public meeting in Budapest. However, thanks to the Hungarian opposition, the meeting still successfully took place in the private residence of two generous artists as host. As I have mentioned, on 15 October, the participants

8 = = Jegyzőkönyv az MSZMP Politikai Bizottságának 1985. szeptember 24-én megtartott üléséről. Jelentés a Budapesten megrendezésre kerülő Európai Kulturális Fórum előkészítésével és lebonyolításával kapcsolatos kérdésekről. Kádár János felszólalása. Magnetofon felvételtől leírt szöveg. [Report on the meeting of the Political Committee of the MSZMP held on September 24, 1985. Report on issues related to the preparation and implementation of the European Cultural Forum to be held in Budapest. János Kádár's speech. Text written following tape recording.] 949-239. M-KS 288-5. MNL OL, Budapest, Hungary.

9 = = This somewhat bizarre saying of the First Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party could either be a reference to a joke commonly known in that time—with the meaning of a 'not really wanted present'—or Kádár's own improvised metaphor for the uncomfortable situation.

gathered at poet István Eörsi's flat, and on the next two days they met at film director András Jeles's apartment. Thus, the event became a private affair, which the Hungarian secret police was unable to prevent, although it tried to monitor it by all means from the beginning till the end of the third day.

As a young writer, translator and editor at the time, I also have some memories about the unique atmosphere of this semi-conspirative, semi-public meeting in the apartment of the well-known poet and intransigent '56-er István Eörsi near the Elisabeth Bridge. After a long historical break, 'West met East' freely and with a rather keen interest in each other in this temporary asylum of a downtown flat full of fairly informally dressed local intellectuals, students, some well-known writers, human rights activists from the 'free world,' and friendly face Western diplomats, a bit more than a hundred people in total. Sitting on the floor, seated on chairs, or standing behind them, the members of the audience listened carefully to the speakers, who spoke mostly in English and sometimes in German, French, and Hungarian. The lectures touched on the question of writers' integrity, the role of writers in society, and the future of European cultural and political heritage. The most sensitive issue, however, was that of censorship, a topic hardly mentioned at the official forum.

In fact, the publicity of these free discussions among writers and intellectuals both from the East and the West was much more intensive than that of the boring protocol like events of the official Forum. The Counter-Forum was atten-



Participants of Alternative or Counter-Forum, 15 October 1985. (Photo: IHF Archives)

ded by, among other people, Susan Sontag,¹⁰ Per Wästberg,¹¹ Danilo Kiš,¹² Hans Magnus Enzensberger,¹³ Timothy Garton Ash,¹⁴ Amos Oz,¹⁵ Pavel Kohut¹⁶ and Jiří Gruša,¹⁷ as well as by a number of Hungarian writers, including György Konrád,¹⁸

10 == Susan Sontag (1933–2004) was an American writer, philosopher, and political activist. She mostly wrote books of essays on photography, war, poverty, cancer, but also published political pamphlets, studies, and film scripts. She remained all in her life a radical minded intellectual, with a passionate search for social justice and liberty worldwide.

11 == Erik Wästberg (1933–) is a Swedish poet, novelist, and journalist. He was editor-in-chief of Sweden's largest daily, *Dagens Nyheter* 1976–1982, and has been a contributor since 1953. Throughout his long life he has campaigned extensively for human rights. He was President of the PEN International from 1979 until 1986 and founder of the Swedish section of Amnesty International (1963).

12 == Danilo Kiš (1935–1989) was born in Subotica (Szabadka) as son of a Serbian mother and a Hungarian Jewish father. He was a Yugoslav novelist, short story writer, essayist and translator. His best known works include 'Hourglass', 'Tomb for Boris Davidovich' and 'The Encyclopedia of the Dead'. In 1979, he left Belgrade for Paris, and gave lectures at Bordeaux University.

13 == Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1929–1922) was a German author, poet, translator, and editor. He was regarded as one of the literary founding figures of the Federal Republic of Germany, and wrote more than 70 books, with works translated into 40 languages. He was one of the leading authors in Group 47, and influenced the 1968 West German student movement.

14 == Timothy Garton Ash (1955–) is a British historian, author, and commentator. He has published so far a dozen of books of political writing which have charted the transformation of Europe over the last half century. He is Professor of European Studies in Oxford University. His essays appear in the *New York Review of Books*. Also writes a column on international affairs in the *Guardian*.

15 == Amos Oz (1939–2018) born in Jerusalem, was an Israeli writer, novelist, and journalist. He was also a professor of Hebrew literature at Ben-Gurion University. From 1967 onwards, he was a prominent advocate of a two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. He was the author of 40 books, and still regarded as one of Israel's most prolific writers and respected intellectuals.

16 == Pavel Kohut (1924–) is a Czech and Austrian novelist, playwright, and poet. He was a member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, a Prague Spring participant and dissident in the 1970s until he was not allowed to return from Austria. He was also a founding member of the Charter 77 movement.

17 == Jiří Gruša (1938–2011) was a Czech poet, novelist, translator, and diplomat. From 1969 he was banned from publishing, and later was imprisoned for his samizdat work. In 1982 he left for West Germany. From 1991 he served as an ambassador to Germany, then on to Austria. For his last years he was the Director of the Diplomatic Academia of Vienna and the President of PEN International.

18 == György Konrád (1933–2019) was a Hungarian writer—banned for long in his own country, and best known in the West. His works include both fictions (*The City Builder*, *The Loser*, *A Feast in the Garden*, *The Stone Dial*) and non-fictions (*Antipolitics*, *The Melancholy of Rebirth*, *A Guest in My Own Country: A Hungarian Life, Departure and Return*). In the 1990s he was elected President of PEN International, and of the Academy of Arts, Berlin.

Sándor Csoóri,¹⁹ György Bence,²⁰ Miklós Mészöly,²¹ and Miklós Tamás Gáspár.²² The Helsinki Federation was represented by Gerald Nagler,²³ Jeri Laber,²⁴ Aryeh Neier²⁵ and Karl von Schwarzenberg,²⁶ who had recently been elected President of the IHF. Right from the beginning, publicity given to the alternative forum by the Western press significantly exceeded the press coverage of the official forum. Three

19 == Sándor Csoóri (1930–2016) was a Hungarian poet, essayist, and screenwriter who became known as one of the finest poets of his generation. He was also considered as a leading figure of national opposition. Volumes of his poetry translated into English included *Memory of Snow*, *Barbarian Prayer*. Among his sociopolitical essays about Eastern Europe are: 'Report from the Tower', 'Preparation for the Reckoning'.

20 == György Bence (1941–2006) was a university professor, philosopher, dissident and political consultant. In 1979 he was among the first Hungarians who criticized together with Andrei Sakharov and others the Soviet crackdown on the Czech Charta 77 signatories. Later he was among the founding members of the IHF for Human Rights. He was founding editor-in-chief of the Budapest Book Review (Budapest Könyvszemle, 1989–1995).

21 == Miklós Mészöly (1921–2001) was a Hungarian prose writer and playwright, a founder and chairman of Széchenyi Academy of Hungarian Writers and Artists. From 1956 he was a freelance writer. His main works included: *Sötét Jelek* ('Dark Signs'), *Az atléta halála* ('Death of an Athlete'), *Saulus* ('Saulus'), *Film* ('Film'), *Megbocsátás* ('Forgiveness'), *Érintések* ('Touches').

22 == Miklós Tamás Gáspár (1948–2023) is a Hungarian philosopher, politician and publicist. In 1978 he settled from Romania to Hungary, and started to teach philosophy at Eötvös Lóránd University Budapest, but soon was fired due to his 'oppositional attitude'. He then went on teaching at Yale and in French universities. Returning to Budapest he soon became one of the most radical figures of the democratic opposition, until he was elected as an MP in 1989.

23 == Gerald Nagler (1929–2022) was a Swedish businessman and a human right activist. In 1977 he went to the Soviet Union to make contact with Andrei Sakharov, Yelena Bonner, Naum Meiman, and other Russian dissidents. He then founded the Swedish Helsinki Committee for Human Rights and was its Chairman from 1992 to 2004.

24 == Jeri Laber (1931–) was one of the founders of Human Rights Watch, the largest human rights organization in the United States. She is the author and/or editor of dozens of Human Rights Watch reports and more than 100 articles on human rights issues published in *The New York Times*, *The New York Review of Books* and many other publications.

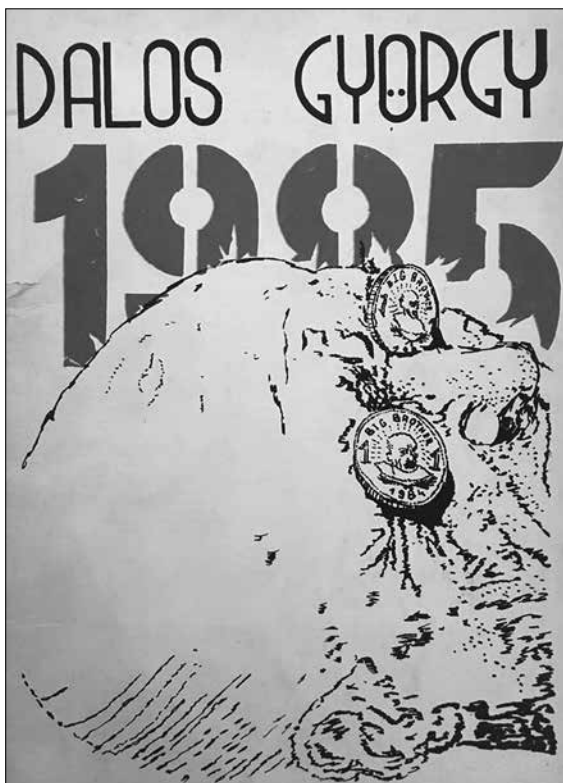
25 == Aryeh Neier (1937–) was born into a German Jewish family in Berlin, then in Nazi Germany. He then became a refugee as a child as his family fled when he was two years old in 1939. He graduated in the US from Cornell University in legal studies in 1961. Later he became a human right activist who co-founded Human Rights Watch, served as the president of George Soros's Open Society Institute philanthropy network from 1993 to 2012.

26 == Karl von Schwarzenberg, (1937–) is a human right activist, politician, and diplomat. In 1948 together with his family he fled from communist Czechoslovakia to Austria. He started his political career as an activist for ÖWP. He was the chairman of IHF for Human Rights between 1984 and 1991. Then on he became twice the Foreign Minister of Czech Republic (2007–2013).

television channels, several radio stations (including the BBC, Voice of America, Deutsche Welle, and Radio Free Europe), and countless correspondents from the Western media took part in the symposium, producing reports and making interviews with the participants.

The great Western dailies, weeklies and magazines, including the Austrian *Profil*, the German *Die Welt*, *Die Weltwoche* and *Die Presse*, the prestigious Swiss *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, the French *Liberation*, and the Italian *La Repubblica*, published detailed coverage of the counter-forum. An essay by Danilo Kiš was published in the *New York Times Book Review*. Garton Ash sent a report to *Spectator*

and wrote a longer study for *New York Review of Books*. In the latter piece, which was entitled ‘The Hungarian lesson’, he revealed that although censorship in Hungary may have seemed liberal from a distance, in reality it was characterised by chaos and unpredictability. To give an example, in response to Soviet protests, he mentioned that copies of a Béla Kun²⁷ biography, written by an associate of the Party History Institute, had recently been removed from the bookshops and the publisher was ordered by the Politburo to keep all the copies closed from the public.²⁸ Even some of the right-wing Western press that did not represented themselves at the Counter-Forum reflected on the main topics quite clearly. *The Guardian of Liberty*, for example, published the full text of Counter-Forum’s statement, ironically adding reiterated the Kremlin’s viewpoint of the Soviet Communist Party daily, *Pravda*, on the role of television and radio, what is applied



A witty and popular samizdat novel by György Dalos—AB Independent Publisher, 1985.

27 == Béla Kun (1886–1938) was the leader of the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919, later he fled for the Soviet Union, where he fell a victim of Stalin’s purges. The book referred by Timothy Garton Ash was György Borsányi’s biography, see: Borsányi, *Kun Béla*.

28 == Garton Ash, ‘The Hungarian lesson’. On the media response in connection with the counter-forum, see Project files: Cultural Forum, Budapest, Press Clippings. Box 2, folder 3. 318-0-5. Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, OSA. Budapest, Hungary.

to the other media and to the arts too: ‘Our television and radio broadcasting must entirely and fully be political television and political radio broadcasting.’²⁹

György Konrád, in those years an ‘unperson’ in his own country, but possibly the best known Hungarian writer abroad, had written a lengthy essay, which was first published in samizdat,³⁰ and then was read out by the author himself as an opening speech to the participants of the Alternative Cultural Forum in Budapest. Even its title sounds rather polemic with a scent of irony: ‘A cenzúra reformja?’ [Reforming censorship?]. Konrád in fact provides a profound analysis from all aspects of the problem: historically, politically, psychologically, and often concludes in highly original statements. As he compared the Western and Eastern models of publishing practice: ‘From Voltaire to Flaubert roughly a century was enough for the French writers to get rid off censorship. However, for the Eastern half of Europe even two centuries were not enough to reach this goal. Censors and customs officers in East Europe are not at all comic figures as yet. Your smile will immediately frozen, once they pull out your personal notes from your suitcase, read them, and may confiscate them, if they feel like. These guys are armed legal rubbers with a high sense of duty.’ He emphasised the unacceptable nature of censorship, and insist that it must be wholly abolished, not just reformed.

Other speakers of the Counter-Forum expressed nevertheless characteristic—although often controversial—ideas, as was reported in those days by the *Hírmondó*, popular samizdat paper of Budapest:

‘Danilo Kiš pointed out that self-censorship was even more harmful than the real thing, official censorship, because in a schizophrenic way the former forced the author to assume the personality of another man, who may not even exist as a real person. In his comments about the written text, he referred to the writer’s dilemma: whether one should be loyal to the laws of the state or to the norms of literature. Talking about the limitations dictated by political “realities”, István Csurka³¹ also referred to censorship and self-censorship, when he declared that while politics may have to deal with realities, culture must transcend them. Literature cannot accept them, and writers must attempt even the impossible. He quoted Epictetus: “Only those deserve freedom, who are prepared to die for it.”

29 = = ‘Budapest appeal for religious freedom’. 1.

30 = = Konrád, ‘A cenzúra reformja? Az Ellen-Fórum beszédeinek külön száma’.

31 = = István Csurka (1934–2012) was a Hungarian novelist, playwright, and politician. During the Kádár era he sharply criticized the communist establishment from a national basis. During the 1980s he became one of the main leaders of the ‘national opposition’. As the editor-in-chief of Magyar Fórum, founding member of MDF (Magyar Demokrata Fórum, Hungarian Democratic Forum), he challenged MDF from inside, the first governing party, from which he was excluded in 1993, still went on marching with his extreme right, anti-liberal, and anti-semitic new party, MIÉP (Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja, Party of Hungarian Justice and Life).

The other main topic of the symposium was European unity and the European idea.

According to Susan Sontag, Europe's future lays in the creation of a multicultural and multinational Europe without separate states. By contrast, Hans Magnus Enzensberger thought that the "European idea" could never be a guiding principle, nor could the European institutes and the bureaucratic organisations of political power be our ideals. He criticised the idea of the European Union, pointing out that the Germans continued to regard themselves Germans, rather than Europeans.

István Csurka painted a picture of Europe as a sick and onanistic society solely interested in money. The West can only produce goods, but not ideas. Still, Eastern Europe was looking to the West for inspiration. [...] Taking issue with Csurka, François Bondy³² pointed out in his brief and witty speech that it was by no means self-evident that new ideas were necessary. In any case, the ideas of democracy and human rights were born in the West, along with a number of new movements in art. Admittedly, Eastern Europe itself produced some new ideas, such as Communism, for example.[...]

In György Krassó's³³ words, there was no such thing as Europe at all; it was all history. There were many ways to divide Europe, but the main distinction separated it into two areas: one half was occupied by the Russians and the other half was *not* occupied by the Americans. In that context, the fact that Hungary was an occupied country of a crushed revolution would have deserved greater attention. [...]

The position and the role of writers was another topic that engaged the attention of the participants most.

Per Wastberg made the point that literature was not about drawing some final and unshakeable conclusions, it was rather a testimony for pluralism. Writers should not be expected to set various goals; they are to express dissatisfaction and desire. Alain Finkelkraut³⁴ talked about the writers' betrayal. Amos Oz also referred

32 == François Bondy (1915–2003) was a Swiss journalist and novelist. He worked for Swiss and German newspapers and was reputed for his political commentaries. In 1940, Bondy worked for *Weltwoche*; in 1950, he joined the *Congress for Cultural Freedom*, and established the monthly magazine *Preuves* Paris. From 1970, he lived in Zürich. He was one of the first Western intellectuals who promoted the work of the Polish exile writer Witold Gombrowicz.

33 == György Krassó (1932–1991) was a member of Hungarian democratic movement during the 1980s. He had taken part in the 1956 revolution as a student, and was imprisoned then for 7 years. By mid-1980s he was the busiest samizdat publisher, for that he was often harrassed by the police. With the standard name 'Hungarian October' he founded his Publishers, Press, and lately his Party. In 1985 he left Budapest for London, but kept on busy with his Press.

34 == Alain Finkelkraut (1949–) is a French philosopher and public intellectual. He has written books and essays on a wide range of topics, many on the ideas of tradition and identity nonviolence, including Jewish identity and antisemitism, French colonialism, the mission of the French education system in immigrant assimilation, and the Yugoslav Wars.

to the responsibility of writers, when he pointed out that tyranny, oppression, moral predicament and mass murder had always and everywhere started with the contamination of language. The writer's task is to name everything by its name. Every time that war was described as peace, oppression and persecution as safety, and murder as liberation, it invariably turned out that tyranny had put shackles on the language. [...]

Jiří Gruša spoke about those emigrant intellectuals from Eastern Europe, who used to be 'prophets' in their home country and now were considered ex-prophets both in the West and in the East. In fact, even back in their home country they only projected their own personality, rather than their fine ideals.³⁵

= = The 'Helsinki kitsch'—or has the 'Big red shark been hooked' by the West?

As for the official conference it proved to be far less challenging and inspirational—both politically and intellectually. The Western delegations could not be blamed entirely for the Forum's failure to use the opportunity to spark fiery debates and express fervent criticism of communism. The agenda of the conference practically smothered all hope of any debate. The Eastern Bloc delegations insisted on the extremely detailed agenda they had set. Thus, only the selected delegates could take the floor; they were allowed to speak only on the subject which they had already specified as the focus of their talks, and there were no informal discussions afterward. Although the Western delegations motioned to change the rules so as to allow time for informal discussions, their proposal needed a unanimous 'yes' from all those present. Since the communist delegates opposed it, the proposal was defeated.

Indeed, the events that took place in the field of international politics in the ten years after Helsinki gave very little cause for celebration, as was indicated by the 'lack of progress' at the Budapest Forum. Still, the Cultural Forum of Budapest became a significant stage in the Helsinki process, not so much on account of the official events, but as a consequence of the initiative launched by the International Helsinki Federation. The Federation wanted to hold a parallel event during the first three days of the official Forum, that was finally managed to be held in private flats owing to daring and generous contributions of Hungarian artists, intellectuals and the active network of the local democratic opposition. This came to be known as the 'Alternative' or 'Counter-Forum', the only progressive novelty in the eyes of many critical minded participants and observers.

35 = = 'Az alternatív fórum'. 3-4.

In his subtly written monograph on the history of Hungarian Helsinki Committee,³⁶ historian András Mink³⁷ concludes: ‘The Alternative Forum passed no resolutions; it issued no final communiqué and presented no official position on the issues debated. But it was not meant to do, either. All things considered, the forum accomplished its mission. One of its goals was to enable the writers, artists and dissidents from both the East and the West to meet and to get to know each other. Another obvious goal was to give Western publicity to censorship and the position of dissidents inside the Communist countries. The third goal of the counter-forum was either to enforce a right acknowledged in the Helsinki Accords—the right of groups of citizens to meet—or to inform the world about the authorities’ denial of this right. The counter-forum was able to meet all these expectations.’³⁸

Even so, many dissidents in Budapest—and no doubt even more in Warsaw, Prague, Moscow and Bucharest—felt rather disappointed about the outcome of the official Helsinki Forum, since they would have expected ‘loud solidarity instead of silent diplomacy’ from the West. In an article, Miklós Haraszti³⁹ radically refused the whole policy of ‘the Helsinki kitsch’, which in his view only helped to maintain the cynical status quo policy of the ‘Yalta order’. He raised the question: ‘Did anything happen?’, and concludes as follows:

‘It cannot be ruled out that totalitarian and democratic states held a consultation in Budapest aimed at reaching a consensus on the future of culture. The way in which the consultation was conducted will also remain with us: this technique of secret diplomacy, has so far only been used for cultural purposes in communist countries. And we are left with a new conception of culture, whose homeland is, in fact, not Budapest, but Helsinki. If the young philosopher, György Lukács was right, culture is nothing more than cultivating a desire for our perfect self. In Budapest, the states have come very close to this possible perfection, simply by the fact of the Forum: to the common official culture of Yalta-Europe. I would call this new culture “Helsinki kitsch”, and I believe that, as a desire for oneself, it lives and works even if it does not yet make a joint final statement.’⁴⁰[...]

36 == Mink, *The Defendent: the State—The History of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee*.

37 == András Mink (1965) is a Hungarian historian and archivist working for Blinken-OSA Archives, Budapest. In the early 1990s he was journalist of weekly *Beszélő*, then on editor-in-chief of the monthly periodical from 2003 to 2007. He joined the Hungarian Helsinki Committee as programme director, and started to work for Blinken OSA in 1995. He received his PhD from the Central European University History Department in 2003.

38 == Mink, op. cit. 66.

39 == Miklós Haraszti (1945–) is a Hungarian writer, journalist, and politician. He studied philosophy and literature at Budapest University. In 1976 he took part in Hungarian democratic opposition, and in 1980 he became editor of the samizdat *Beszélő*. In 1989, he participated in the ‘roundtable’ negotiations on free elections. A member of the Hungarian Parliament from 1990–1994, he then moved on to lecture on media politics at numerous universities.

40 = The final resolution of the European Cultural Forum was vetoed by the Romanian delegation instructed by Nicolae Ceaușescu.

The meeting point is obvious: favoring state-level relations. Communist countries are keen to expand cultural exchanges, provided that their control over culture is not compromised. As long as they are not threatened with this, they are willing to sign standards that are contrary to their principles and practices. The other group, from the west, goes to the meeting point from the opposite direction: if cultural contacts are established between the countries, they will not mind if the eastern states ignore the restrictions that, if implemented consistently, would upset the status quo in Helsinki's first and second baskets. [...]

Whatever we have to say about the Western cultural figures in Budapest, it is a fact that only persons selected by the states could be considered as officially invited participants according to the rules. So far, only official Eastern Europe has ignored a culture independent of the state, now the whole official culture, the West as well as the East, did so when it "took note" of the official explanation given by the Hungarians why they would not allow the independent symposium to be held in public, which, for any case, would have been their duty to host.⁴¹

However, the Soviet human right activist, Sergey Kovalyev⁴² felt quite differently when said: 'The big red shark has already swallowed the hook in Helsinki. Now it is up to the West to tug on the string.'⁴³ This belief seemed to be justified by the fact, that the first Reagen-Gorbachev summit was held in Geneva in November 1985, which in light what followed later on further summits—in Reykjavik in 1986 and in Washington in 1987—soon proved to be the first decisive step to the rapid dissolution of the Soviet system. However, the average East-European citizens could hardly feel anything of this at that time. Nor did the Russian human right activists in their forced labour camp or imprisoned, those Polish Solidarity activists still interned, Václav Havel, Miklós Durayand others in Czechoslovakia, or the victims of the Securitate in Romania. On the contrary, during the next months oppression even in Hungary became harder. It seemed as if the Hungarian authorities wanted to take revenge for their previous indulgence forced upon them by the massive presence of diplomats from the West. The democratic opposition in fact was still to suffer a long series of harassments: house searches, fines, arrests, which soon concluded in the brutal police attack on peaceful demonstrators, the ill-famed 'Battle of Chain Bridge' on 15 March 1986 –national memorial day, when free press was first

41 == Haraszti, 'A Helsinki Giccs'

42 == Sergey Kovalyev (1930–2021) was a biophysicist, and a Soviet-Russian activist for protection of human rights. In 1966 he protested in an open letter against the trial of two brave Russian writers: Siniavsky and Daniel. He was soon fired from the Moscow State University, and in 1974 was sentenced for ten years prison and exile for his samizdat activities, and 'anti-soviet propaganda'. He could only return to Moscow in 1987.

43 == These words of Kovalyev were preserved by his fellow prisoners in the Goulags. No written source has been found.

achieved by some young poets and students in Pest-Buda as a glorious overture of peaceful 1848 revolution.



Memorial stamp issued for the official Cultural Forum by the Hungarian Post, 1985.

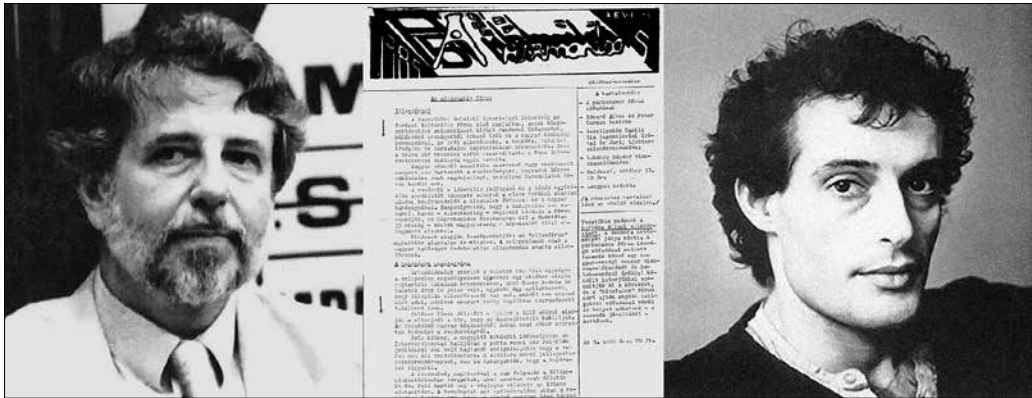
== The sources of the Budapest Forum and Counter-Forum

A rich collection of sources survived about the events and debates of the Forum and Counter-Forum consisting of the one-time publications (articles published in the Eastern and Western press, gassizdat, samizdat, and tamizdat), the records of the Hungarian diplomatic, police, and party organs (secret reports, instructions, etc.) and some private and personal recollections (in the form of memoirs, oral history interviews, etc.). The theme is of both Hungarian and international interest. The

arguments which were put forward in the formal and informal debates clearly reveal what the creators and managers of culture thought about public fora, human rights, and political freedoms and responsibilities. The people who took part were writers, journalists, artists, scientists, diplomats, and politicians from both East and West just a few years before the decline of the bipolar world order.

There are three main archival holdings of the Budapest Cultural and Counter-Cultural Forum held in late 1985: (1) the Hungarian samizdat collection of PIM, (2) the documents of the IHF, and (3) the secret files of ÁBTL. All three closely related, well-structured, and freely researchable repositories are located in downtown Budapest, quite close to one another, which makes it possible to study the materials in their holdings in parallel with relative ease.

The Hungarian samizdat collection of the PIM was completed and made accessible for research following the major changes of the political system in 1989–1990. It went on to become one of the most comprehensive Hungarian reference samizdat collections, like the ones of the National Széchényi Library (Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, OSZK) and the Blinken-osa Archives (former Open Society Archives). Today, the PIM's collection includes more than 200 samizdats in book format and some three dozen non-censored periodicals, and a number of small prints published in the 1970s and 1980s. It was mainly the 1985 issues of *Beszélő* and *Hírmondó*, the two prominent Hungarian samizdat papers, which reported on the events of both the Budapest Forum and Counter-Forum, publishing fresh news, interviews, speeches, and summaries of the debates, though censorship and self-



Dissident writers Ferenc Kőszeg and Miklós Haraszti with samizdat paper *Hírmondó*.

ensorship, the main issues of the unofficial Counter-Forum organised by the IHF and Hungarian dissidents jointly, were often debated passionately both before and after 1985 by independent minded Hungarian authors and scholars, such as György Konrád, Miklós Haraszti, Ferenc Kőszeg,⁴⁴ György Bencze, István Eörsi, György Petri,⁴⁵ György Dalos,⁴⁶ Sándor Radnóti,⁴⁷ Gáspár Miklós Tamás and Sándor Szilágyi.⁴⁸

44 = Ferenc Kőszeg (1939–) is a Hungarian editor, teacher, and politician. In the 1970s, he joined the democratic opposition in the making. As a founding editor of *Beszélő* he took an active part in samizdat movement. In 1988, he was a founding member of the Alliance of Free Hungarian Democrats (Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége, SZDSZ), and became an mp by the first free election. In 1989, he was also a founding member, and then on the first Chairman of Hungarian Helsinki Committee.

45 = György Petri (1943–2000) was a Hungarian poet, translator, and editor. After 1975, his works were banned as politically unacceptable. Until 1988 his poems appeared only in samizdat. During that period, he translated poetry and drama as a freelance job. Between 1981 and 1985, he co-edited *Beszélő* the illegal paper of the Democratic Opposition. He joined the SZETA (Fund for Aiding the Poor,) and the liberal party, SZDSZ formed in 1988.

46 = György Dalos (1943–) is a Hungarian writer and historian. In the mid-1960s, he studied history at the Lomonossov University. He then returned to Budapest and worked as a museologist. In 1968, he was accused of 'Maoist activities' and was handed 7 months prison on probation, plus publication ban. In 1977, he joined the opposition movement of Hungary. From 1987 he lived mostly as a freelance writer in Vienna, Berlin, and Budapest.

47 = Sándor Radnóti (1946–) is a Budapest based former dissident writer, editor, and critic. From 1979, he was an active member of the Hungarian democratic opposition. In 1983, he was offered a visiting fellowship at New York University by the Soros Foundation New York. Since 1993, he has been a professor of aesthetics at the Eötvös Lóránd University of Budapest. He was the founding editor of the prominent literary periodical *Holmi* for a quarter of a century.

48 = Sándor Szilágyi (1954–) is a Hungarian journalist, photographer, member of the the democratic opposition. He was one of the founding editors of *Beszélő*, the leading underground political periodical. Apart from his samizdat activities, he was the main organizer of the free courses of 'flying university' in Budapest. (1978–1984) He was also a devoted editor, who saved and published writings left behind by István Bibó, the revolutionary minister of 1956.

The IHF, as the most influential independent organization monitoring human rights, was founded in Bellagio, Italy in the Autumn of 1982. It remained active for a quarter of a century. Its overall archival documentation, which comes to some 55 meters in length, includes papers, correspondence, thematic and country reports, conference materials, archival photos, and press clippings. These materials were deposited in several installments between 1998 and 2007 in the Open Society Archives in Budapest, as the contractual care-holder of the overall IHF collection. The documents of the 1985 Budapest Cultural Forum and Counter-Forum, as a sub-fund, can be found in five archival boxes.⁴⁹ Apart from the IHF correspondence, papers, press clippings, and archival photographs, the most precious documents preserved here are the original manuscripts (both typewritten and hand-written) submitted by the main speakers of Counter-Forum, such as Danilo Kiš, Susan Sontag, Amos Oz, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, György Konrád and Timothy Garton Ash. The events and debates of both the official and the unofficial Cultural Forum were often covered all the year round by the special programmes and background reports of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty.

The third type of resource of the 1985 Budapest cultural fora, the Hungarian secret police records, can be found in the ÁBTL in Budapest. They provide a very different perspective, including the angle of the existing communist power structure and a number of confident records made by the Hungarian Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the central bodies of the ruling Communist Party. These documents cover a period of more than two years of events from the earliest preparations for the Budapest Cultural Forum to its final evaluation, i.e. from March 1984 until April 1986. For the most part, these documents are ‘top secret’ official plans, propositions, reports, and resolutions added by a number of secret agent reports. Some 70 of these documents were published for the twentieth anniversary of the Budapest cultural fora in 2005 by Rolf Müller, that timean archivist working himself for the ÁBTL.⁵⁰ However, this published collection probably constitutes only a small part of the official records held by the ÁBTL, and new research may well result in many more findings.



Some well-known speakers of the Counter-Forum, 16 october 1985. (Photo: IHF Archives)

49 = = Project files: Cultural Forum, Budapest, Press Clippings. Box 2, folder 3. 318-0-5. Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, OSA. Budapest, Hungary.

50 = = Müller, *Európai Kulturális Fórum és ellenfórum Budapest, 1985*.

= = Three featured items of archival sources

(1) Programme schedule for the IHF Cultural Symposium,
Budapest 15–18 October 1985

Although the plans and practical preparations for the alternative programmes of the Budapest Cultural Forum 1985 had been started more than a year earlier, it was this invitation letter and programme schedule sent to all Western participants by the IHF from its Vienna Office, an invitation signed by Chairman Karl Joachim Schwarzenberg on 1 September 1985, that proved the success of devoted efforts made by the IHF staff to organise a three-day East-West Cultural Symposium in Budapest in parallel with the official opening session of the European Conference.

The main subjects of the alternative forum were much more challenging. They included ‘Writers and their Integrity’ and ‘The Future of European Culture,’ and they offered a good opportunity for free and stimulating exchange of ideas for participants from both East and West. The list of authors invited seemed quite imposing, as it included prominent figures such as György Konrád, Susan Sontag, Per Wästberg, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Derek Walcott,⁵¹ Timothy Garton Ash, Alain Finkelkraut, Danilo Kiš, Jiří Gruša, El Doctorow⁵² and Amos Oz. This forum gave perhaps the first chance since 1945 for writers from both East and West to enter into free public debates on sensitive cultural and political issues such as exile, censorship, self-censorship, the role of national identity in literature, the rights of minorities, the right to history, or the basic question of whether European culture is separate from world culture. And is European culture really one indivisible culture? These issues represented an utterly new approach, which regarded cultural freedom as a vitally important and integral part of the overall realm of human rights.

How did the Budapest Cultural Counter-Forum manage to implement these promising plans made by the IHF? Not quite as was expected. Apart from Hungarians, no other participants from Eastern Bloc countries could attend the symposium, either because they could not get passports or because they were forced to live under police surveillance, house arrest, or had been interned or jailed, like many Russian, Polish, Czech, Slovak and Romanian writers at the time. They were partly represented by some Western writers of Eastern origin, e.g. Jiří Gruša, Danilo Kiš, and Amos Oz, and Timothy Garton Ash, who came directly from Warsaw to Budapest,

51 = = Derek Walcott (1930–2017) was a Saint Lucian poet and playwright, a prominent author of modern Caribbean literature. Among his fifty volumes his best known books of poems are: *The Bounty*, *The Prodigal*, *White Egrets*—his best known plays are: *Walker and The Ghost Dance*, *Moon-Child*, *O Starry Starry Night*. In 1992, he received the Nobel Prize in Literature.

52 = = El Doctorow (1931–2015) was an American novelist, editor, best known for his works of historical fiction. He wrote twelve novels, three volumes of short fiction and a stage drama. They included the novels *Ragtime*, *Billy Bathgate*, and *The March*. A number of his novels and short stories were also adapted for the screen, including *Daniel*, *Ragtime*, and *Wakefield*.

and spoke for the Polish writers who at the time were still suffering from the harsh measures of martial law. Things were similar in the case of writers who belonged to ethnic minorities. Hungarian participants, like poet Sándor Csoóri and philosopher Gáspár Miklós Tamás, spoke on their behalf, as did two of the most harassed writers and samizdat makers, Géza Szócs,⁵³ who was originally from Cluj Napoca (Kolozsvár) and Miklós Duray⁵⁴ from Bratislava (Pozsony). Szócs and Duray addressed open letters to the participants in the Counter-Forum.

How many people took part in the forum? As many (120-150) as could fit in the crowded private Budapest flats provided for the event by poet István Eörsi and film director András Jele. These people were IHF representatives, writers, journalists, Western diplomats, Hungarian intellectuals and students. This constituted an unanticipated change which gave the Counter Forum a fairly informal and non-conformist feel.

The Hungarian authorities refused to allow the group to hold its gathering in any public place, and the reservation made by the IHF for a conference room in a downtown Budapest hotel was cancelled at the last moment by the Hungarian secret police. On the very first day of the six-week-long official Forum, this scandal, which was reported on by the world press and some Western delegates, all of a sudden drew attention to the Counter-Forum, highlighting the fact that cultural affairs are still sensitive political issues in the eastern part of Europe.



Secret police files at the Hungarian Historical Archives of State Security Services, Budapest.

53 = Géza Szócs (1953–2012) was an ethnic Hungarian poet and politician from Transylvania, Romania. In 1982, he edited the Hungarian-language samizdat *Ellenpontok*. Because of this he was interrogated and abused by Securitate, the communist secret police. Then he was forced into exile to Switzerland where he worked in Geneva as a journalist. In 2010–2012 he served as Secretary of State for Culture in Hungary.

54 = Miklós Duray (1945–2022) was an ethnic Hungarian geologist, politician, and professor in Czechoslovakia—later Slovakia. In 1978, he founded the Committee for Protection of the Rights of Hungarian Minority, and joined the civil rights movement Charta '77. In 1982, he was arrested, and held without trial for 470 days. His main crime was his book *Kutyaszorító* ('Dog Clamp') published in the US, documenting the grave violations of right against the Hungarian minority.

(2) Secret report of the Hungarian State Security Service, 16 October 1985

The state security services of communist Hungary began to follow the preparations underway for the Counter-Forum Budapest 18 months prior, i.e. as early as March 1984, by gathering regular information and agent reports on the informal meetings of IHF representatives and some Hungarian dissident intellectuals in Budapest. By the opening of the official Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) Cultural Forum in mid-October 1985, the entire staff of the Hungarian secret police had been mobilised with the main task of preventing any potential conflict or open scandal before, during, and after the six-week-long prestigious East-West diplomatic conference, as a 'top secret' daily information report dated 16 October 1985 (just one day after the grand opening of the CSCE Conference) clearly proves. It seems to be a telling sign of flurry and an excess of caution (or even paranoia) that it was the second report submitted that day by the secret service on the same subject: reporting on all suspicious signs and information concerning the efforts of the IHF to find public places: restaurants, conference rooms in downtown Budapest for the use of the Counter Forum. The brief report, which contained both false and misleading information, also illustrates the incompetence of the Hungarian secret police, as they do not seem to have been aware of the latest news, according to which the Counter-Forum had been refused permission to hold its session in a public place a day before and so was hosted by two wellknown Hungarian dissident artists, who offered their private homes for the sessions.

Gyula Horn,⁵⁵ Head of Department of Foreign Affairs in the Communist Party's Central Committee and Hungarian Prime from 1994 to 1998, was responsible for conducting and ensuring the smooth operations of the CSCE Conference in Budapest. He must have known about the parallel preparations of the IHF's Counter Forum, and he might also have had a decisive role in the official refusal of the IHF demand for public space, which was issued in written form by the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, years later, following 1990, when he was asked about his role by reporters, he replied with an obscure allusion to the fact that there were far too many high-ranking Soviet and Eastern Bloc delegates who expected Hungary, the host country, to adopt firm measures in order to resist 'the pressure of Western countries'.

55 = Gyula Horn (1932–2013) was a Hungarian politician. As a pragmatist cadre of the Communist Party, he was already appointed Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in 1983. In two years, he supervised the events of Budapest Cultural Forum in that capacity as well. He is most remembered as the last Communist Minister of Foreign Affairs who demolished the 'Iron Curtain' for East Germans in 1989. Later he served as Prime Minister from 1994 to 1998.

(3) Special issue of Hungarian samizdat bimonthly *Hírmondó* on debates of the Counter-Forum in Budapest, October–November 1985

The Hungarian samizdat periodical *Hírmondó* was launched in 1993 by Gábor Demszky,⁵⁶ who also founded AB Independent Publishing House, and just over a year later also the *Beszélő*. Soon, other samizdat papers were also launched, such as *Demokrata*, which was founded by Jenő Nagy,⁵⁷ *Máshonnan Beszélő*, an *East European Monitor* which reflected the increasing interest among the public in the uncensored press and the Hungarian samizdat press. *Hírmondó* was published as a screen-printed bymonthly; by the Autumn of 1985, it had been published in 15 issues, each of which sold fairly well. Its profile, style and character were somewhat different compared to other free press products, as it preferred to publish shorter articles and interviews. Its greatest asset was rather the fresh news blocs based on many sources.

Well over of one third of its October–November 1985 issue was dedicated to the debates which had just taken place at the Budapest Cultural Forum and the Counter-Forum. This issue included no less than 10 documents, interviews, essays, and articles, for instance conference papers by Danilo Kiš, Amos Oz, Edward Albee⁵⁸ and Peter Curman,⁵⁹ open letters by Géza Szőcs and Miklós Duray, interviews with Yuriy Lyubimov⁶⁰ and Danilo Kiš, us Congressman Alfonse Marcello

56 == Gábor Demszky (1952–) is a Hungarian politician, lawyer and sociologist. During the late period of communist regime, Demszky was a leading figure of the democratic opposition, and the samizdat activities. During this time he was surveyed by the secret services, and often harassed by the authorities. He was a founding member of the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) between 1988 and 2010, and the Mayor of Budapest for 5 terms from 1990 to 2010.

57 == Jenő Nagy (1952–) a Hungarian philosopher, dissident publicist, founding editor of AB and ABC independent publishers, and the bymonthly periodical *Demokrata*. He joined the samizdat movement right from the start, signed the declaration supporting Charta 77, and then soon lost his job. He was the samizdat editor and publisher in Hungary, who suffered the most from repeated police harassment, but stubbornly carried on anyway.

58 == Edward Albee (1928–2016) was a world-famous modern American playwright known for works such as *A Delicate Balance*, *At home at the Zoo*, *Occupant*, *Seascape*, *The American Dream*, *The Goat*, *The Play About the Baby*, *The Sandbox*, *Three Tall Women*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

59 == Peter Curman (1941–2021) was a Swedish poet, and editor. Apart from his own volumes of poetry, he initiated founding some new Swedish literary publishers, such as *Författarcentrum* (1967) and *Stockholmstidningen* (1998). Between 1983 and 1986 he was the cultural manager of the Swedish liberal daily *Aftonbladet*, and he was elected as Chairman of the Swedish Writers' Association (1988–1999).

60 == Yuriy Lyubimov (1917–2014) was a world famous Russian actor and theater director of his Taganka Theater in Moscow. In 1984, the Soviet leadership replaced him as artistic director of Taganka and then stripped him of his Soviet citizenship. The renowned director went abroad and worked in many European countries, included Hungary too. He regained his Soviet citizenship in 1989 only and returned to his homeland and to the leadership of Taganka.

D'Amato's speech, etc. Hungarian readers were also given a detailed introduction to the principles and activities of International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, which had been founded no more than three years earlier. Though the articles and comments were published with no names, the issue nonetheless seems to be the product of good teamwork among the authors, editors, translators, and interviewers. Two of the authors who published anonymously in the issue were most likely the editors Miklós Haraszti and Gábor Demszky as their witty styles and challenging statements make their writings easy to identify.

This special issue of *Hírmondó* was dedicated to the recent debates which took place at the Counter-Forum. These debates were fresh and provocative, and they evinced a clear commitment to engagement in human rights. Thus, the issue stands out from among the tired, routine news and reports which appeared in the professional press, both in the East and in the West in 1985.

**== Inside and outside
the 'Velvet Prison'**

'In Hungary there is no censorship,' declared György Aczél,⁶¹ cultural secretary of the Central Committee of the MSZMP in an interview with Paul Lendvai⁶² in 1980.⁶³ However, everyone was well aware of the fact that in a country of 'actually existing socialism' such a thing as censorship all too evidently did exist. The statement made by the most influential communist leader in charge



Man of the State and Censorship by György Konrád, Áramlat Independent Publisher, 1986.

61 == György Acél (1917–1991) was a Hungarian communist politician. He became a member of the then illegal Hungarian Communist Party in 1935, and was a founding member of the Political Committee of the MSZMP in late 1956. He was a deputy minister from 1958 to 1967, later, as one of the leaders of the Party's Central Committee the most influential figure in socialist culture politics for a quarter of century.

62 == Paul Lendvai (1929–) is a Hungarian-born Austrian journalist. He moved to Austria in 1957, and is working still as an author and journalist there. Some of his books in English: *Anti-Semitism without Jews: Communist Eastern Europe* (1971), *Bureaucracy of Truth: How Communist Governments Manage the News* (1981), *Hungarians: A Thousand Years of Victory in Defeat* (2003).

63 == Aczél, *Szocializmus, nemzet, kultúra*, 168.

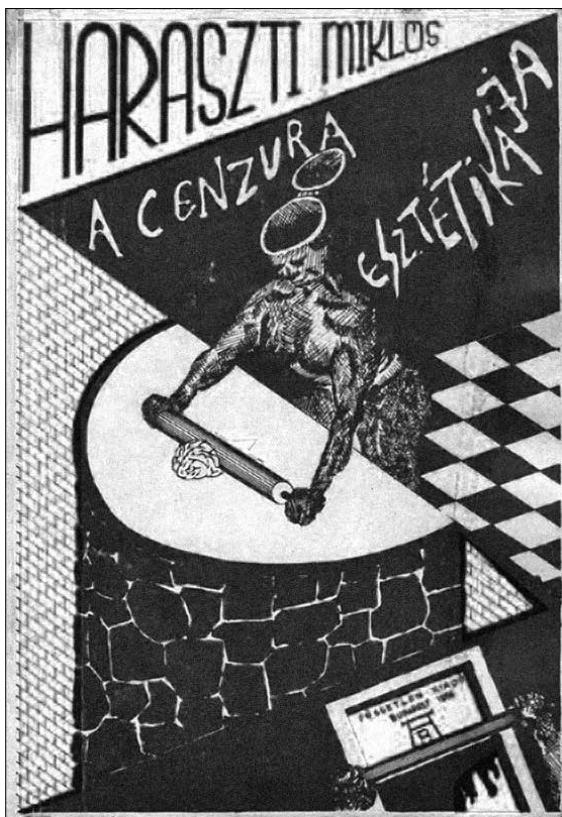
of cultural policy was nothing but a routine propaganda lie, or another sample of Orwellian ‘doublespeak’.

The state bureaucracy and the Politbureau repeatedly discussed how to treat the ‘oppositional-hostile groups’ and their ‘illegal publications’, yet principles were never declared publicly, nor was a list of banned works or writers ever published, although it was loudly demanded from time to time by the rebellious editors of periodical *Mozgó Világ*, for example, or at the assemblies of the Hungarian Writers’ Association (Magyar Írószövetség) in the 1980s. Informality in the daily practice of administration remained paramount in the later years of János Kádár’s rule.

Needless to say, the ‘Thought Police’ played a considerable role too, especially the Department III/III (Internal Reaction & Sabotage) of the Ministry of Interior. House searches, short-term arrests, heavy fines and various other forms of harassment occurred regularly from 1981 until 1988. All in all, thousands of copies of samizdat books and newspapers were destroyed, and a number of duplication machines were confiscated. During the early years of Hungarian samizdat, from

1982 to 1984, the editors of the periodicals *Beszélő* and *Hirmondó* were repeatedly harassed and fined. In spring 1983, Gábor Demszky, editor in chief of AB publishers was attacked by the police in the street and, under the pretext of ‘violence against the authorities’, given a six-month suspended sentence. Somewhat later, György Krassó, the publisher of Magyar Október Független Kiadó, together with Jenő Nagy, the publisher of ABC, Lajos Jakab that of Áramlat, Ádám Modor that of Katalizátor Iroda, and the editors of *Demokrata*, *Égtájak Között*, and *Hiány* suffered serious harassment, repeated house searches, and were forced to pay massive fines.

The first conceptual samizdat work to mount a daring attack on state censorship was the pamphlet by Miklós Haraszti originally entitled *A cenzúra esztétikája* [The Aesthetics of Censorship],⁶⁴ or its later English edition *The*



The Esthetics of Censorship (The Velvet Prison) by Miklós Haraszti, AB Independent Publisher, 1981.

64 = = Haraszti, *A cenzúra esztétikája*.

Velvet Prison.⁶⁵ Haraszi's critical view of censorial practice was formed some years earlier in the mid-1970s, when the so-called Kádárist consolidation in the wake of 1956, with its routine-like institutional control on culture, science and education was still felt strongly in Hungary. In addition, most of the artists, writers and state-employed intelligentsia seemed not merely to respect the rules of the communist regime but to willingly support them. This kind of loyalism as a general attitude led Haraszi to conclude that some two decades after 1956, those in charge of the daily practise of censorship had successfully handed on much of their function in the form of self-censorship to the artists and intellectuals themselves. As he saw it, this had become the major challenge in a new system of state control of cultural and intellectual life: in short, as he put, a 'new civilisation' was emerging.

Haraszi's book had a lively reception both in Hungary and worldwide. It was published as a cyclostyled samizdat brochure in Budapest in 1981, not long before martial law was introduced in Poland. Another Hungarian samizdat version in book form was published in 1986⁶⁶—just one year after the Budapest Cultural Forum and Counter-Forum—and French, German, and English translations came out during the 1980s,⁶⁷ as well as a clandestine Cantonese version printed recently in Hong Kong.

Haraszi's pamphlet was much influenced by the theory György Konrád and Iván Szelényi⁶⁸ offered in *Az értelmiség útja az osztályhatalomhoz* [Intellectuals on the road to class power], a book also originally published in samizdat.⁶⁹ Since communism or state socialism was officially declared to be a system based—at least in theory—on unquestionable Marxist doctrine, all its opponents felt themselves challenged to express their critical views on a structured theoretical basis.⁷⁰ As Konrad comments in his forward to the English version of Haraszi's book:

65 == Haraszi, *The Velvet Prison. Artists Under State Socialism*.

66 == Also by the AB Independent Publisher, Budapest. A third edition was published by Gondolat, Budapest 1991.

67 == French edition: *L'Artiste d'État* (1983), German edition: *Die Staatskünstler* (1984). English editions: *The Velvet Prison* (New Republic Books, 1987), (I. B. Tauris, 1988), (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989), (Penguin Books, 1989).

68 == Iván Szelényi (1938–) is a noted Hungarian-American sociologist. In 1974, a transcript of a book which he wrote with his fellow author György Konrád: *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, was brought out of Hungary. The book contained critical thought about Communist-ruled society. After this move, Szelényi was arrested, later expelled from Hungary and stripped of his citizenship. Ever since he has been teaching worldwide as professor of sociology.

69 == Konrád–Szelényi, *Az értelmiség útja az osztályhatalomhoz*.

70 == This resulted in a huge amount of theoretical literature by the new left authors in the West, and some hereditary reform-Marxist attempts in the East, for example those of the philosopher György Lukács and his 'Budapest School'. There is no space here for a thorough analysis of this rich and rather ambivalent tradition of political theories, but one should note that one of the first Hungarian samizdat books was a selection of studies entitled *Marxizmus a negyedik évtizedben* [Marxism in the Fourth Decade], and some prominent activists of the one-time democratic opposition—János Kis, György Bence etc.—earlier used to belong to György Lukács's school. It is also well known that Haraszi himself in the late-1960s flirted for a while with Maoism, although he did not take part in the 'hostile Maoist conspiracy' of young intellectuals, some of them were sentenced for prison by a show-case trial in 1967.

‘Previously, in a book entitled *Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, written with Ivan Szelényi, I tried to examine how the intelligentsia was becoming a separate class in state socialism. The theory that in state socialism censorship is an inherent part, a constitutional and constructive element of literature, gradually expropriated by the elite in power, was in fact inspired by the mood of the mid-1970s. We came to the realisation that communism is a system whose power is sustained not by the police alone.’⁷¹

Haraszti’s pamphlet also provoked critical reflections among Hungarian dissident writers and intellectuals. Two of them, poet and philosopher György Petri and historian Gábor Klaniczay,⁷² published their comments in *Beszélő*, the most influential Hungarian samizdat periodical. Petri radically rejected Haraszti’s concept and his description of a ‘new civilization’ based on mutual self-restraint on the part of both the subject and the rulers.⁷³ He categorically denied that censorship of any kind ever had any inspiring impact on culture, nor was he ready to accept that writers and intellectuals could ever benefit from or creatively contribute to such a compromise. On the contrary, he witnessed more and more promising efforts for intellectual autonomy on the basis of the re-establishment of some moral principals and professional standards of intellectual life. Meanwhile, the censorial practice of state socialism had lost any authentic ideological principals, and displayed nothing but the real repressive nature of a police state.

In his article, Klaniczay reflects on both Haraszti’s and Petri’s arguments. In the first place, ‘Haraszti and Petri did not seem to talk about the same thing’ and both tend to neglect the real nature of culture. However, he readily admits ‘the positive function of Haraszti’s satirical-pessimistic overstatements’, in as much they successfully inspire critical thinking and provoke some counter arguments. As Klaniczay also notes, Haraszti’s bad luck is that his pamphlet came out too late and much of his vision of the flourishing ‘new civilization’ of post-Stalinist consensus on self-censorship had become obsolete in the interim: ‘Today I would rather agree with Petri’s views, than Haraszti’s vision.’

However, as Klaniczay added: ‘Haraszti’s book, to my knowledge, is the first overall effort to describe the new type of constraints and their potential output on

71 = = Forward to Haraszti, *The Velvet Prison. Artists under state socialism*, xiii.

72 = = Gábor Klaniczay (1950–) is a Hungarian historian, head professor of the Department of Medieval Studies at the Central European University, titular university professor at the Department of Medieval History of the Eötvös Lóránd University History Institute, member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He has also published a book about the counter-cultures of the 70s and 80s: Klaniczay, *Ellenkultúra a hetvenes-nyolcvanas években*.

73 = = Petri, ‘A legvidámabb barak mint civilizáció’.

the socialist culture *as a system*—and that deserves more than just an angry ejection. Petri should not have criticised Haraszti for the poetic overstatement of ‘a new civilization’, but rather should have pointed out that the system the author suggested is a very static one.⁷⁴

Culture in a broader sense after all, as Klaniczay argues, is the daily practice of a society that can neither be directed by cynical, counter-selective bureaucrats, nor be based only on the heroic resistance of some radical intellectuals; and that is what makes Klaniczay none too optimistic for the future.

Looking back in anger (or with a bitter taste of nostalgia?) could we really be proud of this ‘future in the past’ vision—when facing desperately with much similar social attitudes and a growing state control of both cultural and public life close to four decades after?



Two bestseller samizdats: *The Animal Farm* by Orwell, and *Dog's Heart* by Bulgakov—both with the cover design and illustration by Béla Nóvé, 1984–1987.

74 = = Klaniczay, 'Még egyszer a cenzúra esztétikájáról'.

== Appendix: A brief history of Hungarian samizdat movement

Below I have made use of the relevant parts of the historical overview published by Ferenc Kőszeg as an 'Editor's Note' in *Roundtable*.⁷⁵

'The Russian word *samizdat* (самиздат) literally means self-publishing. It is meaningless in a world without censorship. But in countries where the government retains the right to control the publication of books, periodicals and articles, anything that is published and distributed without the censor's stamp is samizdat. Censorship and samizdat depend on each other: while censorship exists, uncensored writing will always be circulated.' So wrote Ferenc Kőszeg in 1987, founding editor of *Beszélő*, the most influential Hungarian samizdat periodical launched in late-1981.

The word samizdat became familiar in the Hungarian language along with knowledge of the Russian and Polish practice of clandestine, uncensored printing, publication and distribution of banned and dissident works. It was also used to refer to the works themselves and flourished in Hungary from 1977 till the Summer of 1989.

But the phenomenon had existed in Hungary well before this, when ferocious state terror was practised against any expression of dissent from the late 1940s. The best Hungarian writers were reduced to silence, but their poems and writings circulating among friends. During this period, a considerable amount of religious material was also distributed among the followers of various denominations. After the 1956 Revolution was violently suppressed, dozens of political manifestos, statements and essays were circulated among intellectuals, workers and students. If caught by the police, their authors served years in prison. A case in point is that of István Bibó,⁷⁶ a member of the Revolutionary Government and an outstanding political thinker.

In the 1970s, samizdat editors produced some 170 publications, mostly typewritten and reproduced via carbon paper or by cyclostyle. The first, and one of the most important, was *Marxizmus a negyedik évtizedben* [Marxism in the Fourth Decade]. Another, the 800-page *Profil* edited by János Kenedi,⁷⁷ was a superb collec-

75 == Kőszeg, 'Editor's Note'.

76 == István Bibó (1911–1979) was a legal philosopher, politician, and the last minister of the revolutionary government in 1956. He was a great theoretician of democratic tradition, author of a series of analytic studies and volumes. In 1957 he was sentenced to lifelong prison, then he was released with an amnesty in 1963. His funeral in 1979 became a massive protest demonstration against the 'rule of the hangmen', i.e. the Kádár regime.

77 == János Kenedi (1947–) was a leading actor of Hungarian democratic opposition. From 1970, he was under a ban on employment and publication. Joined and collected signatures on Charter 77 civil rights petitions. Restless samizdat: editor of *Profil*, *Bibó Memorial Book*, *Máshonnan Beszélő*, *Kelet-Európai Figyelő*. He arranged papers left behind by István Bibó and Zoltán Szabó. Later he was a research consultant of 1956 Institute and expert inspector of ÁBTTL.

tion of poems, short stories, essays and studies rejected by official periodicals in the 1970s under the pretext that they did not fit the scope of the papers. The most significant early samizdat venture was the publication of the 1,000-page, three-volume *Bibó-emlékkönyv* [Bibó Memorial Book] edited by Ferenc Donáth⁷⁸ and others, in honour of István Bibó. Bibó's analysis of Hungarian society and his theories on 'principled compromises' are strikingly similar to the Polish KOR's (Komitet Samoobrony Społecznej, Committee for Self-Defence) conception of limited revolution and have strongly influenced Hungarian intellectuals.⁷⁹ Two periodicals were also published in this period. *Magyar Figyelő* concentrated on domestic affairs and on the fate of Hungarian national minorities beyond Hungary's borders. *Kelet-Európai Figyelő* mainly published translations from the samizdat and emigré press (tamizdat) of Soviet bloc countries.

In 1981, influenced by the enormous independent press in Poland at the time of Solidarity, various groups undertook the production of samizdat for wider circulation. The first mechanically duplicated publication was the fifth issue of *Kelet-Európai Figyelő*, published in August 1981, under the telling title *A lengyel nyár* [The Polish Summer].

Wojciech Jaruzelski's coup⁸⁰ deeply shocked the Hungarian opposition and many gave up active participation. Most of the dissidents, however, decided to carry on. While two of the early periodicals, *Kisúgó* and *Magyar Figyelő* ceased publication. The political quarterly *Beszélő* survived.

Together with the publication of the first samizdat reviews, book publication also began. The first and most productive independent publisher was Gábor Demszky's AB Független Kiadó, which began in 1982. Besides its series of political publications—*Supplement to the history of Eastern Europe, 1956, Poland, Gulag*—it published a growing number of works by foreign authors and Hungarian writers living at home or abroad. They published Orwell's *Animal Farm*, plays by Václav

78 == Ferenc Donáth (1913–1986) politician, journalist, agricultural expert. As a law student, he joined the illegal communist party in 1934 and sought contact with the anti-Nazi resistance. As a political prisoner, he spent years behind the bars in the Horthy-, Rákosi- and Kádár-regimes. In 1956, he strongly supported Imre Nagy. Before he died, he had hosted in 1985 the 'Monor meeting' for an open dialogue of the opposition groups.

79 == About KOR's concept see Mitrovits, *Tiltott kapcsolat—A magyar-lengyel ellenzéki együttműködés 1976–1989*.

80 == On 13 December 1981 Polish general Wojciech Jaruzelski introduced martial law by the mobilized forces of Polish Army. The free Trade Union on Solidarity was banned, thousands of its activists were arrested and interned. Jaruzelski's martial law, with some concessions, lasted until 1989, when a political compromise was made between the party-state and Solidarity, and a general election was held in the country.

Havel⁸¹ and novels by Milan Kundera.⁸² One of its most popular ventures was the publication of the autobiographical novel by György Faludy,⁸³ the prominent Hungarian émigré writer and poet. The 600-page novel of *Pokolbeli vig napjaim* [My happy days in Hell], which had previously been published in English, French, German, Swedish and Japanese, was published first also in Hungarian as one of the most popular samizdat books.

Another independent publisher, Jenő Nagy's ABC Press brought out Arthur Koestler's⁸⁴ *Darkness at Noon* and the biography of Raoul Wallen-



Otilia Solt, sociologist, editor of samizdat *Beszélő*, founder of SZETA: the Aid for Supporting the Poor, an independent social movement. (Photo: Lenke Szilágyi, 1989)

81 == Václav Havel (1936–2011) was a Czech statesman, author, poet, playwright, and former dissident. Havel served as the last president of Czechoslovakia from 1989 until the dissolution of the federal state in 1992, and then as the first president of Czech Republic from 1993 to 2003 democratically elected. As a writer, he is known for his plays, essays, and memoirs. Havel was a leading actor of several dissident initiatives, including Charta 77 and the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted.

82 == Milan Kundera (1929–) is a Czech writer who went into exile in France in 1975. His Czechoslovak citizenship was revoked in 1979, then conferred again in 2019. However, he sees himself as a French writer and insists his work should be classified as French literature. His mostly apolitical novels were banned in his native country until 1990, meanwhile were highly popular worldwide, included in Hungary in samizdat editions.

83 == György Faludy (1910–2006) was a Hungarian poet, writer and translator. In his long life, he left his native country—and returned twice. In 1938, due to his Jewish ancestry, he left for Paris, and then for the U.S. Soon after he returned in 1946, he was sent to the labor camp of Recsk. After the 1956 revolution he escaped again to the West, and lived in London and Toronto until his second return in 1988. He is best known worldwide due to his witty memoir entitled *My Happy Days in Hell*.

84 == Arthur Koestler (1905–1983) was a Hungarian-born author and journalist. He was born in Budapest and, apart from his early school years, was educated in Austria. In 1931, he joined the German Communist Party, but he resigned in 1938, disillusioned with Stalinism. He moved to Britain in 1940, and published his anti-totalitarian novel *Darkness at Noon*. Over the next 43 years, he espoused many political causes and wrote novels, memoirs, biographies, and essays.

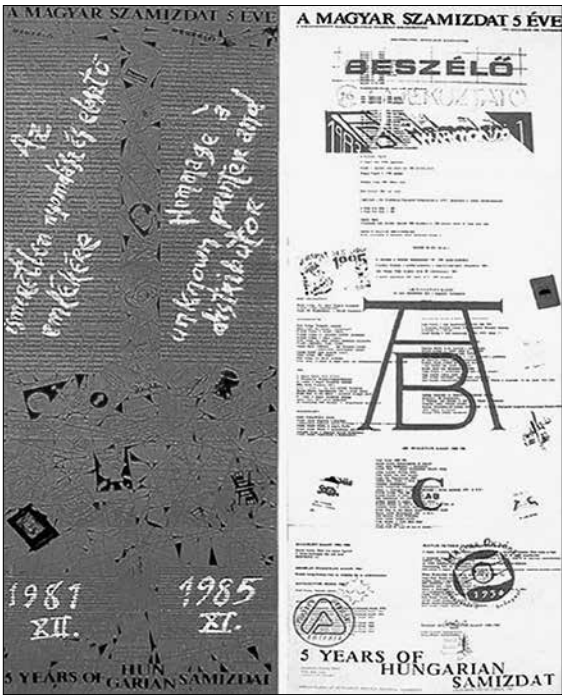
berg.⁸⁵ The publishers under the name *M.O. Független Kiadó* (*Hungarian October*) launched by the intransigent '56-er György Krassó, considered their main task to be the publication of works and documents connected to the 1956 Revolution. Among them are books such as Bibó's writings from 1956 and *Hungarian Diary* by Wiktor Woroszyński,⁸⁶ the eminent Polish poet and journalist. They also issued the striking autobiographical writing of Béla Szász,⁸⁷ a survivor of the Rajk trial⁸⁸ and George Orwell's *1984*.

85 = = Raoul Wallenberg (1912–1947?) was a young Swedish diplomat who saved the lives of many Hungarian Jews in 1944–1945. He was sent to Budapest in July 1944 to help to protect the 200,000 Jews remained in the city. For three months he tried to do his best by issuing protective documents, by securing the release of Jews from deportation trains, death march convoys, and labor service brigades—all at grate risk to himself. He was detained by Soviet agents in mid-January of 1945, and thereafter disappeared without a trace.

86 = = Wiktor Woroszyński (1927–1996) was a Polish poet, translator, and journalist. In 1956 he was sent from Warsaw, as a correspondent, to Budapest. During the 13 days of the Hungarian revolution and freedom fight he wrote his diaries with great sympathy with the revolutionaries, which later was also published as a book in English: *Diary of a Revolt, Budapest 1956, Through Polish Eyes*. It was also published in Hungarian in a samizdat edition, in late 1984.

87 = = Béla Szász (1910–1999) was a Hungarian writer, and journalist. In 1930, he received a scholarship from the Sorbonne. He worked as film director Renoir's assistant. After WW2, he returned home, and got a job in the Hungarian Foreign Ministry. He was soon accused in the Rajk-trial, and sentenced to ten years in prison. In 1957, he emigrated to London, and worked for the the BBC. His book *Without Compulsion* was first published in Hungary as a samizdat.

88 = = László Rajk (1909–1949), the communist Minister for Foreign Affairs was accused of being a 'Titoist spy' and was executed in 1949. It is a bitter irony of history, that his son, László Rajk Jr. (1949–2019) who was just a seven months baby, when lost his father, became a daring activist of anti-communist activities. From 1975 he joined the democratic opposition, and was soon blacklisted. In 1981 with Gábor Demszky (later the Mayor of Budapest) he founded *AB Publishers*, and ran an illegal but public bookstore in his apartment called 'Samizdat Boutique'. In 1988 he was one of the founders of the Alliance of Free Democrats, and served six years in the freely elected Hungarian Parliament.



5 Years of Hungarian Samizdat, a poster designed by László Rajk Jr. and published for the Counter Forum Budapest 1985.

Several smaller publishers also played active part in independent publishing. These included *Áramlat*, *Katalizátor Iroda*, *Alulnézet* and *Szabadidő*. Special mention must be made of the avant-garde artistic publications and political documents used as art objects by the Inconnu Art Group.⁸⁹ Although Hungarian censorship was relatively liberal compared to other Soviet bloc countries, the works listed above would never have reached the Hungarian public without the independent publishing houses.

A few titles among the Hungarian *samizdat* periodicals are well worth mentioning, among them *Beszélő*, already mentioned, *Máshonnan Beszélő*, *AB Hírmondó*, *Demokrata*, *Égtájak Között*, *Vizjel*, *Magyar Zsidó* and *Határ/Idő/Napló—Erdélyi Figyelő*. The techniques generally used included mimeography, silk screen printing, *ramka* (from the early days of Polish samizdat and a combination of the previous two techniques), photocopying and offset printing.⁹⁰ The latter was widely used in book publishing from the mid-1980s.

By 1988, radical opposition movements had gathered momentum, the organisation of democratic proto-parties had started and it became impossible to stop the sudden boom in independent publications. In fact, it was no more than a public admission of the political reality when, in May 1989, the last Hungarian communist prime Miklós Németh⁹¹ declared that prior permission for publishing books and newspapers of any kind was no longer required. This was the official end of censorship in Hungary which had been in existence for more than four decades alongside the forcibly prolonged communist rule of the country.

All in all, in just over a decade, 1977–1989, the Hungarian samizdat movement produced some 300 books and two dozen periodicals.⁹² This crop might not seem as rich and versatile as the Soviet Russian one, in many respects falling short of the literary and bibliophile virtues of Czech samizdat, and certainly had far less ‘mobilizing power’

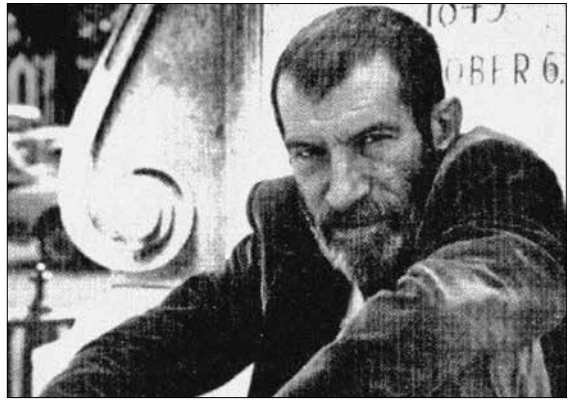
89 = = The Inconnu Art Group, formed by Péter Bokros, Tamás Molnár, Mihály Csécsei, Bánk Mészáros, and Mihály Sípos in the late 1970s was a daring and talented young team that was often harrassed by the police. For the 30th anniversary of the Hungarian revolution of 1986 they organised an international exhibition of which the art pieces were confiscated by the police, and in 1989 they carved some 300 wooden memorial colomn to mark with all the graves of the executed revolutionaries.

90 = = For the Polish technical model and transfer of samizdat multiplications see more details in Mitrovits, *Tiltott kapcsolat—A Magyar-lengyel ellenzéki együttműködés 1976–1989*.

91 = = Miklós Németh (1948–) is a retired Hungarian economist and politician who served as Prime Minister from November 1988 to May 1990. He was one of the leaders of Hungary’s Communist party, in the tumultuous years that led to the collapse of communist system in East-Central Europe. He was the last communist Prime of Hungary, and as such, a pragmatist reformist, who, among other things, abolished censorship by a decree of May 1989.

92 = = Most regrettably, a complete and critical bibliography of Hungarian samizdat publications has still not been prepared as yet. (June 2022).

than the independent Polish press had for many years by supporting the resistance of a whole society against communist rule and its military regime. Yet two of its particular merits seem still significant: its intellectual force and radical engagement with truth and justice. These can be most clearly felt in the arguments of the one-time debates on censorship both in samizdat publications and in other free forums such as the public debates of the Alternative Cultural Forum of 1985 and the Hungarian Writers' Association in the 1980s.



Poet György Petri, at the base of the statue of Polish general Jozef Bem, Budapest 1980s.

== Conclusions

Finally, the question remains: was the Budapest Cultural Forum and Counter Forum held in the autumn of 1985 a success or a failure? Which is better, based on what criteria and to what extent? As we have seen, it is not easy even today to make an authentic assessment of the series of often contradictory events of this complicated transitional period, and that time it was judged rather differently by the contemporaries themselves. According to the decision of the Hungarian Communist Party leadership in December 1985, the official forum was overall successful, it further increased the prestige of the host country, and the scandalous challenge of the Counter-Forum was largely avoided. The Soviet and Eastern European delegates could also be satisfied, since—with the exception of some disturbing, improvised Western interludes—their original scenario prevailed throughout the official conference, and thus it remained largely formal and protocol like.

On the other hand, Miklós Haraszti judged it a serious failure for the same reason, describing the East-West interstate cultural exchange and the stubborn preservation of the Yalta status quo as 'Helsinki kitsch'. In contrast, the Counter-Forum was considered a resounding success not only by the participants, the organiser International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights and members of the Hungarian democratic opposition, but also by the Western press, which reported on it in detail, and the analytical articles of the Hungarian samizdat papers. This was an important event not only because the gross abuses of communist censorship could be openly criticised and participants could freely discuss possible scenarios for the future of Europe, but also because some writers and journalists who were forced to be absent from the Budapest Counter-Forum, being persecuted, interned or imprisoned as they were, could also send their messages. (In this way, Timothy Garton Ash from Warsaw, Sándor Csoóri and Miklós Gáspár Tamás

from Slovakia and Romania transmitted the latest news and important documents.) I myself, together with some participating friends, have already regretted that the Counter Forum and its press reports did not talk more about the heroic stand of many Russian, Polish and Czechoslovak human rights activists, often in defiance of ten-year prison sentences. I missed the fact that more writers, artists, and scientists who had emigrated from East to West were not invited to the Counter Forum. All the more so, because such persons had been excluded from the delegates of the official Forum by a silent East-West consensus.

What would be worth further researching on the topic of the two Budapest forums? Many things, as there are still plenty of less researched and published sources. For instance, the available oral history interviews and memoirs of many participants, their later communications—e.g. exchange of letters—and their joint actions in some public or political matters. It would be equally important to see a more comprehensive European and overseas cultural overview in the background, in other words, what was going on in the 35 countries involved in the mid-1980s, and what thought of interactions between mainstream and underground trends prevailed? In the same way, it would be nevertheless worthwhile to see culture in a broader sense than literature and the press: the that time institutional world of film, theater, music, museums, libraries, and archives—both in the East and in the West. In the narrower context, there is a Hungarian debt to this date, as there has not been made any research and analytical summary of why so many Hungarian prominent writers, artists, film and theater people took part in the official party-state protocol events during the Cultural Forum of Budapest? Who were they and what kind of programmes did they take part? Did they know about the Counter Forum and what did they think about those writers and artists who participated—or, not without risk, even offered their apartment to the many participants of this symposium—as did poet István Eörsi and film director András Lányi?

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Fortepan / MHSZ

===== Dorottya Szénási =====

/// Regime criticism as a form of resistance

Social resistance or social support behind critics of the (Kádár) regime

=== Résumé

1989 and 1990 are considered to be historical moments due to the significance of the regime change, even if it only occurred just over three decades ago. The era before the fall of the communist state apparatus fundamentally defined the subsequent formation of power. Naturally, the way in which the regime change was implemented differed from country to country, and consequently the political transition processes were also different in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

In this study I examine the decade before the regime change in Hungary, the prevailing public mood, the developing opposition within intelligentsia and the Party, and the Party's tactics for keeping the existing regime together. Although the relevance of the topic cannot be discussed without the regime change as an event, my field of research focuses on the period preceding it. Consequently, my analyses include events until the opposition groups began founding political parties.

The minutes of the Monor and Lakitelek meetings served as the basis of the research. I studied the history of the period in books written by Zoltán Ripp and Ignác Romsics. For issues I deemed to be important, I read additional literature. As an additional source, I used periodicals that assumed decisive importance in the period and the press closely following the regime change. Reminiscences greatly contributed to my understanding of the events. After that, I summarised the results my research revealed and drew conclusions.

I will put my argument in a historical context by presenting the ruling system, with a view to examining the last decade of the Kádár era in the light of the beginning of the opposition's organisation. The structure of my study is determined by the analysis of the three main conferences of the opposition circles, based on official reports. I go through the events in chronological order where necessary and,

in separate chapters or subchapters, I describe the ideas of the party state or the events from the Party's perspective.

In the middle of my analization is the meeting at Monor and the meetings at Lakitelek. I also explore the separation of opposition paths. I analyse the reasons for the failure of the second Monor meeting impartially and the debate between the two main opposition circles. Over the years, it can be observed that former outsiders joined the 'debate' and former debaters quit. Principally, I do not examine them as political events or politicians, but I aim to present them according to what they represented before they formed a party.

The events and personalities of the opposition will be presented, firstly, in relation to the party-state system and, secondly, as they defined themselves, and draw new conclusions from the combination of the two. In light of this, I also examine them as group phenomenon.

I chose the opposition of the Kádár era as the topic of my study because, in my opinion, the fault lines formed during the debates of the era and the members of the respective groups largely determined the politicisation of the last thirty years, as after all, the era in question is historically the closest to the present one. After 1989, the intelligentsia necessarily had to place themselves on the scene of post-1989 politics, so the history of the opposition of the Kádár era can be considered as a prelude to this.

= = = Thought provoker

This study seeks to present the forms of resistance that gained ground in the second half of the 1980s, specifically manifestations that had political content different from the agenda of the MSZMP (Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt, Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party, the 'Party'). I sought to find a possible answer to the question about the characteristics connecting the publications and samizdat journals that became publicly known to a specific intellectual environment, and how political fault lines were created in the spaces of dissent by the end of the decade. I have analysed the groupings linked to intellectual trends and the manifestations carrying a political message under the banner of 'social resistance' in the context of historical memory.

The political fault lines that characterized the era did not exclusively consist of the confrontation between the Party and the opposition (in retrospect, this might be the most emphatic approach). The criticism articulated by the demand for reform led to fermentation even within the ruling Party. Besides the orthodox communist line, the New March Front and the reformers led by Imre Pozsgay¹ and Rezső

¹ = Imre Pozsgay (1933–2016), politician, university professor. Minister of Culture from 1976, member of the Central Committee of the Party since 1980. In 1982, he became the Secretary General of the National Council of the Patriotic People's Front until 1988. Although Pozsgay did not hold a particularly high position in the Party (he was a Patriot at the head of the People's Front), he was given an almost free hand, thus increasing the previously insignificant the political role of the organisation. See Pozsgay, *Koronatanú és tettestárs*.

Nyers² appeared, among others. In the following, I also wish to provide a picture of how and why intelligentsia moved in from the area of culture to the political arena. The newly-formed parties in 1989 had a high proportion of intelligentsia and they formed the base of the parties enjoying the greatest support. In my view, control and influence were not necessarily wielded by the person offering the best solution to an existing social problem, but rather by the one that determined the subject of the discourse, in other words, the one able to find a phenomenon through which he/she could make an impact on a social scale in the political public sphere. Inevitably, the literature on the history of the rift between popular and democratic opposition deals with this topic. The presentation and distinction of the opposition circles require a deep knowledge of intellectual trends, which is helped by publications and literary works; however, it is important to underline that no clear categorisation is possible in the period under review. This is made more difficult by factors such as the phenomenon of permeation between groupings, friendships and matters on which they have similar or nearly identical views. Thus, the grouping of individuals may also seem arbitrary in some cases—even if they do each have their distinctive features—and therefore, while striving for completeness and credibility, their orientation cannot be correctly judged in all cases. The issue of public relations distinguished the two groupings. Whereas those attached to the popular side expressed their opinions mainly in the framework of the existing public media, i.e. mainly in rural periodicals, those belonging to the so-called democratic opposition often expressed their opinions in the samizdat publications they published. This is why I primarily rely on the journals rather than the individual accounts of the respective tendencies when distinguishing the two opposition groups. The use of words is a particularly important tool in the political system that dominated the era, and from the perspective of the central question of the study, the clarification of the terms ‘opposition’ and ‘resistance’ is indispensable. Use of the word ‘opposition’ has a different meaning under a one-party system (given the absence of political opposition) than it does nowadays, and this meaning is given political content by the leadership of the ruling regime at the time. Press and public opinion followed the Party’s wording, and thus, by voicing stigmatising terms in public, it positioned the forces critical of the regime in the political space according to its own interests. In their case, it therefore helps us to understand the form of opposition to the system. Throughout the analysis, I will use the word ‘opposition’, but I will interpret it beyond its classical meaning, in line with what has been described.

² = Rezső Nyers (1923–2018), economist, politician, university professor. He supported some employees of various research institutes and the Ministry of Finance in developing an alternative reform programme, which took shape in the 1986 document ‘Change and Reform.’ In December 1987, he was one of the initiators and a founding member of the reform forces within the Party in order to consolidate it, he launched the New March Front, for which he was reprimanded by the Party. See Nyers, *Utkeresés-reformok*.

The Kádár regime has often been labelled as ‘goulash communism’, ‘the happiest barracks’ and ‘soft dictatorship’. We can consider that it began with the repression that followed the 1956 uprising. The subsequent consolidation process sought to avoid openly violent action and to provide the framework for the regime by other means.³ The proclamation of ‘whoever is not against us is with us’ meant a ‘bargain’ between the regime and society, the maintenance of which was mainly to be achieved by the former by ensuring a gradual and slow rise in living standards. In 1968, the Party’s new draft reform integrated some elements of market economy into the planned economy: central planning was decreased and corporate autonomy in the field of production and investment was increased. However, even this did not solve the real problems of the regime. While capitalism could handle the economic crisis, it pushed the already recessionary economy of communist systems to the brink of collapse.

By 1987, János Kádár had admitted that ‘crisis phenomena can be observed’. However, he could not deal with the consequences of the new situation and could not cooperate effectively with the new political forces. The power of the Party rested on three pillars. Sustained economic growth allowed consumers to buy welfare goods and services, the framework of the regime and its adjustments were guaranteed by the Soviet Union, and the ideology underpinning the party’s omnipotence was recognised by society (this included an assessment of 1956 as a ‘counter-revolution’). The nascent political crisis shook these pillars.⁴ Since the 1980s, there had been a noticeable change on the issue of compromise with the regime, with informal concessions becoming more customary, and even dissenters finding it less worthwhile to look for cracks in the wall.⁵

= = Intellectual critique of the political system in illegal spaces

From the mid-1970s onwards, samizdats, i.e. illegal publications reproduced and distributed without permission, appeared in Hungary as well. Its authors often published under pseudonyms and, due to their limited circulation, mainly addressed intelligentsia. In October 1981, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1956 uprising, the first issue of the samizdat journal entitled *Beszélő*, edited by the inner circle of the democratic opposition, was released. The recurring themes of the texts published in *Beszélő* included economic policy, economic crisis situation, labour law, protection of the interests at the workplace, the Hungarian sub-

3 = = Szekér, ‘A diktatúra „kis körei”’, 11–12.

4 = = Ripp, *Rendszerváltás Magyarországon 1987–1990*, 2–44.

5 = = For example, backyard farming was considered such a concession, the essential element of which was that it was not officially part of the system, even so anyone could do it without consequences.

sistence minimum and social security, environmental protection, freedom of the press and the universality of human rights. They considered it necessary to elaborate an electoral reform, a party law and the enforcement of the right of assembly and association, and in the long term the implementation of a multi-party system. At the beginning, the objectives of reforming the system were based on the former 1956 claim, i.e. the implementation of a democratic system based on self-governance. They also gave a lot of thought to the issues of patriotism and internationalism. They advocated the position that the path to modernisation was to follow the Western development pattern, and not to seek some kind of independent Hungarian reform initiative. In seeking an alternative to the prevailing system, they often considered and evaluated the system of ideas of social democracy, Soviet-type Marxism and nationalism from a philosophical point of view. A novelty in comparison to previous samizdat publications was the regular publication and the fact that the authors of *Beszélő* mostly published under their own names. Apart from the members of the *Beszélő-kör*, the movement's different groups included the charitable Poor Relief Fund organisation and the Inconnu artists' group.⁶ Also, those organised around György Krassó⁷, a former 1956 convict, operated initially in the illegal space, working as contributors to the samizdat publications *Hírmondó* and *Demokrata*, and in collaboration with the Inconnu group.

The editors of the samizdat publications were regularly harassed by the police or the secret services, but Kádár avoided spectacular retaliation, as it would have damaged the Western perception of Hungary, which he had an interest in meeting in any case, because of Western loan disbursements.⁸ The leadership sought to get rid of all the remains of Stalinism, while unwilling to renounce its monopoly on power. Job and living opportunities of those who openly expressed and engaged in opposition ideas and activities were restricted in the hope that this would isolate the intelligentsia opposition being isolated in society and deprived it of the possibility to influence the masses. The activities and methods of *Beszélő-kör* were different from those of dissents operating in the legal space. Their more extreme manifestations and the risk of entering illegal territory opened up an independent alternative form of opposition to the regime versus a legal critique of

6 = = Bossányi, *Szólampróba. Beszélgetések az alternatív mozgalmakról*, 208–210.

7 = = György Krassó (1932–1991), opposition intelligentsia. After the Soviet intervention in 1956 he was arrested. From the 1970s, he took an active role in opposition movements. On 23 October 1985, he and the Inconnu group held an illegal celebration. From 1986, he worked for Radio Free Europe and the BBC. He returned home in 1989, before the reburial of Imre Nagy. As a radical anti-communist, he was critical of the opposition parties' negotiations with the Party. See more in Modor, *Célkeresztben Krassó*.

8 = = Horváth, *A tábornok vallomása. Meztelenül a Duna-gate ügyben*, 168–194.

the regime. Through illegal behaviour, they did not wish to circumvent the regulated framework of the party state, but rather to reject it in a demonstrative manner. And they wished to 'legalise' their illegal actions by means of a higher principle, namely fundamental human rights. However, we can hardly speak of truly radical steps even in the case of the so-called democratic opposition.⁹

This degree of easing was not only due to the crisis of the Party, the process was spurred on by the transformation in international politics, such as Gorbachev's reform policy, which aimed to reform the existing communist system.¹⁰ These circumstances led to the Hungarian opposition becoming more open to taking organisation to a new level. On 14–16 June 1985, a discussion of critical intelligentsia was held, hosted by Ferenc Donáth.¹¹ The event, organised at the campsite in Monor, was characterised by the diversity of the invitees, in the sense that a wider circle of representatives of different reform initiatives attended than before. The significance of Ferenc Donáth¹² lay in the personal links he held with Party leadership, the democratic opposition and the popular side. Although his orientation was that of the democratic opposition, he maintained a good relationship with the popular side thanks to his personality.¹³ As regards the structure of the discussion, it consisted of four reports and the opponents' comments reflecting on them.

The topics of the session were problem statements, which were reflected on by a number of rapporteurs and speakers. Members of the democratic opposition predominated at the meeting, some of whom included Miklós Szabó,¹⁴ János Kenedi,¹⁵

9 = = Kis, 'A demokratikus ellenzék hagyatéka', 207–229.

10 = = Ripp, *Rendszerváltás Magyarországon 1987–1990*, 42–44.

11 = = Rainer M., *A monori tanácskozás jegyzőkönyve 1985. június 14–16. A vita jegyzőkönyve*, 27.

12 = = Ferenc Donáth (1913–1986), politician, agricultural historian. In 1951, he was sentenced to 15 years and was rehabilitated in 1954. In 1956, he was among the reformers around Imre Nagy. In 1958, he was sentenced to 12 years in prison as a secondary defendant in the Imre Nagy trial. In 1980, he organised the publication of the Bibó memorial book as a samizdat. After his death in 1986, the Supreme Court acquitted him and the defendants of the Nagy Imre trial in the absence of a crime. See more in Bozóky, *Zord idők nyomában*.

13 = = Csizmadia, 'Donáth Ferenc és a demokratikus ellenzék', 304–316.

14 = = Miklós Szabó (1935–2000), historian. From September 1979, he was a regular speaker at the 'Flying University' organised by the democratic opposition. The text of the presentations could not be published, but typed copies were distributed. In the first issue of *Beszélő*, he wrote about the Bibó memorial book under his own name. He received workplace discipline twice for illegal actions. The book was banned from 1979 to 1986. See more in Köbel, *A repülő egyetem professzora*.

15 = = János Kenedi (1947), writer, critic. One of the defining figures of the democratic opposition. From the end of the 1970s, Kenedi's apartment was one of the central places of the opposition party. See Kenedi, *Kis állambiztonsági olvasókönyv I–II*.

Tamás Bauer,¹⁶ János Kis¹⁷ and Miklós Vársárhelyi.¹⁸ The form of the presentations at the meeting was resented by the popular opposition. The presentations of the popular opposition were opposed by members of the democratic opposition. They criticised the subordinate role, which was perceptible in the structure of the meeting. In his address, Ferenc Donáth expressed criticism of the Hungarian government's economic policy. István Csurka,¹⁹ representative of the popular line, highlighted the crisis of Hungarian culture in his speech, taking stock of the events of Hungarian history since 1945, praising 1956 and describing it as a major caesura. He took account of the main social problems as a negative consequence of the enumerated past events: waves of emigration, reduced willingness to have children, alcoholism, the high number of suicides, indifference to national identity. Speakers from the democratic opposition side spoke about the economic recession, 1956, and emphasised the damage to the legal consciousness and solidarity. János Kis called attention to the phenomenon that power, as a 'new control mechanism', facilitated the institutional fragmentation of the intelligentsia.²⁰ The 'result' of the meeting could be seen in the fact that the members of opposition and regime-critical groups, with

16 = = Tamás Bauer (1946–), economist. In 1966, he joined the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, but was expelled in 1974 because he protested against tightening the authorisation of induced abortions. Later, he was a leading member of the democratic opposition, publishing in *Beszélő*. In 1985, he was elected member of the national council of the Patriotic People's Front, but resigned from his position three years later. In 1988, he was one of the initiators of the New March Front.

17 = = János Kis (1943–), philosopher, theoretician of human rights liberalism, the first president of the SZDSZ. From the 1980s, he was one of the leading figures of the democratic opposition. Since the 1980s, he had been active in teaching and research both abroad and in Hungary. He was expelled from the Party in the so-called philosopher's trial, dismissed from the Institute of Philosophy of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and sentenced to silence. He was the editor of the *Beszélő*. See Kis, *Szabadságra ítélve*.

18 = = Miklós Vársárhelyi (1917–2001), historian, politician. He served as the press chief of the second Imre Nagy government. In the Imre Nagy trial, he was sentenced to 5 years in prison. In 1960, he was released from prison with an amnesty. From 1972, he became a staff member of the Institute of Literary Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. In 1988, he became a founding member of the New March Front and the Historical Justice Committee. See more in Kozák, *Kész a leltár–Vársárhelyi Miklós*.

19 = = István Csurka (1934–2012), writer, politician. During the 1956 revolution, he was the head of the college's national guard, so he was relocated for half a year. After graduating in 1957, he became a freelance writer, unable to get a job corresponding to his education. From 1988, he became a member of the editorial staff of the new *Hitel*. As an organiser, gave talks at the Monor and Lakitelek meetings. Founding organiser, board member, and later vice president of the Hungarian Democratic Forum.

20 = = Rainer M., *A monori tanácskozás jegyzőkönyve 1985. június 14–16. A vita jegyzőkönyve*, 85.

partly divergent approaches, confronted each other with their views on the crisis and ways of emerging from it.

= = = The potential inherent in the limitations of the system

The definition of being in opposition changed several times according to the frameworks imposed by the Party, and forms of resistance were also shaped by Party strategy. The Kádarian consolidation wished to distance itself from the Rákosi regime, but did not intend to alter its dictatorial character. One of the experiences of 1956 for the leadership was that the rejection of power, even by the class it had elevated, went so far that even the class-selected, mostly first-generation intelligentsia turned against it, and therefore it had to base itself on a new intellectual policy. They saw self-organising autonomous communities as the main source of danger, so they sought to prevent their emergence in order to avoid violent retaliatory measures.²¹

The deepening of the crisis and the threat of opposition groups joining forces justified Party leaders' putting on the agenda the issue of party policy vis-à-vis voices critical of the system. In its 1986 decision,²² the Policy Committee distinguished two main groups of opposition.

It categorised one of these groups as a civil radical²³ tendency and made the following statement about it: 'It rejects any form of existing socialism, so-called "Soviet-type societies" and the one-party system, and, as an alternative, it considers the realisation of some kind of "pluralist democracy" as a strategic goal.'

According to the 1986 position, the Party credited its own success in preventing the democratic opposition from organising itself into an autonomous political movement and from connecting with the working classes. However, the established system was adversely affected by the significant growth of 'second-public' channels and the operation of illegal publishers and distribution networks. All things considered, they concluded that it was not a threat to power, since 'the "hard core" of the civil radical group still consists of a few dozen people, and their direct influence remains limited to a few hundred people—intelligentsia in the field of

21 = = Szekér, 'A diktatúra "kis körei"', 9–32.

22 = = Jegyzőkönyv az MSZMP PB üléséről, 1986. július 1. [Report on the MSZMP Policy Committee session, 1 July 1986]. MSZMP KB Tudományos, Közoktatási és Kulturális Osztálya javaslata a Politikai Bizottság részére az ellenzéki-ellenséges csoportok tevékenységével összefüggő politikai feladatokról. [The proposal of the Science, Education and Culture Department of the MSZMP Central Committee to the Policy Committee on the political tasks related to the activities of opposition-enemy groups.] 972. M-KS 288-5. MNL OL, Budapest, Hungary.

23 = = In his 1990 assessment, Ferenc Kőszeg calls their circle „the so-called democratic civil rights opposition”, which believes that the nation cannot be anything but the will of the majority respecting the rights of the minority. Cf. Kőszeg, 'Monor üzenete', 12–13.

humanities and social sciences, and a select circle of students at the major Budapest universities'.²⁴

The other group was categorised by the proposal submitted to the Policy Committee as a national radical trend described as follows: 'To them, democracy is a tool in the fight for the good of the nation. Their goal is to elaborate the life principles of an obedient citizen who does not contest issues of power, thereby not prompting it to take violent action. The social background of the trend consists of the middle classes in small towns.'²⁵ They do not totally reject the socialist ideology established in the country, but they see it as an alien system imposed on the nation from outside. Its specific image is given by the issues they keep on the agenda'

In relation to them, the Party came to the conclusion that they had not built up organisational frameworks or brought out illegal publications, and organised opposition actions only together with the democratic opposition. They spread their ideas more in rural periodicals, but they also had a strong base in the Writers' Union and the József Attila Circle of Young Writers. However, they perceived danger in the very fact that their base could easily grow as a result of increasing interest in the 'national question', given that society accused the Party of neglecting these issues anyway. Nevertheless, they stated that it was just a 'loose grouping of writers' with no political agenda.²⁶

The death of Ferenc Donáth, who enjoyed the confidence of both opposition groupings, thwarted the second opposition gathering in 1986, and preparations for a new meeting only began in early 1987.²⁷ In the spring of 1987, a study by young economists entitled *Fordulat és reform* [Change and reform] was published in the journal of social theory of Eötvös Loránd University (Eötvös Lóránd Tudományegyetem, ELTE) and Karl Marx University of Economics (Marx Károly Közgazdaságtudományi Egyetem, MKKE), which for the first time offered a complete programme for economic reform processes.²⁸ Unlike in the past, the study was elabo-

24 == Jegyzőkönyv az MSZMP PB üléséről, 1986. július 1. [Report on the MSZMP Policy Committee session, 1 July 1986]. MSZMP KB Tudományos, Közoktatási és Kulturális Osztálya javaslata a Politikai Bizottság részére az ellenzéki-ellenséges csoportok tevékenységével összefüggő politikai feladatokról. [The proposal of the Science, Education and Culture Department of the MSZMP Central Committee to the Policy Committee on the political tasks related to the activities of opposition-enemy groups.] 972. M-KS 288-5. MNL OL, Budapest, Hungary.

25 == Ibid.

26 == Ibid.

27 == Szeredi, *A nemzetépítő demokratikus ellenzék története 1987–1989*, 17.

28 == In 1986, the leadership of the Patriotic People's Front commissioned economists from various Hungarian research institutes and the Ministry of Finance a detailed economic situation analysis, which formed the basis of a draft reform. The document entitled 'Change and Reform' deals with different aspects of the situation. Researchers and theoretical specialists working at state institutions reflected its position. After the manuscript went to press, its publication was banned.

rated by economists from research institutes at the request of the leadership of the Patriotic People's Front.²⁹ The very fact that the Party was looking for alternative solutions to economic policy problems, and that it was turning to non-party professionals to do so, showed a willingness to negotiate and bargain.³⁰

The organisation of a second meeting in Monor was underway, but a paper by the democratic opposition published in June, encouraged the popular-national opposition to organise itself further in its own circles. A publication of the democratic opposition, *Társadalmi Szerződés* [Social Contract], came out as a special issue of *Beszélő*. The title of the first chapter was 'Kádár must go!'.³¹ The nationals feared that they could provide grounds for tougher action against them, and it went against the very essence of their ideas: to put social support behind criticism of the system.

In popular-opposition memory, the writing of the democratic opposition went down as inspiring them to organise themselves in their own circle. A publication critical of the regime, it included an issue proposed by the democratic opposition for the second Monor meeting programme, which the popular opposition did not accept as discussion material. Lajos Für recalled the event as follows: '[...] János Kis turned up on the terrace of one of the press rooms at Vörös Hadsereg út in Buda, and put the *Társadalmi Szerződés* programme on the table. There had been no mention of this until then. Moreover, for months we had been talking about the fact that the second Monor meeting would develop the joint programme. While we had been discussing this week after week, János Kis and his group had been secretly and quietly preparing their own programme. This took us by surprise and caused quite a shock for everyone [...]. It was the sobering cold shower that made it clear to us, that we must choose a different path.'³²

The premise of *Társadalmi Szerződés* not questioning the viability of the regime, but rather, it sought to put the Kádár system on new democratic foundations with a new type of reform it proposed. It laid the ground for the creation of a democratic legal order and a market economy. The paper also contained the programme proposed by the democratic opposition for debate at the second meeting in Monor, which the national opposition did not accept as discussion material. The publication could not be regarded as the programme of the whole democratic

29 == The Patriotic People's Front (Hazafias Népfrent) was a specific political group, which, true to its historical traditions, called all classes and strata of Hungarian society to unite to realise the timely tasks facing the nation. The Patriotic People's Front was not a mass organisation, but a movement, and every Hungarian citizen who agreed with the People's Front's political goals and undertook to accomplish them could participate in its actions. It did not have a registered membership, it solved its tasks with the help of elected bodies, officials and activists.

30 == Pozsgay, *Esélyünk a reform*, 148–150.

31 == „Társadalmi Szerződés”, 4.

32 == Für, *Szabadon szeretnénk sírni*, 487–488.

opposition, but was rather the programme of *Beszélő-kör*, the samizdat publisher and other groups that had made their mark with anti-regime actions.

The focus of the popular side's strategy was to gain legitimacy, so for them this proved to be unacceptable. They wanted an own independent paper that was not controlled by the party, but neither did it qualify as samizdat. The nationals would have liked to broaden their movement and increase their political weight. They saw an opportunity to obtain the license they had long requested to launch the journal *Hitel*. The same summer, Károly Grósz³³ was elected prime minister, representing the possibility of a new reform era, which they hoped would give them better opportunities to achieve their goals.³⁴

Power seemed to have lost control of intellectual life. The broadening of the 'tolerated' category and allowing certain opposition manifestations to go unchallenged were apparent concessions that were not officially integrated into the system to prevent it from compromising its framework. These concessions did not form part of the system and did not exist legally, yet their use was widespread. These concessions on the part of the Party were a technical instrument of power, but they slowly became an integral part of the system and began to dismantle its structure.³⁵ The criteria of opposition behaviour were unclear, the boundaries between legality and illegality were becoming blurred, and the necessary political unity within the party was also lacking. The category of alternative thinking was put in place in order to nuance the forms of expression that differed from party positions. They used the rhetoric to indicate that they were willing to engage in dialogue with dissidents, that they were not seen as enemies, as they served the same purpose with the best convictions as the powers that be, but by other methods.³⁶ Although they professed to communicate this to the public, that was not the case. According to Party rhetoric, they included the intelligentsia close to the *Fordulat és reform*, the organisers of the Lakitelek meeting and environmentalists.³⁷ They

33 == Károly Grósz (1930–1996), politician. In May 1988, at the national Party conference he was elected general secretary of the Party's Central Committee, as the successor of Kádár, who had resigned. Although he initiated a dialogue with the emerging opposition movements and organisations, he was not willing to make any real concessions. Parallel to the beginning of the disintegration of the party state, his political influence also decreased. See more in Medgyesi, *Apagyilkosság—Kádár János és Grósz Károly küzdelme*.

34 == Riba, *Hatalomtechnika a pártállam végóráiban*, 75–87.

35 == *Ibid.*, 19–20.

36 == Kis, 'Kik azok a másként gondolkodók és hogyan különböztessük meg őket az ellenzékietől?', 4–8.

37 == In Hungary, the construction of the hydroelectric power plant was a symbolic, concrete issue for the greens and the opposition in general. At protests against the dam, slogans of environmental protection were mixed with those demanding democracy. There were people in the so-called Danube movement who protested specifically on professional grounds, while others believed that the government's behaviour in relation to the dam clearly showed the flaws of the political system.

defined them in terms of their ideas being different from Party politics, but without seeking open confrontation and not wishing to go beyond the constitutional framework. The intelligentsia close to *Társadalmi Szerződés*, which advocated a multi-party system, were classed among the enemy groups.³⁸

Isolating critical thinkers from each other was an established Party policy.³⁹ More important than the division, however, was for the Party to initiate a dialogue with thinkers who seemed less radical, so that it could retain the right to make the final decision against them.

A fundamental difference was that *Társadalmi Szerződés* envisaged pluralisation as coming from the bottom, by organising broad social groups into a counter-power, while, according to *Fordulat és reform*, this could be achieved from the top, by fragmentation of power. The debate that arose between the members of *Beszélő-kör* and the authors of *Fordulat és reform* raised the question of who the representatives of power would negotiate with at a given time, in order to provide the agreement with social legitimacy.

The Party policy on intelligentsia created room for opposition; however, even the regime itself did not reckon with the two main groups as resistance. It is therefore necessary to clarify to what extent the analysed groups can be considered to be resistance. In the classical sense, resistance means defiance, non-concession, defence and self-defence against an external force. Clearly radical actors were usually sentenced by means of public law enforcement, leaving them no possibility to organise an eventual opposition. However, it can be stated that intellectual groups had tried to outsmart the framework imposed by the regime rather than become resistant. They might not have achieved their goals in the latter case.

The national opposition, even after the publication of *Társadalmi Szerződés*, insisted that it was necessary to hold another concertation meeting. The organisers of the Lakitelek meeting emerged from their circles. There were some who had experience that could be used in politics, including Zoltán Bíró⁴⁰ and István Bakos

38 = = Az MSZMP Politikai Bizottsága 1988. február 9-i ülésének jegyzőkönyve. [Reports of the meeting of the Political Committee of the MSZMP on February 9, 1988]. A KB Közigazgatási és Adminisztratív Osztályának előterjesztése, 1988. február 3. [Submission of the Public Administration and Administrative Department of the Central Committee, February 3, 1988.] 1019. M-KS 288-5. MNL OL, Budapest, Hungary.

39 = = Szekér, 'A diktatúra "kis körei"', 9–32.

40 = = Zoltán Bíró (1941–), literary historian, university professor, the first president of the MDF. In the 1970s, he was a chief official at the Department of the Ministry of Culture, and later the head of the Department of the Ministry of Culture. In 1988, he was expelled from the Party. One of the founding members of the MDF, he served as first president from 1987 to 1989. See Bihari, Bíró, Lengyel, Király, *Kizárt a párt*. Budapest: Primo, 1989.

(through their activities in the Ministry of Culture) and Mihály Bihari (by means of his political history research). An age group slightly older than them was brought into politics in the wake of 1956. The events of the time and their taking on various roles served as a lifelong lesson (Gyula Fekete, Lajos Für, István Csurka, Sándor Csoóri, etc.). The main representatives of the movement were for the most part of the intelligentsia, writers and literary historians, but there were also political scientists, sociologists and economists. The structure of the speeches delivered at the meeting was made up of reports and co-reports, unlike the Monor organisation. The opposition, operating within the limits of legality, consistently took care of the essence of its strategy, which was that it could not allow the possibility of being classified as illegal by the regime. Dispelling suspicions was an important aspect of the organisation of the Lakitelek meeting, which they tried to ensure, among other things, by inviting Imre Pozsgay, who participated in the meeting as one of the leaders of the Party, to make an introductory presentation, thus setting the organisation's limits. With his participation, in the meantime, he ensured the legality of the meeting against the action of the regime.⁴¹

In his speech, Imre Pozsgay conveyed the standpoint of Károly Grósz, according to which he was 'ready to engage in dialogue with all constructive intentions in the name of unfolding and stability'.⁴² According to Pozsgay, the reforms were most pressing in the field of property, distribution and power-political relations. To a certain extent, he criticised the Party's 1968 reform, and argued that any new reform required a new concept, which approached the management of the country's affairs in a different way than before. He believed the state was unable to maintain a relationship with society and the desired support could not be achieved by democratic means either. He continued to envision a rift in the one-party system, but considered it important that the work of the Party was public to society. He meant to re-regulate the operation of social organisations and associations, and wanted to place the function of the Parliament on a new basis based on the principle of popular sovereignty. Part of his concept was the amendment of the electoral law, as well as the introduction of referendum in a consultative (and not legislative) role. He wished to incorporate the historical values of Hungarian public law and constitutionalism into the socialist state concept.⁴³

István Csurka gave the next presentation. The theory he elaborated, the 'anti-catastrophe programme,'—according to which the Hungarian nation was threatened with extinction and must fight for its survival—formed the basis of his later politics.

41 = = Szeredi, *A nemzetépítő demokratikus ellenzék története 1987–1989*, 30–33.

42 = = Speech by Imre Pozsgay at the Lakitelek meeting.

43 = = Ibid.

The ‘vision of the national death,’ derived from Herder’s prophecy,⁴⁴ had previously prompted several Hungarian literary figures to action. According to his theory, the fate of the Hungarians beyond the border was only the beginning: Hungarians were being raised to be small-minded and the nation was on its way to population decline, or if it did not die out, it would turn into a so-called subservient ‘waiter-nation.’ According to Zoltán Bíró, the most serious reason for the crisis was that the country had been left to itself. True to the preliminary discussions, he initiated the creation of a forum that would provide the opportunity for participation, dialogue and cooperation, and would play a fact-finding and proposal-making role between the state power and society. The joint Lakitelek Declaration was not classified as a political programme, but rather, it was meant to initiate a dialogue to encourage the creation of a political alternative.⁴⁵

= = = Earned legality

The editors of *Hitel* primarily belonged to the popular side and the Writers’ Union. After waiting many years for the magazine to be licensed, the first issue was published less than a year after the 1987 meeting. *Hitel* became a magazine with literary, artistic and social themes, defined by the folk-national spirit. The writings and their choice of topics conveyed a value system in which national tradition, language cultivation, national self-awareness and historiography took first place. Special attention was paid to the grievances suffered during Trianon and the 1956 uprising. The writings about their third-way ideas⁴⁶ about the Hungarian future were also decisive in terms of the spirit of the magazine. The importance of *Hitel* lay in the fact that the founders consciously waited until they received the magazine’s approval and did not want to go ‘underground’ and publish samizdat that only reached a narrow section of society. They feared that radical steps would win the support of fewer people, while they sought to appeal to the widest possible sections of so-

44 = = The vision of ‘the death of the nation’, by Johann Gottfried Herder, was that in centuries to come, in the sea of Slavs, Germans, Romanians and other peoples surrounding the Hungarians, the Hungarian language would be hardly recognisable. Among the writings of the volumes entitled *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, published between 1784 and 1791, the ‘prophecy,’ which can be found only as a commentary, had a great influence on Hungarian intellectual life and was a mobilising force in the movements of the reform era.

45 = = Agócs-Medvigy, *Lakitelek, 1987. A magyarság esélyei. A tanácskozás hiteles jegyzőkönyve*.

46 = = In Hungary, the term appeared in the 1930s, in the use of words by some folk writers. Some of the writers associated with the popular ‘spiritual-political force field’ from his world of thought and principles, what is summarised as the ‘third way.’ The concept comes from László Németh. The essence of the idea is that Hungarians should not expect development either from the West or from the East, because this will always lead to exploitation and dependence.

ciety from the outset.⁴⁷ All of this was the result of a conscious strategy, the fact that the journal could be published legally was considered even more important than the content of the published articles.⁴⁸ At the time, in addition to supplementing Forum, the magazine considered it a duty to provide a counterpoint and an alternative to *Beszélő*.

The main difference between the popular and democratic opposition is well illustrated by the distribution of samizdat publications, specifically, the avoidance of the genre. The democratic opposition did not seek permission to publish its magazine, which was printed as a samizdat. This means that the company—even if they only went ‘illegal’ as individuals when proceedings were initiated against them—was active in an illegal area. The popular opposition’s strategy sought to avoid this very thing. Despite all this, it can be observed that they kept in touch with each other and were able to cooperate from time to time in certain matters.

The visit of the Hungarian Prime Minister Károly Grósz to Arad became one of the important topics of the second Lakitelek meeting, organised on 3 September 1988—due to appointment scheduling and the increasingly dire fate of Hungarians in Romania. The Prime Minister’s visit on 28 August 1988 had elicited a significant response, with almost the entire Hungarian society expressing its disapproval. Pursuant to the programme announced by Ceaușescu, the demolition of the former Hungarian cities in Romania began in autumn in order to resettle the Hungarian population.⁴⁹ Moreover, expropriations took place without the possibility of legal remedy, with minimal compensation. The flow of refugees also increased: almost ten thousand people tried to flee to Hungary this year.

The Forum tried to gain support for the situation of the Transylvanian minority and managed to establish a good relationship with Austrian movements, partly through the efforts of the Austrian People’s Party, which promised to officially notify the Austrian government that it would request the help of the UN in stopping the methods used against minority Hungarians in Transylvania.⁵⁰

It is important to mention the case of the Bős–Nagymaros dam, which was also discussed at the meeting. At the end of the 1980s, a mass movement against the construction of the dam was formed, which was initially of an environmental nature, but over time, demonstrations took on a strongly oppositional and directly critical nature.⁵¹ In the years before the regime change, the barrage spread in public consciousness as a symbol of the communist one-party system and unlimited power.

47 = = Csoóri, ‘A visszaszerzés reménye’, 4–6.

48 = = Csoóri, ‘Mi a magyar, ma?’, 51.

49 = = ‘Kéretlen tájékoztató’, 24–26.

50 = = Documents Nos 21–29. In: Riba-Szekér, *Dokumentumok a Magyar Demokrata Fórum korai történetéből 1987–1989*, 75–92.

51 = = Csengey, ‘A parlament előtt’, 31–33.

As the country was known to be on the brink of economic bankruptcy, it could not have afforded such an investment, but the Party pushed for it for a long time in order to demonstrate its political strength. The project was ultimately scrapped.⁵²

The founding charter of the Forum as a social organisation was adopted at the end of the Lakitelek discussion in September 1988. It was a novelty that both the domestic and international press attended and reported on the meeting. News of the social organisation of the Hungarian Democratic Forum spread extremely quickly. As a result of press—and in particular Hungarian Radio—coverage, the Forum's stance, reflecting on the most important social problems, gained immense publicity, which allowed them to gain greater and greater social support.

= = = Belated steps

According to one of the well-tried strategies of the Party, the Patriotic People's Front could have consolidated the alternative organisations and pluralism would have been accomplished at most in the form of intra-party groupings. Grósz's first goal was to get the Forum to be incorporated into the Patriotic People's Front, but this was unacceptable to them. The Party leadership wished to demonstrate that the opposition relations with Party members exceeded the limit of tolerance. In 1988, they demanded cooperating Party members to be held accountable. Pozsgay was included in the Policy Committee, which made his position within the Party more prestigious, but this also demanded greater loyalty to the Party. Due to his participation in the Lakitelek meeting, Pozsgay was disciplined. The 'supporters of Pozsgay's reform efforts,' Zoltán Bíró, László Lengyel, Zoltán Király and Mihály Bihari, all of whom were somehow connected to the Forum and its events, were expelled from the Party.⁵³ The leadership tried to create distance between Pozsgay and the opposition circles by official means, but the relations between them did not cease even after that. Pozsgay maintained good relations with several reform organisations, but worked in the closest cooperation with the Forum. In the beginning—as best as they could—Grósz and his companions tried to 'win' the Forum for themselves and make it look like the group representing the social base of the reforms. The Patriotic People's Front was managed by Pozsgay and Grósz was Pozsgay's rival, so this organisation was foreign territory to him. The relationship between the two intensified in the second half of the '80s. Pozsgay was promised a serious position before the 1988 Party conference. The thinking of Grósz and Pozsgay was similar on several issues from the start of the 1980s. In spite of that, they acted as rivals. They agreed on the multi-party system and the need to replace Kádár. However, Grósz did not consider the multi-party system essential, but rather, he believed that the renewal of the existing one-party structure could solve the problems.

⁵² = = Ripp, *Rendszerváltás Magyarországon 1987–1990*, 78–81.

⁵³ = = Szeredi, *A nemzetépítő demokratikus ellenzék története 1987–1989*, 156–157.

This difference of opinion and distancing from Pozsgay, by the way greatly boosted Grósz's career. For Pozsgay, Grósz's progress could mean that both positions from which he could achieve meaningful results were occupied. Grósz, who was already aware of Kádár's intention regarding the position of general secretary, proposed the appointment of Imre Pozsgay and Rezső Nyers as state ministers. By nominating Pozsgay, he was, firstly, able to emphasise the new government's commitment to reforms, and secondly, he prepared the ground for the time when he would be appointed secretary general. He informed Pozsgay of all this, making a specific promise to him for the post of prime minister. According to Pozsgay's memories, Grósz approached him with the idea of replacing Kádár, asking for his support in reaching the position of general secretary. The fate of the post of prime minister was also discussed during the conversation, but according to Pozsgay, he only asked Grósz to resign, but he did not ask for it himself. According to Grósz, he believed that Pozsgay would be involved in government work as state minister and that when the time came, the change of prime minister would be easier. However, in the end Grósz changed his opinion regarding Pozsgay's position as prime minister.⁵⁴

Polarisation could be observed within the Party as well. Those who considered a multi-party system inevitable, but only with the participation of political parties that accepted socialism, grouped around Károly Grósz. By this time, the primary goal of the reformists was to find a coalition partner for the multi-party elections, as they all realised that the Party would not be able to form a government on its own. Imre Pozsgay had a more or less organised relationship with the popular-national opposition, Rezső Nyers with the social democrats and partly with the democratic opposition, and Miklós Németh with the technocrats and expert groups.⁵⁵ Rezső Nyers initiated the New March Front with this aim in mind. In November 1988, Miklós Németh was elected as Prime Minister, and he primarily had the backing of professional organisations.

On the opposition's side, the grouping of the popular side proved to be the strongest, and although the Hungarian Democratic Forum classified itself as a social organisation, they saw the possibility of a future party. The circle of civil democrats formed the Free Initiatives Network in the spring of 1988, and then the Free Democrats Association in November, which, compared to the previous network form of the former, acted much more like a party-like initiative. At that time, it was no longer possible to impose a barrier on independent organisations, so in November the government adopted the draft law on associations and assemblies, which even made the establishment of parties possible.⁵⁶

54 = = Jónás, 'Adalékok egy reformer pályaképehez. Pozsgay Imre útja 1988-ig', 4–13.

55 = = Ibid.

56 = = Szeredi, *A nemzetépítő demokratikus ellenzék története 1987–1989*, 160.

In the spring, the Historical Justice Committee was established, the main purpose of which was to reveal the crimes, illegalities and injustices committed during Stalinism in Hungary after 1945 and to advocate for their reparation. They dealt with the issue of 1956 separately and issued statements about the necessity to analyse the events of 1956. Their tasks were divided into three categories: historical, legal and religious.⁵⁷ Hundreds of people attended the commemoration on the thirtieth anniversary of the execution of Imre Nagy and his companions. The interpretation of 1956 remained a central issue from the regime's point of view, as their conceptual framework and thus their legitimacy of power would have been called into question in case the events come under review.⁵⁸

= = = Social resistance?

It was definitely in the interest of the opposition forces to win the trust of the society, but when it came to legitimisation by the regime, they took a different attitude.

The popular side envisioned change through the reformation of power, thus, during the Kádár era, they, as the opposition, strove to assert legitimacy, hoping that the interests they represented would appear and take effect in the decisions of the power, which would also mark the end of the one-party system. The democratic opposition took a different stance, not trusting that the government would ever give up its monopolies by itself, so they envisioned the validation of the matters they considered important and the defence of their position as something to be fought out. For them, obtaining legitimacy from the Party was a less important aspect. In terms of social support, the popular side were thinking about winning over broad strata of society, while the democratic opposition could count on the support of narrower, intellectual layers.

Resistance in its classic sense and alternative ideas gaining ground in the public in an illegal or legal way are not the same thing. Aside from our knowledge of the era, we tend to idealise facts or even endow them with opposite feelings. However, the inappropriate use of certain concepts can lead to wrong recognitions, which results in a distortion of the collective historical memory.

Movements formed around the magazines, by taking on topics and authors that could not appear elsewhere, and the writers became opinion-makers who took on their ideas that differed from party propaganda in front of the public. The 'popular-national' and 'democratic' division is somewhat arbitrary, but it became quite exclusive in the era. Transition between groups was not typical especially among

57 = = Speech by Zoltán Bíró at the second Lakitelek meeting. In: Szeredi, *Lakitelek 1988. A Magyar Demokrata Fórum 1988. szeptember 3-i tanácskozásának jegyzőkönyve és sajtóvisszhangja*, 15–23.

58 = = Szekér–Riba, *A Nagy Imre-kód. Nagy Imre újratemetésének politikai dimenziói*, 22–23.

the more vehement debaters. The identity of the groups individually strengthened as they increasingly began to define themselves in relation to each other. By reading the minutes of the meetings and their writings, it was possible to determine to which opposition group the speaker—even without prior knowledge of their identity—belonged to in almost every case.⁵⁹ The reason for this is that the debate was driven by a specific use of words and the clash of certain specific guidelines and ideas.

The representatives of the various opposition circles were organised along strict fault lines, but at the same time, the linguistic system used by the disputing parties, with which they defined themselves, distinguishes them from others. They were the first to reflect on unresolved issues affecting broad sections of society. For the Party, dominating the discourse topics meant a disadvantage in relation to the opposition, and formulating its position on the current problems was only possible in hindsight, less authentically, while the popular viewpoints were assumed to have already been taken by the so-called ‘alternatives,’ ‘reformers,’ ‘enemy groups,’ i.e. mostly representatives of the popular side, the Democrats or even some representatives of the Reform Communists. It also often happened that they voiced the same idea, only phrased it differently, for which the language framework of the Party proved to be narrow and outdated. In other words, the opposition of the Kádár era had a common goal: rejecting the existing system, and the debate society itself was in fact a joint society of the popular side and the democratic opposition.

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59 == This is clearly illustrated by Éva Kovács's concise synthesis in the 1994 issue of the journal 2000: 'and [...] if you worry about Hungarian minorities beyond the border, you can only be a populist (and not a human rights activist), if you want an open market economy, you can only be an urbanist (and not a pro-market economist)' In: Kovács, 'Indulatok a népi-urbánus vitában', 15–22.

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==== Bogusław Wójcik =====

/// Keston College (1969–1989) and the evaluation of its activities by the Polish communist intelligence

During the Cold War, people split in two camps would not only enter into political, military and economic arguments, but also clash in a strong ideological conflict. In this period, when the Western slogan: ‘Better dead than red’ was on everyone’s lips, ruling leaders in the East were trying to defend their own ideological *status quo*, by, among other things, battling against so-called Western centres of ideological subversion. As it emerges from preserved documents of Department I of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the People’s Republic of Poland, the Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism, founded in 1969 in Great Britain,¹ later to be colloquially known as Keston College² was regarded as such a centre. This paper aims to present the activities of Keston College and verify its classification by Polish communist intelligence as a Western centre of ideological subversion. Looking for an answer to the question: ‘why was Keston College treated by officers of the Polish communist intelligence as a centre of ideological subversion?’ I will use the analysis of archival sources and references to the opinions of Keston College researchers

1 = = The investigation regarding Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism was initiated in 1979 in Division XI of Department I of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the People’s Republic of Poland. At the beginning of 1988, it was transferred to Division III of Department I of the Ministry of Internal Affairs as a result of establishing the object-based investigation with the cryptonym ‘Circus’, registration number 17888. It was completed in November 1989. Teczka Rozpracowania Obiektowego dot. Keston College—ośrodka Studiów nad Religią i Komunizmem w Wielkiej Brytanii. [Object Research File for Keston College—Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism in Great Britain], 1979–1989, AIPN, 02071/27, The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, Poland.

2 = = The centre was named ‘Keston College’ after transferring its registered office in 1974 from Chislehurst to Keston Common on the outskirts of London.

and historical literature. In the article, I refer mainly to the archival materials of the Ministry of the Interior of the People's Republic of Poland. However, it should be borne in mind, that intelligence officers from countries remaining in the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union also spoke in a similar tone about the activities of Keston College. I will carry out comparative research in this area in the forthcoming publication *Keston College and the Polish Affairs*.

== Foundation and activities of Keston College

Despite the passage of more than fifty years since the foundation of Keston College, still no definitive monograph exists on this organisation. The following works contributed to writing its story: Jenny Robertson's popular book *Be Our Voice. The Story of Michael Bourdeaux and Keston College*,³ a chapter in Mark Hurst's book analysing the relationships of British organisations defending human rights and reporting on Soviet dissidents in 1965–1985,⁴ as well as a collection of essays by people active at Keston College in the past, archivists and scholars, published by Baylor University Press in 2019 and entitled *Voices of the Voiceless*.⁵ The diary of Michael Bourdeaux,⁶ the founder of Keston College, was published in 2019. It has become an important source of information about the organisation. Keston's Archive and Library located at the Keston Center for Religion Politics and Society at Baylor University in the USA is also a mine of information.⁷

Among authoritative sovietologists who supported the idea of establishing Keston College as a centre analysing the situation relevant to the status of religious freedom in the Eastern-Bloc countries were Sir John Lawrence, Leonard Schapiro and Peter Reddaway. In addition to the founders' personalities, the development of Keston College was influenced by geopolitical conditions and coincidence. Due to a combination of these factors, the linguistically gifted Michael Bourdeaux did not take a course in German during his compulsory military service⁸ but took up Russian instead. Subsequently, he continued to explore the mysteries of the Russian language and culture during his philological studies at the University of Oxford in 1954–1959, and during a one-year internship in Moscow, where he was sent by the British Council in 1959–1960 on a student exchange programme. His stay in Moscow inspired him spiritually, as at the time he met many believers of the Orthodox Church and became personally aware of the truth that religion and belie-

3 == Robertson, *Be Our Voice*.

4 == Hurst, *British Human Rights Organizations*, 115–146.

5 == Graffenried and Knox, *Voices of the Voiceless*.

6 == Bourdeaux, *One Word of Truth*.

7 == Keston Center for Religion Politics and Society, Baylor University, <https://www.baylor.edu/kestoncenter>. (Access on 1 September 2022).

8 == Hurst, *British Human Rights Organizations*, 115–116.

vers were persecuted in the USSR, a circumstance not known to the British public of the time. In 1960, Bourdeaux was ordained a priest in the Anglican Church and this opened up new prospects of professional advancement and an academic career. However, in 1964, there was an event in Moscow, which over time became a founding myth of sorts about Keston College. Near the ruins of the Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, destroyed by communists, he met two women, Feodosia Varavva and Anastasia Pronina. They asked him this: ‘Be our voice and speak for us’,⁹ which spurred his further activity.

The initial activity of Keston College met with the disapproval of both the employees of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to whom Bourdeaux communicated his observations from his time in the USSR, and influential opinion-forming groups. After publishing a book entitled *Opium of the People*,¹⁰ in which he decided for the first time to take up the role of ‘the voice of the persecuted’, he was dismissed as untrustworthy. The British public’s perception of communism and life in the USSR and its satellite states were at complete odds with Bourdeaux’s impressions. Testimony given by Grażyna Sikorska, who worked at Keston College in 1978–1989 is an interesting illustration of this situation. Referring to previous experience as an assistant at the University of London, she stated that ‘English researchers, to their surprise, learned from me that the communist system had been imposed on Poland by a powerful neighbour. I was asked: “Don’t the Polish people vote for the communist party in free elections?”. Even more interesting discussions were held on the realities of life in Poland. I was often accused of lying or exaggerating when I talked about the total dependence of the citizen on the state which had a monopoly on providing livelihood, accommodation and education as well as the mere function of the nationalised mass media to act as a communist propaganda tool, the preponderance of socialist ideas in culture, the falsification of history and the struggle against religion and the Church. I was also disbelieved quite frequently when pointing out that permission to obtain a passport and travel abroad required the permission of the Communist Party, faced numerous attempts to convince me that the socialist system was vastly superior to the capitalist’.¹¹

The *Opium of the People*’s frosty reception did not discourage Michael Bourdeaux, but rather, it convinced him that he would accomplish his mission by continuing to collect, correct and then publicise information about the ongoing persecution of believers in the USSR. He also decided to establish a foundation that would provide help to the followers of different persecuted religions in the USSR. The charity *Aid to Russian Christians* was an independent sister organisation of Keston College, headed by Jane Ellis, who coordinated sending parcels of food and medicine

9 = = Bourdeaux, *One Word of Truth*, 87.

10 = = Bourdeaux, *Opium of the People*.

11 = = Interview with Grażyna Sikorska.

to the 'gulags' and families of prisoners of conscience, as well as assisting the travel of volunteers to the USSR. When mentioning one such trip to Moscow, Andrew Lenox-Cunningham said, 'I was carrying a bag full of clothes and wearing a fur for a woman whose husband was imprisoned. I do not need to mention that I was nervous, especially because I could not speak Russian and I had never been to the USSR. However, everything went well thanks to the guidelines and preparation of the whole expedition by Jane Ellis'.¹²

The circumstances surrounding the establishment of Keston College meant that the first period of its activity focused primarily on the situation of religion, churches and religious associations in the USSR. Apart from the above-mentioned Jane Ellis, the situation in the USSR was closely monitored by specialist researchers Xenia Howard-Johnston (née Dennen) and Michael Rowe. The staff of Keston College gradually continued to grow. In the mid-1980s, when Keston College was in its heyday, there were 25 researchers reviewing hundreds of magazines, papers and samizdat documents every month¹³ in 19 languages and publishing the most important excerpts. The Research department at that time was headed by Michael Rowe, the Information department by Alyona Kojevnikov and the whole organisation was led by Philip Walters as Executive Director. The situation of believers in Central and Eastern Europe was reported by Arvan Gordon (GDR), Bob Hoare (Bulgaria), Alan Scarfe and Paul Booth (Romania), John Eibner (Hungary), Stella Alexander (Yugoslavia), Alexander Tomský (Czechoslovakia and Poland) and Grażyna Sikorska (Poland), among others. Keston College's main principle was to confirm through other sources the information that the researchers from the centre obtained from samizdat publications, phone calls or the official press of socialist countries. Sandra Oestreich, who worked in the Keston College administration and served as an assistant to the editor of the *Keston News Service* (KNS) emphasises that 'each report received, whether by phone or in writing, was verified before publication. We followed the journalists' principle of obtaining several confirmations of the information before publishing it'.¹⁴ Published every two weeks, the *Keston News Service* was subscribed to by most leading news agencies (Reuters, UPI, Associated Press etc.) and other media of the time. It was divided into several sections, which presented an overview of the most important events, documents and updated the list of persecuted religious activists and dissidents.

The academic journal *Religion in Communist Lands* (RCL) was first published at Keston College in 1973. For the first few years it was edited by Xenia Howard-Johnston (née Dennen), and then Jane Ellis. In the first issue of this jour-

12 = = Interview with Andrew Lenox-Cunningham.

13 = = Samizdat—Russian: self-publishing—illegal, underground publication of political, religious and literary dissidents in the Eastern Europe.

14 = = Interview with Sandy Oestreich.

nal, in determining its profile, Michael Bourdeaux indicated that it was not meant to be a register of persecution, but rather, a record and analysis shedding light on spiritual awakening in countries where militant atheism had become an official doctrine.¹⁵ This message also expressed Keston College's philosophy of not seeking to influence the overthrow of communism, but 'to study and document all aspects of religious life (both Christian and non-Christian) in those countries which are governed by Communist or Marxist regimes'.¹⁶ Over the years, the Archive and Library at Keston College were organised to form a unique collection of samizdat publications, as well as studies and material regarding the socio-political situation in the USSR and countries under its 'protectorate'. At Keston, the experts' opinions on the religious situation were prepared for governments and state delegations, groups of politicians and journalists visiting the countries of the Eastern Bloc.¹⁷

In the 1970s and 1980s, most people—even sovietologists—did not anticipate events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. The geopolitical scenarios, envisaging the disintegration of the USSR and its satellite countries, pointed to a distant time perspective of such hypothetical events also according to the Institute's staff. Malcolm Walker, who became the Librarian of Keston College in 1980, was also one who did not believe in the possibility of changing the situation in the Eastern Bloc. From today's perspective, as he observes, the activity of Keston College, and particularly the news services (KNS) published in this centre, seems to be completely different. Both "publishing these reports, as well as the colleagues' opinions expressed during various consultations with politicians and church leaders played its role in changes which occurred at the end of the eighties."¹⁸ Andrew Sorokowski, who spent three years at Keston College from November 1984 to November 1987 as a researcher, mentions that "although Keston College was trying to be apolitical, it was clear that we were sharing the faith in a political liberation of our nations from communist tyranny."¹⁹ In his opinion, the fact that people associated with Keston College, such as Sir John Lawrence, had access to government circles, must have had an impact on the development of political events. Access to the media also had an effect. Alexander Tomský, associated with Keston College in 1977–1986 as Manager of the Central Europe department among others, mentions that every week he was a guest on BBC Radio and less frequently on television. His articles were also published outside Great Britain, in France and Germany. Furthermore, he was running a Czech and Slovak chronicle for 'Kultura' and was sending messages to the French service about dissi-

15 = = Schapiro, 'Ten Years', 4.

16 = = Bourdeaux, *Land of Crosses*, XV.

17 = = Wójcik, 'Znaczenie infogeopolityki', 388.

18 = = Interview with Malcom Walker.

19 = = Interview with Andrew Sorokowski.

dents. He also emphasises that ‘he had a chance to recommend to Margaret Thatcher some materials and books for reading.’²⁰

In 1984, that is, in the period of the greatest impact of Keston College, Michael Bourdeaux received the prestigious Templeton Prize for his work and achievements. The money the prize came with allowed for, among other things, the renovation and extension of the organisation’s registered office and helped to temporarily overcome difficulties of constantly increasing running costs. Using grants from the Ford Foundation or Church in Need, Michael Bourdeaux strictly avoided accepting financial funds that would give rise to suspicion that Keston College was politically controlled. In fact, the organisation had to rely on funds received primarily from private donors and sales of the KNS by media, or sale of its other publications. Paradoxically, the biggest financial problems were caused by the fall of communism in Central Europe in 1989. The Keston College forming team was forced to specify its mission once again. One of the actions in this regard was a dramatic decrease of researchers employed in the centre from 25 to 5, the transfer of the centre’s registered office in 1991 to Oxford and the change of its name to the Keston Institute.²¹

== Was Keston College really a centre of ideological diversion?

Analyses on the extent and characteristics of actions described as ‘psychological warfare’ and ‘ideological subversion’ were conducted in both the West and the East. Also in Poland, apart from the internal materials of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the People’s Republic of Poland, there was public literature devoted to the issue.²² In the internal studies of this ministry, classified as ‘confidential’ or ‘for internal use’, Janusz Kolczyński’s approach afforded a way to describe the relations between the above-mentioned activities. His argument was that both psychological warfare and ideological subversion were concepts subordinate to the overall concept of ideological struggle. In his opinion, imperialist countries were fighting an ideological battle with communism by means of (1) an ideological discussion—reduction to dialogue forms of competition at the levels of science and culture; (2) ideological subversion—in the form of ‘black’ propaganda and political provocation; (3) psychological warfare distinguished by an offensive activities targeted at military and political aims.²³ The Soviet literature concerning ideological subversion as-

20 == Interview with Alexander Tomský.

21 == Wójcik, ‘Keston College’, 117–127.

22 == Gabriel, *Imperialistyczna dywersja*. Łarski, *Ośrodki antykomunistyczne*. Szulczewski, *Propaganda polityczna*. Jaworski, *Pole bitwy*.

23 == *Dywersja ideologiczno-polityczna imperializmu*. [Ideological and political subversion of imperialism], Warszawa, 1967, AIPN, Rz. 00250/198: 159. The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Rzeszów, Poland.

sumed an important role in Polish studies devoted to these issues. One such study described ideological subversion as ‘a system of activities, initiatives and operations in propaganda, agitation, as well as intelligence and organisation targeted against communist countries, aiming to undermine the ideological and world-view attitudes of citizens of these countries; having a hostile ideological and political impact, inspiring and stimulating antisocialist phenomena and tendencies, the intensified and subsequent use of which would allow the achievement of an intended counter-revolutionary aim—capitalism restored in these countries—in a camouflaged, evolutionary manner, and under favourable conditions in an open way.’²⁴

In the view of analysts supporting the authorities behind the ‘Iron Curtain’, an ideological pressure on communist countries had been systematically increasing since the end of the Second World War, reaching its peak in the mid-70s of the 20th century. ‘The creation and subsequent consistent implementation of the so-called Carter Doctrine, i.e. a defence of human and civil rights’ lent it special severity and importance.²⁵ From the perspective of the Soviet government, any initiatives taken in the West as part of this doctrine, e.g. under the pretext of defending political prisoners’ rights, were nothing else but ‘a carefully thought-out and coordinated subversive action’²⁶. Therefore, ideological subversion was regarded as one of ‘the most dangerous means of destructive penetration into the countries of the communist camp’²⁷. The officials of the Stasi expressed this opinion by means of a *bon-mot*: ‘there are no underground activities without political and ideological subversion’.²⁸

24 = = Dywersja ideologiczna państw kapitalistycznych przeciwko wspólnocie państw socjalistycznych ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem antypolskiej działalności Radia Wolna Europa w latach 1980–1982. Praca dyplomowa napisana pod kierunkiem mjr. dr. Henryka Szczerbińskiego. [Ideological subversion of capitalist countries against the community of socialist countries, with particular emphasis on the anti-Polish activities of Radio Free Europe in 1980–1982. Thesis written under the supervision of squadron-leader Dr Henryk Szczerbiński], Warszawa, 1988, AIPN, 001708/3401: 16, The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, Poland.

25 = = Dywersja ideologiczno-polityczna prowadzona przeciwko PRL (zewnętrzna i wewnętrzna) oraz środki przeciwdziałania podejmowane przez SB MSW PRL. [Ideological and political subversion against the People’s Republic of Poland (external and internal) and countermeasures taken by the Security Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the People’s Republic of Poland], Warszawa, 1983, AIPN, 01210/23: 157, The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, Poland.

26 = = Komitet Bezpieczeństwa Państwowego przy Radzie Ministrów ZSRR, Walka organów KBP z ideologiczną dywersją państw imperialistycznych w warunkach współczesnych. [The State Security Committee of the USSR Council of Ministers, The struggle of the KGB organs against the ideological subversion of the imperialist states in contemporary conditions], Moscow, 1976, AIPN, 0296/257 vol. 1: 98, The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, Poland (hereafter cited as The struggle of the KGB organs).

27 = = The struggle of the KGB organs, 95.

28 = = Glaeser, *Secret Police*, 483.

The intelligence services of the communist countries dealing with the identification and neutralisation of the activities of ideological subversion centres, assumed that ideological subversion in capitalist countries was conducted by both governmental services (propaganda, diplomatic and intelligence) and organisations and institutions camouflaged as private or non-governmental associations. It was pointed out that reference to their status as 'private' and 'independent' was only a manoeuvre suggesting that the opinions expressed by them were objective, while their activities did not expose the governments of the Western countries to accusations of violation of the rules of international law.²⁹ Back in the 1960s, it was suggested that in the West, apart from university centres, there were about 600 independent institutes and centres carrying out research on communist countries. The reach of this research was extensive and covered problems concerning ideology, political parties, the issue of state and law, demographic, national and religious matters, education policy and relationships between countries and churches.

In attempting to classify ideological subversion centres in the Polish literature, reference has been made to both 'model' categories indicated in this regard by the Committee for State Security attached to the Council of Ministers (KGB) of the USSR, and to the fact that they were created by taking into account local specifics.³⁰ Classifying ideological subversion centres in the West 'acting against the Polish People's Republic,' one publication mentioned the following: the radio stations Radio Free Europe (RFE), Voice of America, BBC and France Internationale Radio; survey offices of RFE in Vienna and Copenhagen; and the publishing houses Kultura, Kontakt, Spotkania, Pogląd, Archipelag and Pomost.³¹ The same publication drew attention to ideological subversion centres established after 1981, whose 'per-

29 = = Antykomunistyczne ośrodki dywersji ideologicznej na Zachodzie. Zarys organizacji, metod i kierunków działalności. [Anti-communist centres of ideological subversion in the West. Outline of organisation, methods and directions of activity], Warszawa, 1980, AIPN, 01521/1826: 15, The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, Poland.

30 = = Among centres of this type, conducting activities against the USSR, the following were mentioned: governmental and international centres of planning and coordinating ideological subversion activities, intelligence authorities, research institutions, special implementing authorities carrying out actions and operations of the ideological subversion, national and international anti-communist organisations, anti-Soviet organisations, nationalist organisations, Zionist organisations and reactive clergy centres. Sympozjum na temat zagrożenia kraju dywersją ideologiczno-polityczną i polityczno-operacyjnego systemu przeciwdziałania. [Symposium on the threat of ideological and political subversion to the country and the political and operational counteraction system], Warszawa, 1974, AIPN, 0296/73, vol. 2: 87–88, The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, Poland (hereafter cited as Symposium on the threat of ideological and political subversion).

31 = = Rola i zadania wywiadu (z uwzględnieniem wywiadu PRL MSW). [The role and tasks of the intelligence service (including the intelligence of the Ministry of Internal

sonnel was recruited from the staff of activists of the [former] “Solidarity” forming “a new political emigration”.³²

Among the characteristic phenomena accompanying ideological subversion in the 1970s, USSR intelligence identified the increasing use of mail parcels and tourism. The first form refers to sending, among other things, religious literature to the USSR, which local authorities described as anti-Soviet. Tourism-related ideological subversion took forms such as ‘importing and distributing anti-Soviet religious and other harmful literature, collecting and exporting from the USSR tendentious materials intended for publication abroad, providing moral and financial help to nationalists or other individuals with a negative attitude, influencing individual citizens of the USSR with an anti-Soviet spirit, persuading some of them to go abroad, etc.’³³ In this context, the speech of the KGB representative at the meeting of communist state intelligence agency representatives, held in Budapest on 23–29 May 1978, directly emphasised the necessity of close and systematic cooperation between security bodies of communist states ‘in terms of combating the opponent’s ideological subversion’.³⁴

Another new trend noticed by the Soviet services in the 1970s was the creation of new ideological subversion centres by political defectors from the USSR and other communist countries. In the USSR, they were associated mainly with *Kontinent* magazine, RFE broadcasters and *Kronika-Press* publishing house. Vitaly Pavlov, head of the KGB’s ‘Narew’ Group in Warsaw, writing to Adam Krzysztowski, head of Department III of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the People’s Republic of Poland on 15 July 1978, emphasised that the KGB leadership ‘attributed considerable importance to work against defectors, by taking action together with sister services’.³⁵ He specified these basic activities as follows: ‘agency penetration into the opponent’s special services and ideological subversion centres of defector groups’; the disclosure and capture of communication channels of defectors in the

Affairs of the People’s Republic of Poland]], Legionowo, 1988, AIPN, 02220/268: 72, The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, Poland (hereafter cited as The role and tasks of the intelligence service).³² = The role and tasks of the intelligence service, 73.

³² = The role and tasks of the intelligence service, 73.

³³ = Notatka o wykorzystaniu przez przeciwnika turystyki do celów dywersji ideologicznej w ZSRR. [Note on the enemy’s use of tourism for ideological subversion in the USSR], Moskwa, 1976, AIPN, 0296/257 vol. 1: 54, The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, Poland.

³⁴ = The struggle of the KGB organs, 89.

³⁵ = Pismo Witalija Pawłowa do Adama Krzysztowskiego. [Letter from Vitaly Pavlov to Adam Krzysztowski], Warszawa, 15 July 1978, AIPN, 0296/257 vol. 1: 139, The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, Poland (hereafter cited as Letter from Vitaly Pavlov).

West with their supporters in the USSR and other communist countries; the disclosure of a group of publishing houses belonging to defectors (“Kontinent”, “Kronika bieżących wydarzeń”, “Kultura”, “xx wiek” and others) as being sources of disinformation and anti-Soviet propaganda financed by reactionary circles and in the service of capitalist states; disclosure and profound recognition of negative processes arising abroad in connection with anti-Soviet activity of defectors and employing measures for the purpose of their neutralisation; preventing opponents’ attempts to unite existing groups and movements in the defectors’ environment’.³⁶

One example of interaction between an organisation functioning (in the intelligence nomenclature of the Eastern-Bloc countries) as an ‘ideological subversion centre’ and domestic opposition, was a cooperation beginning at the end of the 1970s between Keston College researchers and editorial staff of the Lublin underground periodical entitled ‘Spotkania’. The fruits of their labours included, for example, reprints by ‘Spotkania’ of authors such as Frank Sysyn, Marite Sapiets and Alexander Tomský, which had been previously published by RCL,³⁷ as well as reports on the activity of young opposition figures in Poland in RCL.³⁸ When talking about his contacts with Keston College through Alexander Tomský and Grażyna Sikorska, Piotr Jegliński wrote that, ‘If I had any information which came from the country, I’d pass it on firstly to Keston College and of course Radio Free Europe. That information was particularly valuable from the point of view of their interests, as I’d have information from various church circles, bishops and laymen about what was happening in the East, in Soviet Russia. On another front, we were organising shipments of literature to Lviv and the Baltic Republics, sending various materials, including the ones published by Keston College. Later, a lot of materials and information were transferred directly by Alex. That was much easier because Keston was situated near London and getting there was an expedition’.³⁹

The essentials and assumptions of intelligence activities regarding ideological subversion, the ways intelligence was collected, and the centres covered by these activities have been specified in a number of documents of the functioning of Department I of the Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs.⁴⁰ One of them was *Instrukcja w sprawie pracy jednostek organizacyjnych resortu spraw wewnętrznych*

36 == Letter from Vitaly Pavlov, 139.

37 == Choma-Jusińska, ‘Współpraca środowisk’, 198–199.

38 == Jegliński and Tomský, ‘Spotkania’, 23–28.

39 == Interview with Piotr Jegliński.

40 == Bagiński, ‘Wydział XI’, 505–611.

na rzecz wywiadu [Instruction on the work of organisational units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for intelligence], introduced by Minister Stanisław Kowalczyk's Order No. 0061/73 of 1 June 1973. The implementation of the guidelines of this instruction was expected to contribute to the optimisation of operational activities of Department I, aiming to protect the country against 'espionage, economic, political and ideological subversion.'⁴¹ The following was attached to this instruction: *Wykaz obiektów, zagadnień, środowisk oraz kategorii osób i dokumentów będących w zainteresowaniu operacyjnym Departamentu I MSW* [A list of objects, issues, environments and categories of people and documents of operational interest of Department I of the Ministry of Internal Affairs]. In point III of the above-mentioned attachment, entitled *Rozpracowanie ośrodków dywersji ideologicznej* [Investigation of the ideological subversion centres], Keston College was identified as a model example of such a centre engaged in investigating the issues of religion and communism.⁴² In other departments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, these classifications would differ. In *Wykaz obiektów* [A list of objects] of Department IV of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, investigating the 'antinational' activities of churches and religious associations, Keston College—Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism, 'Keston News Service', 'Religion in Communist Lands', as well as Kultura and Aneks, were categorised as foreign centres, organisations and publishing houses associated with Polish religious environments.⁴³

Counteracting the impacts of ideological subversion centres, in accordance with the guidelines of Department I of the Ministry of Internal Affairs was primarily supposed to consist of penetrating them and identifying their plans and courses of action. In the case of Keston College, no such investigation occurred.⁴⁴ Due to the lack of possibility to apply the agency method, the officials of Department I had to content themselves with possibilities which the non-agency method, 'consisting of using other sources of information, operational contacts and service

41 == Zarządzenie Nr 0061/73 Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych z dnia 1 czerwca 1973 r. w sprawie pracy jednostek organizacyjnych resortu spraw wewnętrznych w zakresie wywiadu. Instrukcja w sprawie pracy jednostek organizacyjnych resortu spraw wewnętrznych na rzecz wywiadu. [Ordinance No. 0061/73 of the Minister of Internal Affairs of 1 June 1973 on the work of organisational units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the field of intelligence. Instruction on the work of organisational units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for intelligence], AIPN, 01756/2: 336, The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, Poland (hereafter cited as Ordinance No. 0061/73).

42 == Ordinance No. 0061/73, 351.

43 == Indeks obiektów. [Object index], MSW Departament IV, Marzec 1983, 0021/6: 214, The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Rzeszów, Poland.

44 == Wójcik, 'Informacja', 251–264.

contacts'⁴⁵ afforded in this regard. In order to neutralise the impact of ideological subversion centres, methods such as 'breaking' attempts to rally Polish citizens, eliminating channels of shipments of hostile literature, disclosing and eliminating contacts of Polish citizens with subversion centres, disclosing and identifying any facts of Polish citizens' subversive warfare,⁴⁶ were additionally applied in the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

== Conclusion

Including Keston College in the group of ideological subversion centres in the internal instruction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs would not be possible without popularising the term itself by the USSR authorities at the beginning of the 1960s, or without subsequently repeating its opinions, analyses and classifications.⁴⁷ Most crucial were the assumptions connected with the vision of the world being an arena of the giant games of the USA and the USSR, in which everyone, more or less consciously, was involved.⁴⁸ From this perspective, independent research facilities, founda-

45 == A range of non-agentry methods provided for in the Instruction was very wide, covering all sources and possibilities within the scope of obtaining documents, information or other interesting data, such as: official contacts, private and social contacts, accidental contacts; printed sources: press, specialist publications and bulletins, official governmental publishers, biographical brochures, guidebooks, maps, leaflets, technical drawings, etc.; radio and televisions programmes, photographs, cassette tapes or video cassette tapes; samples or patterns of products, machines or devices; observation of the area, objects and people; intelligence, results of the interrogations of suspects; foreigners, prisoners of war, prisoners, refugees, etc.; interviews with the citizens of the Polish People's Republic going abroad and returning from capitalist countries of the intelligence interest; a set of measures of operational intelligence technique, secret photography, legalisation, long distance wiretap, radio monitoring, photoelectronic equipment; other technical and operational measures: room wiretap, telephone eavesdropping, preview, photographic documentation, correspondence and mail control, decryption, revisions of frontiers, secret searches, etc. Instrukcja o pracy wywiadowczej Departamentu I MSW. Załącznik do Zarządzenia Nr 0041/72 Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych z dnia 6 maja 1972 r. [Instruction on the intelligence work of Department I of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Attachment to Order No. 0041/72 of the Minister of the Internal Affairs of 6 May 1972], AIPN, 01756/2: 305, The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, Poland.

46 == Symposium on the threat of ideological and political subversion, 74–75.

47 == Bagieński, 'Antykomunistyczna "dywersja ideologiczna"', 275.

48 == Pawłow, *Generał Pawłow*, 205. 'In the world divided into two camps, no important political force, especially in such a pivotal country as Poland and at a turning point in history, could remain neutral. Lofty slogans, great ideas and impulses, institutions, people who believed in those ideas—these were merely elements of a giant game in which everyone was involved regardless of their choices'.

tions and charities, such as Keston College and *Aid to Russian Christians*⁴⁹ also became ideological subversion centres. Inconsistencies of such generalisation can also be noticeable when comparing the interpretations of subversive warfare promoted at that time in Poland with in-depth knowledge on the Keston College. In keeping with the indicated standards, the subversive nature of certain activities was to be determined by the motives with which they were undertaken, such as achieving your own benefit or harming the recipient; measures used within the scope of such activities, such as falsified facts, insinuations and slanders; applied methodology, such as camouflage, masking real intentions and using demagoguery.⁵⁰ The activity of the people who set up Keston College was characterised by selflessness, willingness to help the oppressed, care in distributing only verified information and transparency of activities. Finally, it should be emphasised that the founders, researchers and people supporting Keston College intended to change Western communities' perception of the situation in the USSR and countries under its influence, and not to affect their internal socio-political situation.

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Interview with Alexander Tomský, 4 August 2018, by telephone.

Interview with Malcolm Walker, 1 July 2018, Brockenhurst, UK.

Interview with Malcolm Walker, 3 January 2019, by email.

==== Websites ====

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Only the grey horizon remained.

Fortepan / MHSZ

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