

**= 1953 =**  
**Stalin's Death and Beyond**

# ՀԱՅԵՆԿԱՆԻՏՈՒ

The Quarterly Journal of  
the Historical Archives of the  
Hungarian State Security

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- > Romanian–Soviet Joint Enterprises ----- Florian Banu
- > From Mass Songs to *The Miracle of God* ----- Gabriella Murvai-Bóke
- > Nomenklatura in the Moldavian SSR ----- Marius Tăriță

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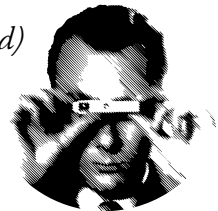
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Czechoslovakia 1956.

Fortepan / Sándor Bauer

**= Articles =**  
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Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, who led the RPK delegation to Stalin's funeral, at Băneasa Airport on his return from Moscow. Bucharest (Romania), March 11, 1953.

A.N.I.C.

===== Florian Banu =====

## **/// The Impact of Stalin’s Death on the Functioning of Romanian- Soviet Joint Enterprises (1953–1956)**

A medieval dictum says that often “after war the loser cries and the winner is ruined.” Romania’s situation at the end of the Second World War fully illustrates this. Though ending the war in the camp of the victors, Romania had no reason to congratulate itself. Despite the armistice concluded with the United Nations on September 12, 1944 and the huge efforts made to defeat Nazi Germany, Romania was considered a defeated country and was placed under one of the harshest military occupation regimes in its history. Not only human loss and material destruction, but also the interruption of the traditional circuits for supplies of raw materials and the sale of finished products placed severe strain on the national economy, causing the standard of living to deteriorate dramatically. Internal political changes and the reconfiguration of the spheres of influence at the international level made the post-war reconstruction of the country particularly difficult. The solution found by Romania’s leadership to get out of this impasse would prove to be one with long-term repercussions: the establishment of Romanian-Soviet joint enterprises, known as *sovromuri*.

Although the *sovroms* played an important role in controlling some branches of the Romanian economy by the Soviet Union, while at the same time acting as a political lever, the historiography has not yet fully recognized their importance. Although interest in the subject has been manifested since the 1950s,<sup>1</sup> works dedicated to the subject are few and either suffer from a lack of access to essential docu-

1 == Nicholas Spulber, *The Economics of Communist Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Technology Press of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1957); idem, “The Soviet undertaking and Soviet mixed companies in Eastern Europe,” *Journal of Central European Affairs* 14, no. 2 (July 1954): 154–73.

ments (in the case of those published in the West)<sup>2</sup>, or they bear a certain ideological imprint (in the case of those published in Romania, until 1990<sup>3</sup>). Among newer works, we note the studies made by Gheorghe Onisoru,<sup>4</sup> Brândușa Costache,<sup>5</sup> and Alina Ilinca.<sup>6</sup>

We ourselves gave a wide space to the analysis of *sovroms* in a volume published almost 20 years ago.<sup>7</sup> However, in this present study, we propose to focus on the impact that the death of the Soviet leader Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin had on the functioning of joint Soviet-Romanian enterprises.

### **= = = A sui generis economic collaboration**

In this particularly difficult political and economic context, the only solution was a reorientation towards the Soviet Union, the former enemy that had already imposed on March 6, 1945 the formation of a communist-controlled government led by Prime Minister Petru Groza. As a result, on April 25, 1945 a government delegation led by Mircea Durma, the Minister of Finance, went to Moscow to conclude commercial agreements that would allow Romanian industry to resume production.

After laborious negotiations, the governmental representatives of Romania and the U.S.S.R. concluded two agreements (one on trade and goods exchange and one on economic collaboration) on May 8, 1945.<sup>8</sup> During the negotiations in Moscow, five documents were drawn up: an economic collaboration agreement between Romania and the Soviet Union; a confidential protocol to the collaboration agreement; an agreement on the mutual delivery of goods between Romania and the

2 = = John Michael Montias, *Economic Development in Communist Rumania* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1967).

3 = = Institutul de Cercetări Economice, *Dezvoltarea economiei R.P.R.* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Române, 1958); Roman Moldovan, Ion Rachmuth, and Vasile Malinschi, eds. *Economia României între anii 1944–1959* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Romine, 1959); a praiseworthy exception is the work of Ion Alexandrescu (*Economia României în primii ani postbelici* [Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1986]).

4 = = Gheorghe Onisoru, *România în anii 1944–1948. Transformări economice și realități sociale* (Bucharest: Fundația Academia Civică, 1998).

5 = = Brândușa Costache, *Activitatea României în Consiliul de Ajutor Economic Reciproc, 1949–1974* (Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2012).

6 = = Alina Ilinca, "Societățile mixte româno-sovietice în economia României (1949–1960)," in *România. Supraviețuire și afirmare prin diplomație în anii Războiului Rece. Comunicări, articole, studii*, ed. Nicolae Ecobescu (Bucharest: Fundația Europeană Titulescu, 2013), vol. 1, 389–408.

7 = = Florian Banu, *Asalt asupra economiei României. De la Solagra la SOVROM (1936–1956)* (Bucharest: Editura Nemira, 2004).

8 = = A.N.I.C., fund C.C. of P.C.R., Economic Section, file no. 18/1945, The economic collaboration agreement between Romania and the Soviet Union, 1–27; A.N.I.C., Royal House fund, file no. 38/1945, *passim*.



Soviet Union including two export and import lists (also confidential); an annex protocol regarding price setting; and a protocol for the liquidation of old accounts (in a reduced amount), left unregulated since the former Romanian-Soviet agreement of 1941.<sup>9</sup>

Through the economic collaboration agreement, the Soviet government expressed its desire not only to participate in prospecting, exploration, oil and metal mining in territory of Romania, but also to get involved in the Romanian economy. This was done with a view to exploiting, industrializing and commercializing wood, as well as to become involved in Romanian banking activities and in air, fluvial, and maritime transport. This Soviet participation was to be done either by exploiting already existing enterprises or economic bodies, or by establishing mixed-capital companies that could be granted direct concessions or exploitations.

The Moscow agreements entered into force following the publication of a decree-law in the "Monitorul Oficial" of June 15, 1945.<sup>10</sup> In May and June, a surge of feverish activity took place in Bucharest as projects were prepared that would establish joint enterprises in those fields that the Soviets had indicated they considered a priority.<sup>11</sup> At the beginning of June, a Soviet delegation arrived in Bucharest to determine the details for establishing joint ventures in the fields of oil, banking, and naval and air transport. As a result, by the end of August 1945 four joint companies had already been established: the Soviet-Romanian Petroleum Company "Sovrompetrol," the Soviet-Romanian Navigation Society "Sovromtransport," the Romanian-Soviet Air Transport Society ("TARS") and a Soviet-Romanian bank named "Sovrombanc."<sup>12</sup>

Subsequently in the period from 1946 to 1952, similar companies were also created in the machine building and chemical industries and in the fields of construction and uranium mining. However, the way of operation and especially of the distribution of the obtained profits gradually caused the grievances of the Romanian side.

### **= = = De jure full equality, de facto...**

According to the constitutive documents of the companies, capital infusion was to be made in equal percentages: 50%-50%. In reality, the *sovroms* were established by taking ownership of the assets of natural and legal persons of German nationality and including them as assets of the new joint-stock companies as a contribution of

9 = = A.N.I.C., P.C.M. fund-transcripts, file no. 5/1945, Transcript of the ministerial meeting, June 5, 1945, 21.

10 = = *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 133, June 15, 1945, 5029-30.

11 = = A.N.I.C., fund C.C. of P.C.R., Chancery Section, file no. 40/1945 Projects for the establishment of some Romanian-Soviet joint companies, June 4, 1945, 1-5.

12 = = Banu, *Asalt*, 131-35.

the Soviet state.<sup>13</sup> To these were added a series of installations, machines, and raw materials taken over by the Red Army during the first months of the occupation of Romania, under the title of “war trophies.” According to an address from the Romanian Commission for the Application of the Armistice to the Allied (Soviet) Control Commission dated January 20, 1945, only from the deposit the following goods were seized from the Romanian oil companies: 46,273 tons of tubular material, representing almost 80% of the companies’ total stocks; 98 pieces of machines, engines and pumps; and 1,111 tons of various materials.<sup>14</sup> To these was added the lifting of a large rolling mill from the „Malaxa” factory, together with its related raw material (14,000 tons).<sup>15</sup>

Upon carefully going through the texts of the founding conventions, the articles of incorporation, and the statutes of the new Romanian-Soviet joint companies, an objective reader quickly realizes that from the very beginning, the *souvroms* held a privileged status and were poised to play an important role in the economy of Romania. All of these companies were established for an unlimited duration, and they were exempt from any stamp or registration fees to the state, county, commune, or Romanian Chamber of Commerce, both in terms of capital and in terms of issued shares. Although the statutes of the companies provided for parity within the boards of directors, in actuality the leadership of the *souvroms* was Soviet. The general directors were Soviet, and most of the key positions were held by Soviet citizens. Operations were reserved for Romanians, and salary policies continued to be discriminatory. For example, a Soviet specialist who came to work in Romania was paid three to four times that of his Romanian counterparts<sup>16</sup>.

The danger that the *souvroms* represented, not only for the Romanian economy but also for the standing of western capital in Romania, was noticed by interested parties immediately after their establishment. For example, General Schuyler, the American military representative in the Allied (Soviet) Control Commission, noted in his diary on August 15, 1945:

13 = = These properties were included in the provisions of art. 8 of the Armistice Convention, signed on September 12, 1944, and which had the following wording: „The Romanian Government and High Command undertake not to allow the export or expropriation of any form of property (including valuables and money) belonging to Germany and Hungary or their nationals, or persons residing in their territories, or in the territories occupied by them, without the authorization of the Allied (Soviet) High Command. The Government and the Romanian High Command will keep these assets under the conditions to be established by the Allied (Soviet) High Command”, *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 219, September 22, 1944.

14 = = Marin Radu Mocanu, ed., *România și Armistițiul cu Națiunile Unite: Documente* (Bucharest: 1995), vol 2, 171–72.

15 = = Mocanu, *Romania*, 121–24.

16 = = A.N.I.C., fund C.C. of P.C.R., Chancery Section, file no. 7/1963. Transcript of the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers’ Party, March 5–8, 1963, 17 and 399–400.

[...] the new societies are sufficiently well organized to hold a total or partial monopoly in the respective fields. This is especially true within the shipping and aviation companies, where there will be no particular competition worth considering. Both in the oil field and the banking field, certain companies with private capital will continue to operate, especially the oil companies, which, being foreign property, cannot be interfered with for the time being. However, the outlook is rather bleak, because special concessions of all kinds are made to the new joint ventures.<sup>17</sup>

A month later in September 1945, Mircea Durma, the former finance minister who had signed the Moscow agreements, drew the attention of Gheorghe Tătărescu, vice-president of the Council of Ministers, to the fact that “the Sovrom bank, although a new bank, will become a concern that will control almost all the big banks in Romania.” He also emphasized the danger represented by the Soviet-imposed condition that the National Bank of Romania remain at the disposal of the new bank for resettlement. Tătărescu argued that these concessions were necessary, as they hoped these would help to secure improved conditions within the armistice.<sup>18</sup>

For his part, the Romanian businessman Alexandru Ștefănescu believed that by establishing the *souvroms*, the U.S.S.R. was treating Romania as “a conquered vassal.”<sup>19</sup> Not even left-wing politicians missed the true meaning of the Soviets’ involvement in Romania. In a report titled “Changes in the Romanian Economy,” Herbert (Bellu) Zilber – then the director of the Romanian Institute for the Study of the Economy and a member of the Communist Party – informed Ana Pauker, member of the Political Bureau of the Romanian Communist Party (P.C.R.) and close associate of Viaceslav Molotov, that “[t]he Armistice, the Collaboration Agreement and the enemy assets taken over as reparations give the Soviet Union a dominant position in the Romanian economy for a long period. Directly and indirectly, our economy will be felt to the last inch by the planned Soviet policy.”<sup>20</sup>

The painful reality of a politically and economically subjugated Romania was accurately perceived by Mark Ethridge, the special envoy of the U.S. President Harry Truman, while in Romania. In the report drawn up for the President in December 1945, he warned that Romania is “in the situation of an animal three-quarters into a python’s mouth. All we can do now, in the absence of a general treaty, would be

17 == Cortlandt Van Rensselaer Schuyler, *Misiune dificilă. Jurnal (28 ianuarie 1945–20 septembrie 1946)* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1997), 178.

18 == Ulrich Burger, *Misiunea Ethridge în România* (Bucharest: Fundația Academia Civică, 2000), 204.

19 == Burger, *Misiunea*, 199.

20 == A.N.I.C., fund C.C. of P.C.R., Economic Section, file no. 67/1945. Report on the state of the national economy at the end of the war, undated, 4.

to hold his back legs tight.”<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, through the post-war arrangements between the Great Powers, Romania, along with other Central and Eastern European states, had been ceded to the Soviet sphere of influence. Consequently, the U.S.S.R. undertook fully disposing of the economic resources of its satellite states in order to facilitate the work of post-war reconstruction.<sup>22</sup>

Newly installed in power, faced with strong and well-organized opposition political parties, and receiving rather uncertain popular support, the Romanian communist leaders were in no position to oppose their main ally, with whose assistance they had gained governmental power. As a result, neither Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the general secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, nor any other governmental political agent of the time allowed even the slightest objection to the Soviet proposals of creating *sovroms* in key areas of the Romanian economy, which was in the midst of recovery and adapting to peace conditions. Indeed, they missed no opportunity to praise this form of “internationalist aid.” Thus, in the “Political Report of the Central Committee of the P.C.R.” presented at the National Conference of the P.C.R. in October 1945, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej maintained that the four *sovroms* created thus far represented “a valuable support in the economic development of Romania.”<sup>23</sup>

In the following years, a series of new joint Soviet-Romanian enterprises was established in Romania in various fields of activity. On March 20, 1946, the “Sovromlemn” company was founded, following the signing of the Convention for the Exploitation, Industrialization and Valorization of Wood Materials.<sup>24</sup> On the same date, the company “Sovromgaz” was established for the exploitation of Romania’s natural gas deposits. On November 1, 1948, in a lavish ceremony at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the conventions for founding two new joint-stock companies were signed: “Sovromchim,” to be active in the chemical industry (the production of agricultural fertilizers, explosives, and tannins in the Ucea-Făgăraș factories); and “Sovromtractor,” intended to transform the production capacities of the city of Brașov’s aeronautical industry into a factory for producing the tractors that were so necessary to Romanian agriculture.

Of course, the co-interest of the Soviets in these various branches of the Romanian economy was still presented to the public as a genuine achievement of the regime. In this vein, on November 1, 1948, the Minister of Finance Vasile Luca stated:

21 == Burger, *Misiunea*, 118.

22 == Simultaneously with the creation of the first *sovroms* in Romania, the Potsdam Conference (July 17–August 2) was taking place, during which Great Britain and the U.S. recognized the rights of the U.S.S.R. on the German properties in the areas occupied by the Red Army.

23 == Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, *Articole și cuvântări*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed (Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură Politică, 1953), 32.

24 == *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 101, May 1, 1946, 4402–7.

We, through this collaboration, are building a tractor factory and establishing other enterprises. This means that we are embarking on the path of a concrete solution to the technicization of our agriculture; this means preparing for the penetration of socialism in the villages; this means the development of a heavy industry in our country; this means strengthening the economic and political independence of our country.<sup>25</sup>

On July 4, 1949, the conventions establishing three more *sovroms* were signed: “Sovromcărbune” (Valea Jiului), “Sovrommetal” (Reșita) and “Sovromconstrucții.”<sup>26</sup> On July 30, 1949, the nationalized insurance companies were combined in a joint venture called “Sovromasigurare,”<sup>27</sup> which aimed to organize insurance in Romania “on a socialist basis” and according to the Soviet model.<sup>28</sup> The last *sovroms* were established in 1952 and numbered three: “Sovromutilajpetrolifer,” “Sovromnaval,” and “Sovromcuartit.” The first two, established on August 15, 1952, in fact arose when some oil equipment production enterprises were removed from “Sovrompetrol” and were merged with other profile enterprises into a new joint venture, and secondly when shipyards were removed from the “Sovromtransport” company. Thus, the new “Sovromutilajpetrolifer” had as its objective “the manufacture of oil drilling and production equipment, as well as installations and aggregates for refineries,” while “Sovromnaval” was to produce fluvial and maritime transport vessels.<sup>29</sup> The only novelty was “Sovromcuartit,” the name of which attempted to camouflage the exploiting of Romania’s deposits of uranium, an extremely important natural resource for the U.S.S.R.’s nuclear program. Moreover, unlike the founding conventions of the other *sovroms*, the establishment of this last mixed company was not made public.

25 == A.N.I.C., P.C.M. fund-transcripts, file no. 11/1948. Transcript of the meeting of the Council of Ministers on November 1, 1948, 5.

26 == Moldovan, *Economy*, 534.

27 == The Soviets had taken over the German insurance companies as early as 1946 but, over time, some conflicts of interest had arisen with the Autonomous State Insurance Agency. The agency was accused of harming the U.S.S.R. by creating a monopoly for the insurance of the Romanian state’s assets which resulted in an unfair competition with the companies taken over by the Soviets, by charging lower premiums. In order to eliminate such problems, recourse was made to the „Sovromasigurare” solution. A.N.I.C., fund M.A.I.-D.A.S., file no. 22/1948. Informational note from Gh. Arteni, the general director of the Autonomous State Insurance Agency to the general secretary St. Tănăsescu, June 12, 1948, 49–50.

28 == “Semnarea convenției româno-sovietice pentru înființarea Societății ‘Sovromasigurare,’” [Signing of the Romanian-Soviet convention for the establishment of the “Sovromasigurare” Company] *Scânteia*, July 31, 1949, 1.

29 == “Înființarea societăților sovieto-române Sovrom-utilaj petrolifer și Sovromnaval,” [Establishment of the Soviet-Romanian companies Sovrom-utilaj petrolifer and Sovromnaval] *Scânteia*, July 16, 1952, 1.

The establishment of *sovroms* in 1952 represented the last stage of the penetration of this type of organization into the Romanian economy. By this time, the communist leadership in Bucharest had accumulated a series of grievances and had already taken into account that some of the *sovroms* would be dissolved, but they had to wait for a favorable moment before opening negotiations with the Soviets on the topic. Their activity had proved so harmful that the Romanian leaders now understood that such a form of “internationalist fraternal cooperation” had to end.

### **= = February 1947 – Team Dej-Maurer versus team Stalin-Molotov**

We will not develop here an analysis of the multi-faceted problem of the Soviet Union’s exploitation of the Romanian economy through the *sovroms*, but we will succinctly reproduce an episode in the silent confrontation that began to take shape after 1947 over the issue of economic collaboration.

As I have shown, during the first post-war years the material destruction and human losses caused by the war, the lack of imported raw materials, the diverting of production to pay war reparations, the maintenance of the Soviet troops stationed in Romania, and the terrible drought that hit the country in 1945-1946 all created an incredibly difficult economic situation that affected a large part of the population with hunger. In this domestic and international context, any critical attitude on the part of the communist leaders in Romania towards the “big brother” from the East was disallowed from the start, as dependence on Soviet support for maintaining the government was still very significant. In addition, the existence of the so-called “Moscow group” in the leadership of the Communist Party made any gesture likely to receive the “anti-Soviet” label even more risky.

As a result of this complex of factors, it was only at the beginning of 1947, after they had consolidated their positions and obtained the coveted legitimacy by winning the elections of November 1946 that the governmental factors from Bucharest dared to formulate its first objections to the economic relations with the Soviet Union. The opportunity was provided by the fact that between January 15 and February 20, 1947, economic negotiations took place in Moscow between a Romanian delegation, led by Gheorghiu-Dej, and a Soviet one.<sup>30</sup>

The diplomatic “battle” was opened, in the meeting of the economic collaboration commissions on January 28, 1947, by the presentation of the problems related to the activity of the *sovroms*. On this occasion, the Soviet side requested \$2,081,354 for the petroleum products taken over by the Romanian state from Sovrompetrol in 1946, another \$2,163,000 to cover the depreciation of the equipment, and the

<sup>30</sup> = = A.N.I.C., fund C.C. of P.C.R.-Economic Section, file no. 12/1947, Report on the bilateral discussions held in Moscow between January 15 and February 20, 1947, undated, 1-5.

sum of \$2,500,000 as a benefit that would be missing until January 1, 1947. (This last sum was an estimated global amount, because, as the Soviets also recognized, the exact amount was impossible to determine.) During the negotiations, the lawyer Ion Gheorghe Maurer, at that time undersecretary of state at the Ministry of Industry and Commerce – the holder of the portfolio being Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej himself – insisted on the formation of a commission to supervise the *sovroms* and wanted to specify that, legally, *sovroms* would be Romanian companies and that they would be subject to Romanian jurisdiction like any other companies.

The Soviet representative, visibly irritated by the claims of the Romanian side, demanded to know why this problem was being raised. Undersecretary of State Maurer used as an example how the „Sovromtransport” company was using the foreign currency they obtained without handing it over to the National Bank of Romania, as dictated by Romanian laws and by the Soviet proposal to share the foreign currency benefit of the *sovrom* between both parties. The second argument, cleverly included, highlighted the fact that there were other enterprises with foreign capital in Romania and, in accordance with the most favored nation clause provided for in the Paris Peace Treaty, they should be granted the same treatment, however politically unacceptable. The debates on this subject were quite heated, but they ended with a compromise that represented a small but significant gain for Romania.<sup>31</sup>

As if the tension created during the negotiations was not enough, on February 2, Gheorghiu-Dej and Ana Pauker were received by the all-powerful Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin. Also participating in the discussion were Vyacheslav Molotov, First Deputy Prime Minister, Sergey Kavtaradze, ambassador of the U.S.S.R. in Romania, and colonel general Ivan Susaykov, the deputy president of the Allied (Soviet) Control Commission in Romania. During the audience with Stalin, Gheorghiu-Dej dared to raise the issue of reducing expenses caused by payments for the functioning of the Soviet High Command in Romania (160 million dollars), as well as the issue of the delivery of goods on account of war reparations and the amounts paid into account Article 12 of the Armistice Convention (approximately 300 billion lei), thus showing the serious economic difficulties created for Romania.<sup>32</sup>

According to a memorandum of the discussion made by Gheorghiu-Dej on November 29, 1961, the reasons for the approach and the unfolding of the exposition were as follows:

31 == Banu, *Asalt*, 148.

32 == Dan Cătănuș and Vasile Buga, eds., *Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej la Stalin. Stenogramă, note de convorbire, memorii, 1944–1952* (Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2012), 86. The official exchange rate of the National Bank of Romania for March 20, 1947 was 1 USD for 150,187,060 lei (*Argus*, nr. 10.104, March 21, 1947, 1); 300 billion Romanian lei were equivalent to 1,997,508.97 US dollars.

We set out to show what the economic situation is, very sharp inflation phenomena began to appear, people began to live harder and harder, to gasp. And since we were part of the government, we carried the lion's share and there was quite a lot of talk in public about these truce obligations. Then we thought that in order to return home with a political gain, that the representatives of the P.C.R. in the government are those who have obtained the relief of things. [...]

I raised this issue of the obligations from the Armistice Convention, what does this mean, how much do we have to give, what is the economic and financial situation, what is the material situation of the masses, what is the disposition of the masses and that the conclusion [sic!] we reached is that it must be seen whether some relief cannot be made. [...] I also said that not only were we giving goods, but we were also paying for their transportation to the territory of the Soviet Union, even if their destination was Vladivostok. It was much more than what was stipulated in the Armistice Convention. I'm not talking about installations in factories, everything they thought fit to be given to the account of war expenses. Then we gave meat, wool, everything they needed. Cattle were taken by choice, especially cows, sheep, horses, very, very much. You could feel that it was going like this... It was as if there was a whirlpool that was pulling all these things. And for everything they took there, we had to pay for the transport on the territory of the Soviet Union as well. I showed the situation, in what situation humanity lives, what state of mind is in the masses, how the reaction uses these things, that they blame the Soviet Union, that they starve us [sic!] [...].<sup>33</sup>

The issues raised by Gheorghiu-Dej provoked a furious reaction from Molotov, who vehemently rejected the point of view of the Romanian delegation, while Stalin maintained an indecipherable attitude, much to Gheorghiu-Dej's dismay:

Maybe I wasn't delicate enough and I didn't find the most ideal formulations, but that doesn't matter. Molotov started to take me; it took me very hard. First, he asked me if I knew how many Soviet citizens were massacred, how many widows there are, how many towns were destroyed, how many villages were destroyed, and he started to tell me a picture that made your head wrinkle. He spoke more and more excitedly, he sparkled; that what you said here is the result of certain influences. He blamed the influences coming from the representatives of the bourgeoisie in the

33 = = Cătănuș and Buga, *Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej*, 94.



government and that these representatives of the bourgeoisie speak with Gheorghiu-Dej's mouth. Come on, say something!<sup>34</sup>

Molotov's reaction, combined with Stalin's question about the existence of a "nationalist current" within the Romanian Communist Party, nationalism being regarded as a capital sin, deeply worried Gheorghiu-Dej. On his way to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R., he confessed to the Soviet translator that "he made not only a mistake, but also a stupidity, because he put himself in an unpleasant situation and enraged such people as Stalin and Molotov."<sup>35</sup>

There is no doubt that, at that moment, Gheorghiu-Dej even feared for his life, the nervous tension he was in being confirmed by the notes in Andrey Vishinsky's diary: Furthermore, Dej said that he is still under the deep impression of the discussion he had with Tov.[arish] Stalin: «After my first meeting with the Generalissimo, Dej continued, I literally could not eat or sleep. I suffered greatly and was ashamed and spiteful for the mistakes I made. Therefore, the second discussion instilled in me courage and confidence in the future». I told Dej that we are all glad to receive Comrade Stalin's instructions. These teachings remain imprinted in the memory throughout life and bring only benefits. Dej must appreciate them as a great help from Comrade Stalin.<sup>36</sup>

As he later admitted in December 1961, Gheorghiu-Dej was not aware at the time of the meeting in February 1947 that Ana Pauker had previously informed Moscow of the existence of a "nationalist deviation within the Romanian Communist Party." Stalin's harsh warning to the Romanian leaders ("take into account that if their party is class, social, it will grow, but if it is racial, it will perish, because racism leads to fascism"<sup>37</sup>) deeply marked Gheorghiu-Dej, as can be seen from his words fourteen years after the events:

Stalin, in this circumstance, had that expression, he had that formulation, which disturbed and embittered me a lot, and you realize what Stalin means – Stalin! – to pronounce like that. Yes, it was no joke! Of course, if I had known the things that were revealed by the 20th [of the C.P.S.U.] and 22nd Congresses, no matter how much courage a communist had, I believe that he would not have dared to take a stand as I took it then.<sup>38</sup>

34 = = Cătănuș and Buga, *Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej*, 95.

35 = = Cătănuș and Buga, *Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej*, 82.

36 = = Cătănuș and Buga, *Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej*, 91.

37 = = Cătănuș and Buga, *Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej*, 88.

38 = = Cătănuș and Buga, *Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej*, 102–103.

### **= = = The „suspect” Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej does penance**

There is no doubt that, following this visit, Gheorghiu-Dej fully understood that his political position was not fully consolidated, and that a whim of Stalin could not only remove him from the head of the Communist Party but could even mean death. Moreover, he became convinced that his rivals in the party leadership were supplying the Soviets with information that put him in a totally unfavorable light.

In fact, a few months after this memorable visit, the “Dej-Maurer team” again came to the attention of the Soviets following a report sent to General Susaykov, deputy president of the Allied (Soviet) Control Commission by Emil Bodnăraș. This former Soviet agent, who was undersecretary of state at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in charge of controlling the secret services, harshly accused Gheorghiu-Dej and the people around him (Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Simion Zeiger, Gheorghe Gaston Marin) of being insufficiently invested in the interests of the Soviet Union and of harboring a sympathy towards the Anglo-Americans.<sup>39</sup>

Following this report made on June 10, 1947 by General Susaykov, the Foreign Policy Section of the Central Committee (C.C.) of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (C.P.S.U.) sent Vladimir Lesakov to Romania to verify the content of the report Bodnăraș had prepared. Lesakov had encounters with General Susaykov, who in turn met with Ana Pauker, with Vasile Luca (member of the Political Bureau, with Soviet citizenship), and with Gheorghiu-Dej. The first three revealed a tendency similar to that of Bodnăraș, so that, in the report drawn up by Lesakov on August 29, 1947, Gheorghiu-Dej was accused of having committed a series of mistakes in terms of economic and trade union policy, as well as a politically incorrect attitude towards bourgeois “companions.”<sup>40</sup> Based on the statements made by Susaykov and Vasile Luca, Lesakov believed that Ion Maurer’s influence was at the root of Gheorghiu-Dej’s mistakes. Maurer was even accused of directing Romania’s economy towards the West and “consciously tend[ed] to discredit trade with the Soviet Union.”<sup>41</sup>

In this context, a series of actions during the following period, in which Gheorghiu-Dej had to reaffirm his loyalty to Moscow, become fully comprehensible. In the months that followed, the leaders from Bucharest competed to prove their loyalty to the U.S.S.R., a strategy seen as their only chance to ensure their political and even physical survival. In this way, Romania became one of the most obedient satellites of Moscow. It is not by chance that in June 1948, the Soviet Union decided to transfer the headquarters of the Cominform and the editorial office of the weekly

39 = = Cătănuș and Buga, *Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej*, 212.

40 = = The report prepared by V. Lesakov was published by Dennis Deletant, *Teroarea comunistă în România. Gheorghiu-Dej și statul polițienesc, 1948–1965* (Iași: Polirom, 2001) 240–43.

41 = = Deletant, *Teroarea*, 241.

“For lasting peace, for popular democracy,” the organ of the Information Bureau of the Cominform, to Bucharest. Romanian leaders were also entrusted by the Soviet leadership in January 1949 with the task of creating a proposal for the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon), as a counterpart to the Marshall Plan.<sup>42</sup>

Also in this context must be observed Stalin’s decision to check Gheorghiu-Dej and simultaneously to compromise his credibility in front of international and Romanian public opinion. Stalin accomplished this in November 1949 by entrusting him with the thankless task of reading a report entitled “The Yugoslav Communist Party in the hands of a gang of assassins and spies”<sup>43</sup> during the Cominform meeting held in Budapest.

At the same time, Gheorghiu-Dej’s concern with protecting his main collaborator should be noted. Ion Maurer was removed from the position of undersecretary of state at the Ministry of Industry and Commerce on April 13, 1948. Subsequently kept in positions of low visibility, Maurer was constantly defended by Gheorghiu-Dej, and was only brought back to the forefront of the political scene on July 16, 1957, when he was entrusted with the Foreign Affairs portfolio.<sup>44</sup>

Promoting and defending national interests in a bipolar world, in which Moscow’s right to impose its security interests throughout its sphere of influence was fully recognized by its Western counterparts, was an extremely difficult mission. The presence of Soviet troops in Romanian territory (until 1958), of secret agents in the service of the Kremlin infiltrating the highest echelons of state and Communist Party leadership, in addition to their mistrust of the West and dependence on the economic and military support of the Soviet Union, represented serious obstacles to developing an independent foreign policy capable of promoting Romania’s perennial interests.

Additionally, a series of international events fully convinced Gheorghiu-Dej that any request to review the situation of the *souroms* would have to be postponed until a more opportune time. There were many indications that the Cold War was on the rise: the promulgation of the Truman Doctrine on March 12, 1947; the defeat of the Italian Communist Party in the elections of April 1948 through the discreet involvement of the USA; the implementation of the Marshall Plan through the signing of the Economic Recovery Act on April 3, 1948; the start of the Berlin Crisis (June 24, 1948); and the outbreak of the Korean War (June 25, 1950). In this context, prudence in relations with the giant neighbor from the East became an axiom for the government in Bucharest.

42 = = Costache, *Activitatea României*, 19.

43 = = “Comunicat asupra consfătuirii Biroului Informativ al Partidelor Comuniste; Partidul Comunist din Iugoslavia în mâinile unor asasini și spioni,” [Communiqué on the consultation of the Information Bureau of the Communist Parties; The Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the hands of assassins and spies] *Scântea*, 1949, November 30, 1 and 3.

44 = = Lavinia Betea, *Alexandru Bărlădeanu despre Dej, Ceaușescu și Iliescu. Convorbiri* (Bucharest: Editura Evenimentul Românesc, 1998), 94.

## = = The death of Stalin, the „death” of the *sovroms*

After a period of complete subservience to the Kremlin, a period in which the leadership dogma of the P.C.R. was that “the touchstone of proletarian internationalism is friendship with the Soviet Union,”<sup>45</sup> in 1953 Romania embarked on a slow, very cautious process of distancing itself from Moscow. After his political rivals Ana Pauker, Teohari Georgescu, and Vasile Luca, reunited in the so-called “anti-party group,” were eliminated on May 26–27, 1952, consolidation of his internal position within the party and especially the death of Stalin allowed the leader Gheorghiu-Dej to initiate the process of “detachment” from the Soviet Union. We will not analyze here the motivations for this gesture, the national interest, and/or the preservation of personal power, but we will attempt to present the basic elements that set into motion the first stage: the abolition of *sovroms*.

Dissatisfaction with the operation of the *sovroms* had grown within the leadership of the Romanian Workers’ Party (P.M.R.), and finding a risk-free way to approach the problems of the Romanian-Soviet joint associations had become a priority. Attempts to streamline some of them (for example, by creating “Sovromnaval” and “Sovromutilajpetrolifer”) had not yielded the expected results. Thus, both sides, Romanian and Soviet, were signaling their dissatisfaction with the poor economic results.

The year 1953 would prove to be one of great change. On January 28, 1953, Gheorghiu-Dej also took over the position of president of the Council of Ministers and decided to try to find a solution, seconded by his trusted people from the party. At the end of February 1953, a meeting of the Bureau of the Comecon was to take place in Moscow, and on this occasion, it was decided that the problem of the *sovroms* should be addressed. In the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Romanian Workers’ Party (P.M.R.) on February 24, 1953, the lines on which the issue of abolishing the *sovroms* needed to be addressed were drawn by the delegation headed for Moscow, under the leadership of Miron Constantinescu, president of the State Planning Committee.<sup>46</sup>

In a Kremlin shaken by rumors about the state of health of the almighty Stalin, the Romanian delegation was received quite kindly. Against the backdrop of the impending changes, the negotiators on the Soviet side were probably all more concerned with the stability of their own positions than with the demands that the Romanians would present. The death of Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin, the all-powerful president of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. and Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, at 21:50 on March 5, 1953, produced a veritable cataclysm in the power structures of the U.S.S.R. The resulting shock waves would be felt throughout the entire communist camp.

45 = = Victor Frunză, *Istoria stalinismului în România* (Bucharest: Editura Humanitas, 1990), 403.

46 = = Banu, *Asalt*, 166.

Having returned to his country, during a meeting on March 7, 1953 of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the P.M.R., Miron Constantinescu presented the results of the discussions in Moscow. Gheorghiu-Dej, the general secretary of the P.M.R., Chivu Stoica, Alexandru Moghioroș, and Dumitru Coliu, members of the Political Bureau, were all present from the party leadership. As can be seen from the report, an agreement was reached according to which eight joint Soviet-Romanian enterprises were to pass in the next period into the Romanian state's patrimony; that is, the Soviet part of these enterprises was to be bought back by Romania. These *sovroms* included: "Sovrommetal" (Reșita), "Sovromchim" (Ucea), "Sovromtractor" (Brașov), "Sovromlemn," "Sovromcărbune," "Sovromgaz," "Sovrombanc," and "Sovromconstrucții."<sup>47</sup> Six *sovroms* remained in operation: "Sovrompetrol," "Sovromutilajpetrolifer," "Sovromnaval," "Sovromtransport," "TARS," and "Sovromcuartit."<sup>48</sup>

Of course, the conventions had not yet been signed, as it was an agreement in principle. Nevertheless, the Romanian government immediately instructed the ministries that supervised these *sovroms* to prepare the organizational chart and propose the cadres that would take over positions of responsibility in these enterprises. "Sovromcărbune" was to be abolished first, it being where the greatest problems were being recorded. In fact, as early as the first half of March 1953, the Soviet engineers had already received orders to hand over the functions they performed to the Romanian delegates.<sup>49</sup>

The Romanian communist leaders were afraid of possible sabotage that would have "proven" the inability of the Romanian side to administer these enterprises. To prevent any "accidents," the Ministry of Coal had sent a deputy minister to Valea Jiului and two directors from the ministry to the Anina and Șotânga mines. Gheorghiu-Dej was personally concerned with these matters:

In such moments of change, people are found to disturb the waters. You must take care of this and expose any attempt to disturb the peace [...]. The management of these enterprises must be in the desk drawer, in the iron house of the Regional Office; to know them by name, to know them, to talk to them, to call them to the Regional Party Office, to surround them

47 = = A.N.I.C., fund C.C. of P.C.R., Chancery Section, file no. 20/1953. Transcript of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the C.C. of P.M.R. from March 7, 1953, 1–3.

48 = = "Sovromasigurare" ceased its activity, based on another agreement, on July 1, 1953. A.N.I.C., fund C.C. of P.C.R., Chancery Section, file no. 21/1954, Protocol regarding the liquidation of the Romanian-Soviet joint company "Sovromasigurare", 10.

49 = = Banu, *Asalt*, 166.

carefully, to support them, to be documented, to feel that the regional committee of the party is interested in the fate of the enterprise.<sup>50</sup>

The reasons invoked by the Romanian side during the negotiations to support the abolition of the *sovroms* can be summarized as follows: a need to subordinate these enterprises to the Romanian state and make them comply with Romanian legislation, as well as a need for more efficient control by the Romanian state; the need for socio-cultural investments in the enterprises within the *sovroms*; the losses recorded by some *sovroms*; difficulties in securing the labour force for *sovroms*<sup>51</sup>; and the capacity of the Romanian state, thanks to the Soviet aid it had received, to develop certain fields of industry on its own.

On the topic of approaching future negotiations over the *sovroms*, Emil Bodnăraş, member of the Political Bureau and Minister of the Armed Forces, showed himself to be the most direct: “Everything must be shown [to the Soviets] without reservations and without embarrassment. Let’s talk with our comrades and show them the situation clearly. I think their management is not fully informed.”<sup>52</sup>

### **= = A difficult takeover with many unknown aspects (1953–1956)**

Serious problems in the process of the Romanian state’s takeover of the *sovroms* appeared when it was time to evaluate their patrimony. The Romanian side was forced to admit that it did not have certain data about the value and functioning of the *sovroms* before 1949. Gheorghiu-Dej, in discussing a provisional evaluation of the *sovroms*, emphasized that “as regards the activity up to 1949, it must be added that we do not have the data, that the data we give here have some deficiencies, are probably not complete. It must be shown as the reality is because it is possible that

50 = = A.N.I.C., fund C.C. of P.C.R., Chancery Section, file no. 20/1953. Transcript of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers’ Party, March 7, 1953, 4.

51 = = Fifty percent of the workers at “Sovromcoărbune” and “Sovromconstrucții” were provided by soldiers of the Romanian army. A large number of soldiers also worked in the forestry operations of “Sovromlemn.” As Miron Constantinescu expressed himself, “comrades with great responsibility, the Soviets, stated that this must stop because it is not politically convenient for Romanian soldiers to work in the *sovroms*.” A.N.I.C., fund C.C. of P.C.R., Chancery Section, file no. 20/1953. Transcript of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers’ Party, March 7, 1953, 7.

52 = = A.N.I.C., fund C.C. of P.C.R., Chancery Section, file no. 20/1953. Transcript of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers’ Party, March 7, 1953, 12.

the [Soviet] comrades have better data than us. It should be mentioned that they are 'estimated evaluations'."<sup>53</sup>

The problems related to the evaluation dragged on, so that in January 1954 the delivery of "Sovromtractor," "Sovrommetal," "Sovromchim," and "Sovromlemn" to Romania was still being discussed.<sup>54</sup> The beginning of 1954 meant a new round of Romanian-Soviet talks on the issue of abolishing the *sovroms*. A government delegation, consisting of Gheorghiu-Dej, Miron Constantinescu, Chivu Stoica, Dumitru Petrescu, and Alexandru Bârlădeanu, left for Moscow on January 23, 1954. The delegation also included Stancu Marin, from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and Manea Mănescu, from the Central Directorate of Statistics. The meetings with the C.P.S.U. leadership took place between January 26 and February 1, 1954, with the problems of the *sovroms* being addressed in the meetings of January 27 and February 1.

From the discussions, it emerged that the old loans additionally given by the Romanian side to some *sovromuri* needed to be returned in order to find a "fair and equitable solution" for the redemption of the eight *sovromuri*, as well as to improve the situation of the company "Sovromcuartit."<sup>55</sup> Because there were inequities it was proposed to re-examine the prices paid to "Sovromcuartit." The option chosen was to adopt the domestic prices from Romania, and to increase the benefits from 8% to 10%.<sup>56</sup> The *sovroms*' benefits were to be established in lei and transferred to the U.S.S.R. in goods, valued at domestic Romanian prices.

The sums resulting from the redemption of the *sovroms* by the Romanian state were to be used by the Soviet Union to cover the value of the uranium production of "Sovromcuartit," which it took over in full, and for other expenses of the Soviet state in Romania. Initially, it was considered that a difference in favor of the U.S.S.R. would remain, which would have to be covered by the delivery of Romanian goods. However, the Minister of Foreign Trade, Alexandru Bârlădeanu, announced at the

53 = = A.N.I.C., fund C.C. of P.C.R., Chancery Section, file no. 20/1953. Transcript of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party, March 7, 1953, 13.

54 = = A.N.I.C., fund C.C. of P.C.R., Chancery Section, file no. 7/1954. Protocol no. 3 of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party, January 19, 1954, 5.

55 = = A.N.I.C., fund C.C. of P.C.R., Chancery Section, file no. 153/1954. Notes of conversations of the delegation of the Romanian Workers' Party, led by Gheorghiu-Dej, with the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in relation to the economic problems of the Romanian People's Republic, Kremlin, January 26 – February 1, 1954, 19–20.

56 = = The social capital of "Sovromcuartit" had been increased, in the fall of 1953, by 81.5 million rubles through the contribution of both states. A.N.I.C., fund C.C. of P.C.R., Chancery Section, file no. 22/1953. Transcript of the discussions held with the representatives of the Soviet Union on the sovrom issue, February 1, 1954, 3.

end of February 1954 that, according to the latest calculations, all the funds in lei, which the Soviet state achieves in Romania from the redemption of the eight *sovroms* and from the income of those that remain, could not cover the production cost of the company “Sovromcuartit.” The Soviet side would therefore need to bring, for the year 1954, a compensation of 50 million rubles-goods.<sup>57</sup>

The protocol for taking over the first eight *sovroms* was finally signed on March 31, 1954. However, some of the problems related to compensation dragged on. Only through a protocol signed on November 6, 1956 in Moscow would it be stipulated that the initial evaluations, made at the establishment of each *sovrom*, would be considered definitive for five of the eight *sovroms* that had been proposed for abolition in 1954. The other three *sovroms* had to be reevaluated by the experts of the Ministry of Foreign Trade of the U.S.S.R. and the Romanian Ministry of Finance.<sup>58</sup>

At the beginning of August 1954, A.F. Inozemtsev, the commercial representative of the Soviet Embassy, communicated to Gheorghiu-Dej the U.S.S.R.’s proposal to transfer the ownership of four more *sovroms* to the Romanian state: “Sovromutilajpetrolifer,” “Sovromnaval,” “Sovromtransport” and TARS. Within “Sovromutilajpetrolifer,” “1 Mai” and “Poiana Câmpina,” the enterprises from Târgoviște and Bacău, were to form “a metallurgical trust” to serve “Sovrompetrol.” The conditions for Romania’s takeover were to be identical to those established for the other eight *sovroms*. The Soviet motivation for this transfer was a result of their confidence in Romanian leadership; as they put it, in the last period, “Romanian cadres capable of managing these enterprises have grown. The Soviet government believes that these enterprises can be handed over to the Romanian state, as there is a certainty that the Romanian state is in a position to manage and develop their activity.”<sup>59</sup> Another surprising proposal from Moscow was to hand over the currency taken as a trophy during the war to the Romanian government.

The debate over these proposals took place in the meeting of the Political Bureau of the P.M.R. that began on August 13, 1954. Gheorghiu-Dej proposed during this meeting that the *sovroms* be taken over after the conclusion of the balance sheet for 1954; that is, the effective takeover would take place in 1955. Support for this proposal came from the fact that the redemption payment began to be made one year

57 = = A.N.I.C., fund C.C. of P.C.R., Chancery Section, file no. 21/1954. Transcript of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers’ Party, February 27, 1954, 14.

58 = = A.N.I.C., fund C.C. of P.C.R., Chancery Section, file no. 7/1954. Notes of conversations of the delegation of the Romanian Workers’ Party, led by Gheorghiu-Dej, with the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in relation to the economic problems of the Romanian People’s Republic, Kremlin, January 26 - February 1, 1954, 12.

59 = = A.N.I.C., fund C.C. of P.C.R., Chancery Section, file no. 94/1954. Protocol no. 37 of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers’ Party, August 13, 1954, 40.



after the handover. In Gheorghiu-Dej's proposal, the payment was to start from 1956 because he believed that "1955 is a very busy and difficult year and I don't know if we could do this."<sup>60</sup>

The final decision to take over the four *sovroms* was made at the Politburo meeting on September 14, 1954. Miron Constantinescu was tasked with signing the takeover protocols in Moscow on behalf of the Romanian government.<sup>61</sup> The signing of the protocols by the Minister of Foreign Trade of the U.S.S.R., Ivan G. Kabanov and Miron Constantinescu, vice-president of the Council of Ministers took place on September 18, 1954.

The Romanian press published the "Soviet-Romanian Communiqué regarding the handing over to the Romanian People's Republic of the Soviet participation quota in the Soviet-Romanian joint companies," in which it was specified that

the fruitful activity of the mentioned companies had a positive role in restoring and developing the national economy of the Romanian People's Republic and prepared the conditions for the transfer of leadership into the hands of state organizations in Romania. Thus, the Soviet-Romanian joint companies fulfilled their assigned tasks and, in connection with this, the U.S.S.R. government and the government of the R.P.R. examined the problem of these companies and agreed on the transfer to the Romanian People's Republic of the Soviet participation in twelve companies.<sup>62</sup>

Consequently, on March 31 and September 18, 1954, the Agreements were signed in Moscow regarding the sale and handover to the Romanian People's Republic of the Soviet share in the Soviet-Romanian joint companies: "Sovrommetal," "Sovromcărbune," "Sovromtransport," "Sovrom-utilaj-petrolifer," "Sovromnaval," "Sovromtractor," "Sovromchim," "Sovromgaz," "Sovromlemn," "Sovromconstrucția," "Sovrombanc," and "TARS" (a civil aviation company).<sup>63</sup> With the signing of these

60 = = A.N.I.C., fund C.C. of P.C.R., Chancery Section, file no. 94/1954. Protocol no. 37 of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party, August 13, 1954. 41.

61 = = A.N.I.C., fund C.C. of P.C.R., Chancery Section, file no. 103/1954. Protocol no. 40 of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party September 14, 1954. 3.

62 = = "Comunicatul sovieto-român privind predarea către Republica Populară Română a cotei de participație sovietice în societățile mixte sovieto-române," [The Soviet-Romanian communiqué regarding the handover to the Romanian People's Republic of the Soviet participation in joint Soviet-Romanian companies], *România liberă*, September 25, 1954, 1.

63 = = "Comunicatul sovieto-român privind predarea către republica Populară Română a cotei de participație sovietice în societățile mixte sovieto-române," [The Soviet-Romanian communiqué regarding the handover to the Romanian People's Republic of the Soviet participation in joint Soviet-Romanian companies], *România liberă*, September 25, 1954, 1.

protocols, most of the *sovroms* were abolished, an event that the Bucharest government could consider a diplomatic victory.

### **= = The Dissolution of Romanian-Soviet joint ventures: goodwill or pragmatism?**

Explaining the “gesture of goodwill” of the Soviet Union is difficult. The official version that presented the liquidation agreements as exclusively the result of “friendly relations” between the two countries is not very credible and, as such, is not worth analyzing. The attitude of the Romanian side, which advocated the withdrawal of the U.S.S.R. from these companies, is perfectly justified given the negative economic results that resulted from these *sovroms*’ activity as well as their persistent insubordination to the authorities in Bucharest. But why did the Soviet Union comply with the proposals coming from Bucharest?

It is obvious that the international situation, as well as the internal situation of the U.S.S.R., was different from that of 1945–1946. Although Stalin’s death did not change overnight the subordinate relationship of the Romanian communists to Moscow, this event proved to be crucial for the evolution of bilateral relations in both the medium and long term. The new leadership from the Kremlin proved quite quickly that it was aware of the need for the external relations of the Soviet Union to change, both in relation to the satellite countries and in terms of their attitude towards the “imperialist camp.”

Regarding the specific problem of the *sovroms*, we believe that an explanation can be provided by analyzing the subsequent evolution of the U.S.S.R.’s attitude compared to the other “fraternal countries.” The Soviet leaders understood that the system of mixed companies, as a means of economic domination over the satellite countries, was no longer adequate considering the new political, economic, and social realities in these states. The abandonment of this system was done in parallel with the creation of more sophisticated mechanisms that would work through a closer collaboration within the Comecon, an organization under the firm direction of Moscow. Thus, in the first stage from 1953 to 1956, the new leadership team in Moscow moved to offer concessions to the governments of the satellite countries in order to mark a distance from the Stalin era and to improve their image in the international arena. This was then followed by a stage in which the Soviet Union sought to restore their economic domination using the leverage afforded by Comecon.

The Soviet leadership noticed the need to change their approach to economic relations due to the increasingly vehement reactions of the leaders in Bucharest. Gheorghe Apostol, one of Gheorghiu-Dej’s close collaborators, recounted in an interview how he “opened the conflict on the subject of the *sovroms*.”<sup>64</sup> After the

64 = = Lavinia Betea, *Maurer și lumea de ieri. mărturii despre stalinizarea României* (Arad: Editura Ioan Slavici, 1995), 261.

reception given by the Soviet embassy on November 7, 1952, at Gheorghiu-Dej's residence, following a meeting attended by the Soviet representative for the problems of the Soviet Union, Apostol reported that:

At one point, Gheorghiu-Dej asked me:

- What does capital export mean?
- Why do you want to know from me? [...]
- I want to know from you because you are not an economist like any other. Not everyone is sent by Comrade Stalin to coordinate and be responsible for the *sovroms* in Romania.
- Well, capital export is only done by American imperialism in the colonies. [...]
- But what do you do in Romania, what can it be called? [...] Don't you consider Romania as a colony, as the imperialists consider countries in Africa and Asia?<sup>65</sup>

Gheorghiu-Dej's attitude toward the *sovrom* problem is confirmed by Nikita Khrushchev. In his memoirs, he remembered that "there, [in Romania], Sovrum [sic] was working – a Soviet-Romanian company that mainly dealt with obtaining uranium ore [...]. But it offended the Romanians and when we, after Stalin's death, liquidated this association, if it came to it, Dej, with some anger, kept repeating, like a curse, 'Sovrum, Sovrum [sic]!'. We abolished such joint societies in all the brotherly countries, because we understood that they were like stubs on the toes and hurt national feelings, producing misunderstandings in our camp."<sup>66</sup>

Therefore, it is clear that the decision by the Soviet Union leadership to abolish the joint ventures that operated in several countries with communist governments was a pragmatic one. It aimed to improve the image of the U.S.S.R. in the world public opinion and to remove a series of tensions that arose between the Soviet government and the states where this type of enterprise operated.

In addition, the nature of the propaganda campaign also emerges from the fact that the *sovroms'* abolition occurred almost simultaneously. For example, on Octo-

65 = = Lavinia Betea, *Maurer*, 262.

66 = = "Cum vedea N.S. Hrușciiov România," [How he saw N.S. Khrushchev Romania] *Magazin istoric* no. 2/1997, 29; Khrushchev presents in his memoirs the considerations that made him grant concessions to the satellites as follows: "[...] after the war, Stalin treated these countries very harshly. He dictated his will to them. In his eyes they were not true friends. He treated them as subjects of the Soviet Union, not as allies. We, the post-Stalinist leadership, took over things as he had arranged them. Because of some hard feelings and even antagonism on the part of our allies, it was difficult for us to create a monolith in the socialist camp." Apud Ioan Scurtu, ed., *România. Retragerea trupelor sovietice, 1958* (Bucharest: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică R.A., 1996), 233.

ber 9, 1954, the agreement was signed for transferring the Soviet share in joint Soviet-Bulgarian enterprises: “Corbso,” for shipbuilding, “Sovbolstroj,” for construction and producing construction materials, and “Tabso,” for civil aviation. Only three days later on October 12, 1954, agreements were signed to dissolve the Soviet-Chinese joint enterprises: the Society for the extraction of non-ferrous and rare metals; the Society for the extraction and processing of oil; the Society for the construction and repair of vessels; and the Society for the organization and operation of civil airlines.<sup>67</sup> Special attention was paid to the German People’s Republic, which celebrated its fifth anniversary in 1954. As such, in September the Soviet government proceeded to liquidate all the G.D.R.’s debts from before and after the war, stopped the payment of war reparations, and all enterprises within G.D.R. territory that had previously been the property of the U.S.S.R. became the property of the G.D.R. government.<sup>68</sup> In November 1954, Soviet participation in joint Soviet-Hungarian enterprises such as “Maszovlet” (*Magyar–Szovjet Polgári Légiforgalmi Részvénytársaság*, for air transport) and “Maszovol”/“Maszolakj” (*Magyar-Szovjet Olajipari Részvénytársaság* – the Hungarian-Soviet Oil Company, for oil production) was bought back by the Budapest government.

The Romanians’ resentment from the *souvrom* ordeal was long-lasting. Alexandru Bârlădeanu recollected that, during more intense negotiations held in Moscow in 1963,

[...] we had the opportunity to tell them some truths. I put the problem of the Sovroms to them [...] that they plundered the national economy through the Sovroms. How much they have damaged us through this formula of cooperation. Kosîghin got so angry that he didn’t even want to shake my hand [...] when we returned from Moscow, Dej said to me on the phone:

Well done! I am very satisfied with the way you raised the issue of the Sovroms. I read the transcript.<sup>69</sup>

Very likely, the disturbances that appeared in Poland and especially in Hungary made the Soviet side more malleable and more accepting of the Romanian point of view. The dissolution of the last two *souvroms* (“Sovrompetrol” and “Sovromcuar-

67 == “Comunicatul sovieto-chinez cu privire la predarea către republica Populară Chineză a cotei sovietice de participație în societățile mixte,” [The Soviet-Chinese communiqué regarding the handover to the People’s Republic of China of the Soviet share in joint ventures] *Scânteia*, October 13, 1954, 3.

68 == “Pentru întărirea cauzei păcii, pentru lărgirea relațiilor economice. Cuvântarea lui Otto Grotewohl la deschiderea Târgului de la Leipzig,” [To strengthen the cause of peace, to widen economic relations. Otto Grotewohl’s speech at the opening of the Leipzig Fair] *Scânteia*, September 7, 1954, 4.

69 == Betea, *Alexandru Bârlădeanu*, 134.

tit”) took place in 1956. Of course, things were not at all simple this time, either; discussions on the topic began in July, but the takeover convention by Romania was signed only on October 22, 1956. The “Sovromcuartit” joint-stock company’s operations were terminated by Decree no. 583 on November 1, 1956.<sup>70</sup>

The new policy adopted by the Soviet Union was also reflected in the “Declaration of the Government of the U.S.S.R. based on the development and strengthening of friendship and collaboration between the U.S.S.R. and the other socialist countries” of October 30, 1956. In this document, it was appreciated that in the process of establishing the new order and the profound revolutionary transformations of social relations, there were numerous difficulties, unsolved tasks and obvious mistakes, including mistakes in the relations between socialist countries, violations and mistakes that made the value of the principle of equal rights in relations between socialist states.<sup>71</sup> The Soviet government declared itself ready to discuss with the governments of other socialist countries measures to remove “any possibility of violating the principle of national sovereignty, mutual advantage and equal rights in economic relations.”<sup>72</sup>

As a new sign of goodwill, the Soviet government decided to reduce by 4.3 billion lei the amount previously provided as a ransom for the enterprises passed into the ownership of the Romanian state, of which 1.5 billion lei was for the former German properties. The value of the Soviet share was to be redeemed in equal annual installments staggered over a period of 15 years, as the amount was considered an interest-free loan granted to Romania by the Soviet Union. This attitude led the Romanian press to note that, in the process of Romanian-Soviet collaboration, “all the problems that arose were always resolved in a spirit of camaraderie, as between friends with equal rights.”<sup>73</sup>

In this way, the Romanian-Soviet “fraternal collaboration” within the *sovroms* came to an end. Thanks to a skillful policy, the leadership in Bucharest managed to obtain from the Kremlin a first withdrawal from Romania: specifically, a withdrawal from the main sectors of the Romanian economy. Occurring four years prior to the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romanian territory, this Soviet economic withdrawal was a genuine surprise both for Western analysts and for the majority of Romanian citizens.

The death of the feared Stalin allowed Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, a cautious and cunning communist leader, to take the first steps on the path of political independence from the U.S.S.R. By skillfully speculating on the new international

70 == Banu, *Asalt*, 173.

71 == Apud Alexandrescu, *Economia*, 217.

72 == Alexandrescu, *Economia*, 217.

73 == “Marea prietenie frățească,” [The great brotherly friendship] *Scântea*, December 5, 1956, 1 and 3.

political conjunctures and carefully studying the psychology of the Soviet leadership and the vulnerable points of the new leader, Khrushchev, Gheorghiu-Dej put into practice a long-term strategy of breaking away from the political, economic, and military grip of the Soviet Union.

The abolition of the *souvroms* in the years 1954–1956 was followed by obtaining first the withdrawal of the Red Army units stationed on Romanian territory (1958), then the withdrawal of Soviet advisors from the Romanian ministries, including advisors from the secret services (1963), and finally by embarking on a gradual process of de-Sovietization of culture and the education system in Romania. These changes accelerated further with a resumption of economic, cultural and political ties with the West, in a subtle policy of restoring some bridges and channels for communication and cooperation.

How much of all this would have been possible had the Kremlin’s “Man of Steel” lived longer remains a question for counterfactual history.

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A tractor in front of the hall of the "Sovromtractor" factory in Brasov (Romania).

A.N.I.C.

### ***Keywords***

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*Mixed enterprises, Sovrom, Stalin, Communist Romania, Communism*



Rudolf Andorka in his traditional, historicising Hungarian gala dress, which he wore as a diplomat in Spain (1930's).

Júlia Andorka's private collection

==== *András Joó* =====

## **/// What Stalin's Death Did Not Really Change:**

### **A Tell-tale File of Hungary's Pre-World War Two Intelligence Chief**

Rudolf Andorka, the famous sociologist, was fulfilling his military service in March 1953. Meanwhile, his father who, on the eve of the Second World War had served as head of Hungarian intelligence and counterintelligence, had been a resident of the Kistarcsa internment camp for years and held there without a trial. The son, who later became a distinguished social scientist, recalled how the news of the Soviet dictator's death was received: "When we heard that Stalin had died, in our euphoria we engaged in a huge, happy bout of wrestling in a secluded room where the officers' corps was not likely to be present. We celebrated Stalin's death with several hours of joyful scuffles."<sup>1</sup>

Andorka, Jr. was perhaps hopeful at the time that better times would come and that his father's persecution and imprisonment would end. This proved to be a vain hope, although the years that followed did ultimately bring some relief. In the wake of Stalin's death, much was undoubtedly about to change, at least in the sense that the methods changed. For example, in the field of intelligence, pragmatic factors began to prevail more than mere intimidation and harsh, repressive action.

Experienced senior officers of the pre-1945 General Staff who had once been involved in the intelligence and counterintelligence work of the Second Department of the Chief of the General Staff (*Vezérkari Főnökség 2. osztálya, or 2. vkf. osztály*, now widely referred to by its not entirely accurately formed abbreviation, VKF-2) could not avoid the constant monitoring of the Hungarian state security services. Quite a few of them left the country in 1945, while others stayed, and still others were only able to return home (with great luck) after a long period of Soviet captivity. It is more than obvious that for those who were imprisoned in the Soviet Union,

1 = = VERITAS OHA, "Interview with Rudolf Andorka," 57.

Stalin's death could truly be called the greatest blessing, as they were finally able to return home within a year or two thereafter. At the same time, and even with the arrival in 1953 of Imre Nagy, the newly appointed and reformist prime minister, for many former officers at home significant changes would only come later. Of course, state security had also intended, in addition to other objectives such as simple intimidation, to explore the workings and former networks of the previous intelligence organisations, both at home and abroad.<sup>2</sup>

### **= = Memoirs and Profiles for State Security: The Nature of General Andorka's File**

The extensive organisational expertise and contacts of former intelligence and counter-intelligence professionals were of increasing interest to communist state security officials.<sup>3</sup> As a result, it was fairly common that former VKF-2 officers were ordered to prepare studies of varying lengths and even full recollections.<sup>4</sup> In the late 1970s, the memoirs of Colonel Gyula Kádár, who had headed the Hungarian "Deuxième Bureau" starting in 1943, were published in a form that fitted the aims of the cultural policy of the time, which was associated with György Aczél, the leading cultural politician of János Kádár's regime. The memoirs of the Colonel could only appear in print with frequent and unmarked modifications, or even omissions and truncations of the original. The manuscript of the reminiscences (whose publication at the time caused a veritable sensation) was prepared much earlier on the "instruction" of state security.<sup>5</sup>

It was not uncommon for state security officials to require the former members of VKF-2 to write shorter personal profiles of important military officers, diplomats, and various agents who had previously been employed in their service abroad. Thus, state security officials hoped to filter out what might prove useful for them in their future operations. However, relatively few of this type of document survived in the end. Retired Major General Rudolf Andorka was also expected to prepare such character profiles at suitable times. He, as mentioned, was a prominent

2 = = Sándor Szakály, "Az önálló magyar katonai hírszerzés és kémelhárítás létrehozása és működése a két világháború közötti Magyarországon 1918–1945," *Felderítő Szemle* 7, (2008): 36–37.

3 = = See the following introductory study to the most relevant source edition concerning our topic: György Haraszti, "Vallomások a túlélésért. Az Ujszászy-feljegyzések keletkezéstörténete," in *Vallomások a holtak házából. Ujszászy István vezérőrnagynak, a 2. vkf. osztály és az Államvédelmi Központ vezetőjének az ÁVH fogságában írott feljegyzései* (Budapest: Corvina – Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára, 2007), 9–37.

4 = = ÁBTL I. 4.1. A-863, Study on VKF-2, undated; ÁBTL I. 3.2.1. Bt–262/1. Career report of Otto Hatz (Hátszeghi Ottó) Annex No. 4, October 20, 1955.

5 = = Gyula Kádár, *A Ludovikától Sopronkőhidáig* (Budapest: Magvető, 1978), vol. I–II. Compare: ÁBTL I. 4.1. A–862. Gyula Kádár's reminiscences.

military officer and for years oversaw Hungarian military intelligence and counter-intelligence. His “reports” from the year 1954 have been preserved in a so-called “research file” marked “κ” (referring to the Hungarian word *kutató* that simply means “searching” or “research”). These profiles can clearly be interpreted in the previous context; they form part of the efforts of Communist state security both to map the methods and contacts of VKF-2, and also to learn more about the Hungarian exile community, many of whose members remained active, presumably as contacts or even members of western intelligence networks. Additionally, it must also have been of considerable interest to gather information on foreign diplomats or military officers who had previously served in Hungary and may still have had living contacts of any kind in the country, though already on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Files marked with a “κ” normally contained material on individuals about whom data was collected for an operational purpose (e.g., for future recruitment).<sup>6</sup> The author of the original texts contained in this κ-file has been given the cryptic alias “Viktor Marczel” (sometimes written simply as “Marcel”), which cannot be clearly associated with Andorka’s person, life, or character. Only from the date of his death indicated at the end of the file (March 30, 1961), and from the sentences (consistently written in the first-person singular) concerning the activities of Andorka as a military leader and later as a diplomat (Hungarian Minister to Madrid) can it be established beyond any doubt that the notes were indeed prepared by the General.<sup>7</sup>

The material, entirely in typewritten form, was prepared in the summer and autumn of 1954, that is, in the months after the temporary release of General Andorka, who had been interned in 1950 and held captive for long years without a proper court trial. The descriptions follow one after the other, with no official markings on the pages such as a file number, a type of classification, or a numerical heading that might help the readers to identify the documents more precisely. At the end of each completed section (with one or two exceptions), the date and alias (“Marczel”) are written in pen, as if authenticated by the author.<sup>8</sup> It is important to point out here that although there is a distinctive signature of the alias (code/cover name) in ink, we still cannot speak of fully authentic texts, but rather of “proof-

6 = = Éva Sz. Kovács, “Néhány gondolat az egykori magyar állambiztonság működéséről (elvek, eszközök, akciók),” *Levéltári Szemle* 61, no. 1 (2011): 5n10, 10n37.

7 = = ÁBTL - I. - 3.2.4. - K-1493. According to the top-secret report, dated July 29, 1963 under the alias “Viktor Marczel” (without any other kind of numeric indication) of the Subdivision 1-A. of the Internal Ministry’s (BM) II/I Group Executive (Csoportfőnökség) – In Andorka’s case, there was also an M-File, i.e. a working dossier, and B-File, i.e. a so-called recruitment dossier. These can no longer be found, so their content and the number of documents they contained is now in doubt. The M-File has been completely rearranged and the B-File has apparently been destroyed, as the material it contained had no ‘operational value’.

8 = = ÁBTL I. 3.2.4. K-1493. For example, see fol. 67.

read” versions, presumably finalised on the basis of Andorka’s previously prepared manuscript notes or even only upon his oral communications. Neither can it be ignored that state security officers themselves may have contributed significantly to the actual drafting of the typed texts. To understand the content and value of this source, we should know more about Andorka’s earlier life, political role, and convictions.

### **= = The Career and Worldview of Andorka**

Andorka was born in Sopron in 1891 to an originally German-speaking family. His birth name was Fleischhacker; he took the name Andorka only in 1927 (after his maternal grandmother). His grandfather was a Lutheran pastor and a well-known preacher of his church. Andorka’s family and the General himself remained strongly connected to their Lutheran roots and were proud of their ancestors’ Protestant faith.<sup>9</sup> Rudolf entered the Honvéd Secondary School in Sopron at the age of 14 and later studied in Budapest at the famous Ludovika Military Academy. After the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, he was sent almost immediately to the front, where he was seriously wounded. He subsequently completed general staff training during the war, and after the collapse of Austria-Hungary, he also served in the army of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. As a soldier he saw this as practically the only way to fight with any hope of success for the territorial integrity of Hungary. After the fall of the Soviet Republic, and despite his earlier role in the Hungarian Red Army, his career as an officer did not end even in Regent Horthy’s counter-revolutionary Hungary. He was able to return to the Hungarian General Staff within a short time (after a brief and temporary service away from the capital). Thanks to his excellent language skills (he spoke perfect German, French and English), he took on military diplomatic duties after 1920. He participated in the negotiations over the exchange of prisoners of war with the Soviet military leadership in Riga, then worked at the legation in Prague and later, from 1931, in Warsaw.<sup>10</sup>

In August 1937, Andorka became director of the Intelligence and Counter-intelligence Department in the Ministry of Defence.<sup>11</sup> He had established very good relations with the British diplomats and attachés accredited in Budapest. As early as then, he had developed a very negative attitude towards Nazi Germany. He therefore generally kept his distance from the staff of the German legation, al-

9 = = András Joó, “Andorka Rudolf,” in *Evangelische Pfarrer im KZ Mauthausen*, ed. Michael Bünkler and Dietlind Pichler (Wien: Evangelischer Presseverband, 2022), 139.

10 = = Sándor Szakály, *A z. vkf. osztály: Tanulmányok a magyar katonai hírszerzés és kémelhárítás történetéből 1918–1945* (Budapest: Magyar Napló – VERITAS Történetkutató Intézet, 2015), 68–69; VERITAS OHA, “Interview with Rudolf Andorka,” 1–4.

11 = = See the works cited in the previous two notes for more details.

though it is worth noting that he nevertheless sympathised with Admiral Wilhelm Canaris.<sup>12</sup> The German admiral went down in history as a silent supporter of the resistance groups within the higher military circles of the Third Reich and also as one of the last victims brutally murdered by the Nazi regime after having been quickly sentenced to death by an SS court martial in April 1945. Canaris headed Germany's military counterintelligence organisation, the Abwehr, and he often visited Budapest. German military intelligence led by Admiral Canaris and the Hungarian VKF-2 worked together in the Balkans as part of a joint plan under the supervision of the Abwehr's Vienna branch (in the German terminology named "Ast"), mainly against the Soviets.<sup>13</sup>

Both according to his staff and according to his successor as head of VKF-2, the renowned István Ujszászy (who was later, in 1945, deported by the Soviets and died in captivity), Andorka's "situation assessments were precise" and his decisions "unchangeable" – both general hallmarks of a good military commander.<sup>14</sup> From May 1939, after retirement and becoming Major General, he worked as a diplomat for two years. He represented Hungary as Minister Plenipotentiary in Madrid on the very eve of World War Two. Thus was fulfilled, albeit for only a relatively short time, his lifelong dream of a diplomatic career. The Hungarian Prime Minister at the time, Pál Teleki, was trying to distance himself from Nazi Germany and remain neutral in the impending war. He therefore commissioned Andorka to establish friendly relations with representatives of the Anglo-Saxon powers and of France. The General, in his new role as head of a diplomatic mission, was quite successful in his endeavours; he established a considerably good relationship with the British ambassador and soon also with Marshal Philippe Pétain, who was working as the French ambassador in Madrid at the time. Andorka sometimes passed on confidential messages from the Hungarian Prime Minister to Pétain.<sup>15</sup> Hungary, however, continued to maintain close bonds with Hitler's Germany. Andorka strongly disapproved of this fact, as he remained consistently antagonistic to the Nazis and opposed dictatorial regimes in general. His views were

12 == Kádár, *A Ludovikától Sopronkőhidáig*, 570–71; VERITAS OHA, "Interview with Rudolf Andorka," 7, 15.

13 == András Joó, "Fedőneve: Jázmin. Adalékok Hatz Ottó tevékenységének megítéléséhez," in *Historia est lux Veritatis: Szakály Sándor köszöntése 60. születésnapján*, ed. László Anka, Gábor Hollósi, Eszter Zsófia Tóth, and Gábor Ujváry (Budapest: VERITAS Történetkutató Intézet – Magyar Napló, 2016) vol. 2, 357, 362–63; ÁBTL I. - 3.2.1. - Bt-262/2, Interrogation minutes of Endre Bartha, former military attaché to Bucharest, November 19, 1951.

14 == Haraszi, ed. *Vallomások a holtak házából*, 454–55.

15 == András Joó, "'Talán még emlékszik rám...': Andorka Rudolf tábornok 1954-ben írt jellemzése brit diplomatákról," in *VERITAS Évkönyv 2017*, ed. Gábor Ujváry (Budapest: VERITAS Történetkutató Intézet–Magyar Napló, 2018), 338, 341–42.

echoed in a highly emotional entry in his diary from the summer of 1939, in which he wrote the following after a short trip to France: “Happy, rich France! These are not totalitarian states where smiles are frozen.”<sup>16</sup>

### **= = = The End of the General's Diplomatic Service and his Fate towards the End of World War Two**

As both general and a soldier, Andorka was firmly convinced that Nazi Germany would lose the Second World War. His attitude did not remain hidden for long.<sup>17</sup> In his position, he tried to keep his distance from the leaders of the Franco regime. In the spring of 1941, following an anti-German military coup in Belgrade, Hungary was pressured (primarily by its geopolitical position) to participate in the German military intervention against Yugoslavia. Prime Minister Teleki plunged into a crisis of conscience and took his own life. Andorka soon resigned as Hungarian minister to Madrid and returned to Hungary shortly afterwards; he did not want to pursue a policy with which he fundamentally disagreed. As an outgoing diplomat, once back in Budapest he was again received by Regent Miklós Horthy at a private audience. Andorka warned the head of state on this occasion not to take any further role in the war on the German side. Andorka did this because earlier, while still in Spain, he had yet to make a farewell visit to see the British ambassador there. Sir Samuel Hoare (who was not only a leading diplomat and ambassador, but a prominent and successful former intelligence officer and one-time Foreign Secretary), clearly warned him, as Andorka remembered, that Hungary should “at all costs” maintain at least its “formal” neutrality. Horthy did not take this advice seriously, even though Andorka communicated him a silent, semi-official warning (presumably coming from none other than the British Prime Minister).

In late June 1941, practically days after Andorka's audience, Hungary entered the war against the Soviet Union. During the same year (in early December), because of this earlier move and the presence of Hungarian troops on Soviet soil, His Majesty's Government in London declared that a state of war existed between Great Britain and Hungary. This was soon followed by Budapest's declaration of war on the US, not answered officially before June 5, 1942, then through a formal declaration of war by the US Congress, which was only reluctantly initiated by the Roosevelt administration.<sup>18</sup>

At this point, Andorka had retired from active service and no longer held any military or public office. From 1942 onwards, he established ever-closer relations

16 = = Rudolf Andorka, *A madridi követségtől Mauthausenig* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1978), 145.

17 = = MNL OL K 64 1941-41-17/res. pol., Letter from Rudolf Andorka on the chances of victory for the Axis Powers, January 8, 1941.

18 = = Joó, “Andorka Rudolf tábornok 1954-ben írt jellemzése,” 342.



with Hungarian anti-war politicians and tried to help those who were persecuted for political reasons. As a former head of the Hungarian secret services, he still held prestige and was willing to use his influence for causes he believed in. It was during this time that he drew closer to the Hungarian Social Democrats.<sup>19</sup> The famous British wartime intelligence organisation SOE (Special Operations Executive), founded at the wish of Winston Churchill in 1940, counted him as a trustworthy friend of the Anglo-Saxon allies in Hungary and tried to establish contacts with him through secret channels. Andorka's activities in Madrid and his friendship with the British ambassador to Spain (Hoare) and to the embassy's military attaché were not forgotten. The British war documents mention Andorka very positively. However, the German secret services did not forget him, either. Nor did the Hungarian supporters of National Socialism fail to draw the attention of the Germans (who were about to act against Hungary as a reluctant and untrustworthy ally) to him. After March 19, 1944 and the beginning of the German occupation of Hungary, Andorka was among the first to be arrested by the Gestapo and taken to the Mauthausen concentration camp, where he was imprisoned along with many other prominent Hungarians.<sup>20</sup>

### **= = From Mauthausen to the Kistarcsa Internment Camp**

In 1944, his family was able to discover that Andorka had been taken to the Mauthausen camp. After receiving this minimal information on his whereabouts, the family did not hear from him again until after the liberation of the concentration camp in early May 1945. He returned to Budapest sick and broken, after having been imprisoned again by the Soviets in Wiener Neustadt for some time. He suspected that he would not be very safe in Hungary, as the country remained under Soviet occupation. For this reason above all, after 1945 he became determined not to assume any office or political role. He later refused to cooperate with the Communist secret services, who were very much interested in his expertise and earlier connections. It is more than likely that they even encouraged him to emigrate and work abroad as their agent (which he rejected categorically). He was finally arrested in 1950 as part of a combined show trial of social democrats and military officers.<sup>21</sup>

As a prisoner, a combination of ill-treatment and torturous interrogations in the prison of the notorious State Defence Authority (ÁVO, АВН) shattered his already fragile health. Upon his arrest, his diaries (originally in four separate book-

19 = = VERITAS OHA, "Interview with Rudolf Andorka," 34; ÁBTL - I. - 2.1. - III/1 (V-143387), Protocol of the interrogation of Árpád Szakasits, April 2, 1956 (Top secret report of the Investigation Department of the Ministry of Interior). Compare: ÁBTL I. 2.1. III/1 V-143387, Protocol of the interrogation of Rudolf Andorka, April 7, 1956.

20 = = Joó, "Andorka Rudolf tábornok 1954-ben írt jellemzése," 339; VERITAS OHA, "Interview with Rudolf Andorka," 15.

21 = = VERITAS OHA, "Interview with Rudolf Andorka," 14.

lets) were immediately confiscated; two of these turned up rather mysteriously in the 1950s among the files of the Hungarian National Archives. The fact alone that the diaries were published many years afterwards (in 1978) could raise several questions, as could the fact that, as we are told in the introductory study to them, the surviving booklets had happened to be placed among the Foreign Ministry papers “by mistake” from the document stock of the Internal Ministry. The diaries of Andorka are nevertheless an important source as they provide very interesting insights into the life of the Hungarian political and military élite before 1945. It is unfortunate that some of the most interesting entries (in the two unfound booklets) are probably lost forever.<sup>22</sup>

General István Ujszászy is mentioned several times in various entries of General Andorka’s diary, often in conjunction with thought-provoking content.<sup>23</sup> In 1954 nothing was known about the fate of Ujszászy, who was almost certainly dead by then. Years earlier, the leaders of state security had made General Ujszászy write similar profiles of certain important persons (soldiers and diplomats) and other contacts, when in 1948 he was briefly detained in Hungary again (only to be handed over to the Soviet authorities at the end of that year). There are several parallels in the careers of the two prominent military leaders, and their relationship remained regular and close during the war years and following Andorka’s return from Madrid. Their meetings were informal and friendly, but primarily of a professional nature. For Ujszászy, first as head of VKF-2 and then, from 1942, as the head of the newly created State Defence Centre, these routine occasions formed part of his office’s information-gathering work. Although their views and characters were very different, Ujszászy respected his predecessor and mostly took him at his word.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, they largely relied on the same network of agents and similar methods, although Ujszászy had to face several new challenges, resulting from the war, that ultimately led to his fate in Soviet captivity.

### **= = = The Indictment and Trial of 1953**

The bill of indictment against General Andorka and three other former VKF-2 officers, in which they were charged with war crimes, was completed on October 9, 1953 by the Budapest Prosecutor’s Office. It is not at all clear from the bill of indict-

22 == VERITAS OHA, “Interview with Rudolf Andorka,” 9, 15–18. See the diary mentioned above: Andorka, *A madridi követségtől* (especially page 59, where the editor tells us about the fate of the source).

23 == Andorka, *A madridi követségtől*, 199, 212, 223, 235, 259.

24 == Zoltán András Kovács, “A Janus-arcú tábornok. Adalékok Ujszászy István vezérőrnagy pályaképehez,” in *Vallomások a holtak házából. Ujszászy István vezérőrnagynak, a 2. vkf. osztály és az Államvédelmi Központ vezetőjének az ÁVH fogóságában írott feljegyzései*, ed. György Haraszti (Budapest: Corvina – Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történelmi Levéltára, 2007), 79, 91.

ment, even in part, which of their former duties as soldiers and under superior orders could have been classified as war crimes. The indictment in Andorka's case was even more absurd since his active service had already ceased before Hungary even entered the war.<sup>25</sup>

The only substantive prosecutorial accusation against the General was that he had acted as the head of VKF-2 against members of the Tourist Association of Nature Lovers, which was a former front for the communist movement. Under the laws in force at the time, any communist organisation was considered illegal. The defendants were in one instance all collectively reproached that they had "assisted the Arrow Cross movement to seize power" – an event that only occurred in October 1944, when Andorka, for example, had already been detained in the Mauthausen concentration camp. Furthermore, the Arrow Cross takeover occurred with external assistance and after Regent Miklós Horthy had been forced to resign. The logic of the indictment, however, bridged this problem with a peculiar "skill," arguing that, by working to "suppress all left-wing movements," they were also "the main orchestrators" of the "Arrow Cross movement gaining strength in the country."<sup>26</sup>

Among the court documents of Andorka and his co-defendants one can find the minutes of his earlier interrogation on September 29, 1952. Here it is recorded that in 1942 he had political conversations with the former prominent Social Democratic leader, Árpád Szakasits, who later served as President of the Republic between 1948 and August 1949, then as President of the Presidential Council of the Hungarian People's Republic, and who was also imprisoned at the time (and not released before March 1956). This relationship with Szakasits was then discussed in more detail at an interrogation on October 2, 1953, shortly before the final indictment bill was drawn up. The minutes of the interrogation mention at least five meetings with the Social Democratic politician during the war. This interrogation protocol from the autumn of 1953 records that Andorka had intervened on behalf of Szakasits, who had been arrested in 1943, and talked to Ujszászy, his successor and the head of the State Defence Centre. This intervention led to the almost immediate release of Szakasits. In 1949, after General Andorka's pension had been withdrawn, Szakasits granted him an occasional subsidy of a thousand forints, which was substantial at the time.<sup>27</sup>

25 == Budapest Főváros Levéltára [Budapest City Archives], BFL XXV. 4. – 0537/53., No. 1953.ü.0537/1, Indictment against I. Rudolf Andorka, II. Lajos Keresztes (Karleosa), III. Viktor Sigetter and IV. Valér Stefán for war crimes, October 9, 1953.

26 == BFL XXV. 4. - 0537/53., No. 1953.ü.0537/1, Indictment against I. Rudolf Andorka, II. Lajos Keresztes (Karleosa), III. Viktor Sigetter and IV. Valér Stefán for war crime, October 9, 1953.

27 == BFL XXV. 4. - 0537/53., No. 1953.ü.0537/1, Minutes of the interrogation of Andorka as a suspect (State Defence Authority, ÁVH), September 29, 1952 and October 2, 1953.

Andorka's arrest happened on the same day (April 24, 1950) as that of Szakasits, although the retired high-ranking officer was taken into custody from his own home, while Szakasits had the questionable "honour" of being arrested in the villa of none other than Mátyás Rákosi himself, the all-powerful General Secretary of the Hungarian Workers' Party. In June 1956, at his retrial, Szakasits was acquitted of all previous charges, although during the new investigation that preceded it, both he and Andorka were again questioned about their wartime relationship.<sup>28</sup>

The first trial of Andorka and associates, with only one hearing, took place on October 23, 1953 in Kistarcsa (i.e., inside the internment camp), which was closed to the public. The presiding judge was Béla Jónás, one of the most notorious judges of the show trials of the era. The verdict was pronounced hastily, namely on the very same day (!). In fact, the imposed sentences were based on legislation from the 1950s, which continued to codify the law of the people's courts. While the prosecutor maintained the indictment and its logically absurd elements, the County Court of Budapest did not consider the offence of war crimes to be well-founded, and the defendants were instead convicted of so-called "anti-popular acts" (based on Soviet-style legal formulations).<sup>29</sup>

In the "Authorised Compilation of the Substantive Criminal Laws in Force" (with its common Hungarian abbreviation, "BHÖ"), compiled in 1952, Chapter IV of the first part of the so-called Special Provisions, under the heading "Offences against the People's Republic," included war crimes in five separate points, and crimes against the people in nine points.<sup>30</sup> These were compiled based on earlier laws and, in this case, on Section 15 of ME Decree (the two capital letters standing for *miniszterelnöki*, that is, "Prime Ministerial") No. 81/1945 concerning peoples' court decisions, which, in fact, became an annex to Act VII of 1945. Within this annex, thus identical with the mentioned ME Decree and applied also in the case of the three VKF-2 officers who were sentenced together with Andorka, Section 15, Point 3 states: "A public official with authority who has consistently exercised an anti-popular, pro-fascist official function is guilty of crimes against the people."

28 == ÁBTL I. 2.1. III/1 V-143387, Minutes of the interrogation of Árpád Szakasits, April 2, 1956 (Top secret report of the Investigation Department of the Ministry of Interior). Compare: ÁBTL I. 2.1. III/1 V-143387, Minutes of the interrogation of Rudolf Andorka, April 7, 1956.

29 == BFL XXV. 4. - 0537/53., No. B.III.0537/1953-4, Verdict of the Budapest County Court (in Kistarcsa), October 23, 1953.

30 == László Nánási, "A magyarországi népbírászkodás joganyaga 1945–1950," in *Pártatlan igazságszolgáltatás vagy megtorlás: Népbíróság-történeti konferencián (2011. május 23. Kecskemét) elhangzott előadások szerkesztett változatai*, ed. József Gyenesei (Kecskemét: Bács-Kiskun Megyei Önkormányzat Levéltára, 2011), 42.

30 == Here I express my special thanks to Izabella Drócsa, my young colleague, who helped me clarify the legal background. See her relevant article: Drócsa, "A szovjet büntetőjog-tudománynak a magyar büntetőjogra gyakorolt hatása 1945 után – különös tekintettel az anyagi és eljárási jogban megjelenő alapelvekre és az en-

Despite the alleged thaw and reformist relaxation following Stalin's death, the verdict as illustrated here was passed without sufficient foundation, practically on the model of the previous show trials, and indeed rather hastily. The shortly submitted petition for clemency, however, was dealt with far less quickly and proceeded with considerable delay during the same period in which Andorka and his reports were being written. Prior to the request for clemency in June 1954, the Ministry of Justice was asked for Andorka's case file, together with the opinion of the presiding judge (Jónás), who, however, dismissed it at the time, because no such request had yet been filed.<sup>32</sup> In September 1954, after the General's daughter (Nadin) had indicated that the remaining months of imprisonment to be served would shortly have to be resumed, she had not yet received any response to the pardon application. Meanwhile, although he had been provisionally set free, her convicted father's health had deteriorated badly. It was not until the beginning of 1955 that the clemency request was answered, and by its resolution of March 2, 1955, the Presidential Council finally granted a pardon for the remaining period.<sup>33</sup>

### **= = = The Second World War and the Intelligence Landscape of the Early Cold War: Andorka Recalls Characters from the Past**

The quality of the texts in the Marczel dossier varies in both content and the degree of elaboration. General Andorka recorded his impressions, for example, of certain British diplomats and legation attachés at considerable length, just as he could recall his time as head of VKF-2 (or as minister to Madrid). All this must have happened in accordance with prior instructions received from state security.<sup>34</sup> There are several descriptions of both Hungarian and foreign individuals, but contradictory elements are often mixed in between factual details. There are three more elaborate and substantial personal profiles of prominent British diplomats, of which the one

nek nyomán elfogadott jogszabályokra," *Pro Publico Bono – Magyar Közigazgatás* 3 (2017): 160–63. See also: 1945. évi VII. törvény a népbíráskodás tárgyában kibocsátott kormányrendeletek törvényerőre emeléséről, I. számú melléklet az 1945. évi VII. törvényhez: 81/1945. (II. 5.) ME rendelet a népbíráskodásról, Különös rész 15§ 3. pont.

32 = = BFL XXV. 4. - 0537/53, No. 5783/5/1954. I.M. I/2, Ernő Fiedler to the President of the Budapest Metropolitan Court (Fővárosi Bíróság Elnöke), November 1, 1954; BFL XXV. 4. - 0537/53., No. 5783/5/1954. I.M. I/2, Béla Jónás to the Ministry of Justice, November 5, 1954.

33 = = BFL XXV. 4. - 0537/53, No. 5783/5/1954. I.M. I/2, Letter of Nadin Andorka to the Ministry of Justice, without number or date; The Ministry of Justice to the President of the Budapest Metropolitan Court on the resolution of the Presidential Council, March 11, 1955.

34 = = ÁBTL I. 3.2.4. K-1493. The "Marczel" research dossier, Profiles of British diplomats, July 4, 1954. 27–32, marked by handwritten numbers.

on Ambassador Samuel Hoare is especially noteworthy since he had a background in intelligence. As a diplomat in Spain, Hoare had built up a secret network and even after the war remained influential as a veteran politician, becoming a member of the House of Lords. Sir Maurice Drummond Peterson, the second among the three British diplomats described by Andorka, was appointed Ambassador to Ankara at the end of the Second World War. In 1946 he succeeded the much more well-known Archibald Clark Kerr as head of the British Embassy in Moscow. Upon his untimely resignation, Peterson gave up his diplomatic career and was succeeded by Sir Alvary Douglas Frederick Gascoigne, whom Andorka knew well and who served in Budapest for years, both before and after the Second World War. All three personalities are potentially interesting from an intelligence point of view, although Peterson was already deceased and Gascoigne was not an active diplomat at the time in question, having already been recalled from Moscow in 1953.<sup>35</sup>

Concerning Hoare, Andorka remarked:

During the First World War, Hoare was the head of a British mission working in Russia, which was an expository unit of the British Intelligence Service. In 1918, he worked on a similar assignment in Italy. After the war he published a book<sup>36</sup> on this work, but (for understandable reasons) it is rather colourless and boring reading.

This shows that the General followed events and book appearances abroad. He continued:

In the most desperate period of the world war, when hardly anyone dared to believe that the Germans and Italians could lose the war, it was thanks to Hoare's personal qualities that the influence of the fascist powers at their height was counterbalanced at the Francoists', and Spain maintained its neutrality in this tantalising situation. Hoare is now, I believe, a member of the English House of Lords as Lord Templewood. He is certainly a strong Conservative, though I do not think he would be a strong personal supporter of Churchill or Eden, who ousted him from the chair of Foreign Secretary at the time.

35 == For Gascoigne's role in Hungary see: Éva Haraszti-Taylor, 'Dear Joe.' *Sir Alvary Frederick Gascoigne, G. B. E. (1893–1970): A British Diplomat in Hungary after the Second World War. A Collection of Documents from the British Foreign Office* (Nottingham: Astra Press, 2005) and Gyula Hegedüs, "Magyar–angol kapcsolatok, 1944–1956" (PhD Dissertation, Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities, Doctoral School of History, 2011)

36 == His work on his own operations in Russia: Samuel Hoare, *The Fourth Seal: The End of a Russian Chapter* (London: Heinemann, 1930).

The last two sentences at the end of the profile are curious and thought-provoking: “The question is, could this high authority politician be of any use to Hungarian aspirations? Perhaps he still remembers me, who always behaved fairly and appropriately towards him.”<sup>37</sup>

As far as Sir Maurice Peterson was concerned (who was also one of Britain’s ambassadors in Francoist Spain), in 1924-1925 Andorka served in the same place of duty as him: the capital of Czechoslovakia, Prague. Peterson was British legation secretary there. As Andorka wrote, at that time there was only a “superficial” acquaintance between them. Then, in 1939, on arriving in Spain, he found Peterson serving as the British ambassador in that country. Of their relationship there, he wrote in 1954:

I became somewhat closer to him because of our old acquaintance in Prague, but this contact was rather expressed in the forms of courtesy. Peterson was able to enhance even more the taciturnity common in English life to the point where a grunted yes or no was hardly to be heard from him. This was not an expression of mistrust, but an individual trait. The ministers of the other neutral small countries looked at me in amazement that I sometimes managed to get him to speak. But even then, he said nothing of any significance.<sup>38</sup>

Andorka could not understand how this diplomat, lacking all flexibility, could be put in such important positions and at such fateful times. He drew his brief conclusion as follows: “I do not know what he could do today, after his mission in Moscow, but I do not think he is worth the slightest attention from the point of view of Hungarian interests.”

Hoare seemed even more interesting, as he had been a member of MI5 (Secret Service) and MI6 (SIS, Secret Intelligence Service) and later belonged to the inner circle of Neville Chamberlain, known as the representative of the policy of appeasement towards Hitler in the late 1930s. When intelligence mattered in Spain, it was intelligence gathering done by the MI6, and Hoare (in full accordance with the Foreign Office) widely used the information received through the agents and contacts of this organisation to face diplomatic challenges with promising results. None other than Kim Philby, one of the SIS operatives in Iberia during the war, was involved in this intelligence work. By this time, Philby, whose role was far from understood by the British in the middle of the 1950s, had already been operating as one of the most successful spies for the Soviets. It was only more than a decade later that he was finally exposed as a Soviet spy and forced to flee to the Soviet

37 == ÁBTL I. 3.2.4. K-1493, Andorka’s profile on Hoare, pages marked 27–28.

38 == ÁBTL I. 3.2.4. K-1493, Andorka’s profile on Peterson, page marked 29.

Union.<sup>39</sup> Hoare's role could only be considered as secondary by the middle of the 1950s. However, his earlier role and any information on him could still represent some value, and it can hardly be regarded as accidental that Andorka was asked to share information specifically on him. Similarly, British diplomats whose experiences were closely related to both Hungary and Moscow were not ignored, if not for the sake of the lessons which intelligence history could provide for the secret services. Although under suspicion, Philby had not yet been exposed as a Soviet spy, nor could his further useful activity be completely ruled out, since by 1951 he had gained prestige from his earlier work. He could hope for a distinguished career in the secret service, with the highest positions open to him after successful work even in Washington.<sup>40</sup>

Philby's person and connections may have played a fairly important role in Eastern European conspiracy charges and the resulting show trials. He was closely implicated in connection with Noel Haviland Field, who was imprisoned in Hungary until October 1954. This connection was referred to in one of the recollections of Vladimir Farkas, who played an important role in both the Rajk trial and in organising and directing the intelligence and reconnaissance work of the State Defence Authority (ÁVH) abroad until 1955.<sup>41</sup> While it would not be prudent for us to overestimate this connection, it could still have seemed useful to explore Philby's earlier contacts (and thus important contacts in Spain) and personal acquaintances even as late as 1954 (possibly through anyone who could recall the by no means insignificant past events). All three British diplomats could be linked to Spain and secret operations there during the Second World War (in August 1939, Gascoigne was sent to Tangier and appointed Consul-General for the Tangier Zone and the Spanish Zone of the Protectorate of Morocco).<sup>42</sup> All three of them were sent to Moscow later. Philby was also in Spain from 1937 to the summer of 1939 as an MI6 agent. He remained in charge of covert operations in the Iberian Peninsula from 1941 to 1944, until, in an ironic twist of fate, he was appointed head of the newly created SIS department responsible for combating the Soviet Union and the communist threat.

Andorka's respect for Canaris was mentioned earlier. The Chief of the Abwehr also visited Spain more than once during the war years; on one occasion, in

39 == David Messenger, "Against the grain: Special Operations Executive in Spain, 1941–1945," in *The Politics and Strategy of Clandestine War: Special Operations Executive, 1940–1946*, ed. Neville Wylie (London: Routledge, 2007), 179.

40 == Barton Whaley, *Soviet Clandestine Communication Nets: Notes for a History of the Structures of the Intelligence Services of the USSR* (Cambridge, MA: Communication and Security Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1969), 172.

41 == Vladimir Farkas, "Antimemoárok V," *Kapu 3* (1991): 19.

42 == See this information on Gascoigne: Éva Haraszti-Taylor, "Egy brit diplomata Magyarországon a második világháború után," in *R. Várkonyi Ágnes Emlékkönyv*, ed. Péter Tusor (Budapest: ELTE BTK, 1998), 595.



the summer of 1939, he even met Andorka for a discussion in Madrid. He made no secret of aggressive German plans and an impending war about to break out.<sup>43</sup> In his series of short reports in the summer of 1954, Andorka (on June 10) also wrote more about Canaris and his own links with the German Abwehr.<sup>44</sup> Information about former German intelligence officers may have been of interest again, even in the 1950s, because some of the former intelligence officers remained active after 1945. They were involved in the build-up of the Federal Intelligence Service (*Bundesnachrichtendienst*) of the Federal Republic of Germany, as well as in the earlier reconnaissance operations or important intelligence missions on behalf of the US under the leadership of former Abwehr officer, Reinhard Gehlen.<sup>45</sup> This organisation continued to employ Richard Kauder (alias Klatt),<sup>46</sup> for example, who was active for a long time after the war and who, before 1944 and in close cooperation with the Hungarian services, had carried out very successful reconnaissance operations against the Soviets from Sofia. (This spy centre in the Bulgarian capital was the so-called Klatt Bureau.) Soviet interrogators also questioned Colonel Gyula Kádár extensively about Kauder.<sup>47</sup> The people of the former Canaris network, so far as they had not either fallen victim of the purges after the failed assassination attempt against Hitler, or been taken into Soviet captivity (where they mostly disappeared forever), must have been of interest until at least the mid-1960s.

In the same document, dated June 10, 1954, he also briefly discusses his contacts with some US representatives in Hungary, especially diplomats. Among the few paragraphs that recall only insignificant moments, the following may have caught the attention of his state security readers:

I would like to draw attention to one person, and that is Francis Deák (Ferenc Deák). I had already heard during the war years that a man of Hungarian origin named Ferenc Deák played a major role in the American intelligence service in Switzerland, which was headed by Dulles (brother of the present Secretary of State).<sup>48</sup>

43 == Andorka, *A madridi követségtől*, 151.

44 == ÁBTL I. – 3.2.4. – K-1493, Andorka's remarks on Abwehr officers, pages marked 38–39.

45 == Thomas Wolf, "Die Anfänge des BND. Gehlens Organisation – Prozess, Legende und Hypothek," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 64, no. 2 (2016): 191–225.

46 == Kauder, Richard Josef, KLATT (1900–1960), German spy, who later worked for US intelligence.

47 == CIA FOIA ERR. Agent Report: Kauder-Klatt, Richard Intelligence Activities, 13 February, 1953; Meyer, Winfried. *Klatt. Hitlers jüdischer Meisteragent gegen Stalin: Überlebenskunst in Holocaust und Geheimdienstkrieg*. Berlin: Metropol, 2015.; ÁBTL I. 4.1. A-862, Gyula Kádár's reminiscences, 162–63.

48 == Allen Dulles, the first civilian Director of Central Intelligence (CIA). His brother was John Foster Dulles.

After the war, this Deák was formally assigned to the American Legation as a civil Air Attaché, and in this capacity, he regularly appeared in Budapest. Andorka hinted that Deák may also have tried to recruit agents into his network in Hungary.

Another profile of Deák was prepared by Andorka the following year, in February 1955. However, he could not add much to what he had already written, only what he had heard second-hand from the former driver of the American Minister to Budapest, who, like him, had been interned at the Kistarcsa internment camp. Deák had been sent to Lisbon during the war as a representative of the Office of Strategic Services (the wartime intelligence and sabotage organisation, better known simply as OSS). In addition to this, he represented a de facto separate line to Tibor Eckhardt, the prominent politician of the Horthy era, residing in Washington. In America, Eckhardt collaborated with the War Department's Special Intelligence Division, or more precisely the intelligence service under its direction, operating under the code name "POND". This special intelligence unit began operating in March 1943 with Roosevelt's approval. Its Hungarian network was code-named PONY (of which Deák became a member under the code name JUDSON), and one of its main European connections was established in Lisbon. Otto Habsburg (with whom the Hungarian Prime Minister, Miklós Kállay maintained contact through the Portuguese capital) also played a role in this activity. The organisation continued to operate during the Cold War, with Eckhardt maintaining his role in it.<sup>49</sup>

### **== Conclusions and Epilogue**

If we intend to draw some conclusion based on what is found in Andorka's file, what he describes in his profiles, and on what the Hungarian state security officials were presumably concerned with, the focus of interest was clearly on Anglo-Saxon networks, Hungarian exiles, and possible channels for contact leading from abroad to Hungary. In 1954 Hungarian state security was interested particularly in those individuals who had previous and surviving contacts with members of British or American intelligence organisations. The importance of Hungarian emigration, including former diplomats, high-ranking soldiers, and some prominent politicians, increased depending on whether they were seen as worthy of a role in Washington, either in the political or the intelligence field – or even in both (Tibor Eckhardt, for example). Between 1953 and 1956, the positions of the old conservative elite of the pre-1945 era became somewhat strengthened within the Hungarian exile community, and also (temporarily) in the Hungarian National Committee based in New York.<sup>50</sup> Former

49 == Mark Stout and Katalin Kádár Lynn, "Every Hungarian of any value to intelligence": Tibor Eckhardt, John Grombach, and the Pond," *Intelligence and National Security* 31, (2016): 703–5, 709–12. See also concerning Deák: István Vida and Károly Urbán, eds., "Magyar béketapogatózások az Egyesült Államokban. Dokumentumok a Lisszaboni Magyar Követség titkos levéltárából," *Kritika* 14, no. 3 (1985): 27.

50 == Katalin Kádár Lynn, "The Hungarian National Council / Hungarian National Committee 1947–1972," in *The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare. Cold War*

diplomat Baron György Bakách-Bessenyei,<sup>51</sup> in addition to being an integral member of the POND, came to greater prominence as a member of the Hungarian National Committee and Chairman of the Committee for External Affairs. Interestingly, in 1952 it was considered essential in Budapest to open a separate research dossier on Bakách-Bessenyei. At that time, the VIII/4. Department, responsible for intelligence work in the Hungarian émigré communities, opened the research file.<sup>52</sup>

Andorka also wrote a profile on former diplomat László Bartók, who became a member of the POND in 1948 (under the code name LADD). He had contacts with US intelligence before 1945, and as Hungarian minister to Vienna, according to POND records, maintained “very close contact” with the US minister and the chief of the CIA in the Austrian capital. After Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy had been forced into exile in early June 1947, Bartók only barely escaped from the Hungarian Legation in Vienna with some American help. In 1951 Bartók moved to Uruguay under the name DAHL, and from there ran operations in Uruguay, Argentina, and Brazil against communists.<sup>53</sup>

The scope of the present study does not allow us to give a proper glimpse of each individual profile in General Andorka’s dossier, let alone to discuss their contents in more detail. In truth, any of them could offer good material for a case study. Only a selection of hopefully very interesting correlations have been highlighted in this study to illustrate the value of the material that has survived for us, while the other relevant dossiers (Mt and Bt) have been lost.

As a sort of epilogue, it should be mentioned that in its session of December 17, 1956, the Supreme Court of the Hungarian People’s Republic annulled the part of the sentence against Rudolf Andorka and his associates (B. III. 0537/1953-4.) pertaining to his person alone. The decision was annulled on the grounds of lapse of time at the time of the court proceeding.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the complete fabrication of the original indictment of “war crimes” was still not recognized.

*Organizations sponsored by the National Committee for a Free Europe / Free Europe Committee*, edited by Katalin Kádár Lynn (Saint Helena, CA: Helena History Press, 2013), 238–45.

51 == Bakách-Bessenyei, György (1892–1959), Minister in Vichy from July 27, 1941 to September 10, 1943, then in Bern until after the German occupation of Hungary.

52 == ÁBTL I. 4.1. A-2127/17, Hungarian National Committee, Report of the Internal Ministry (BM) Department II/5, February 13, 1956, on the subject of the target person (Bakách-B.) identified under the alias “István Perényi”, for whom the State Defence Authority (ÁVH) Department VIII/4 opened a personal file in 1952.

53 == Stout, ‘Every Hungarian of any value’, 711; Lajos Gecsényi, “Iratok a magyar emigráció történetéhez: Bartók László bécsi követ és Szegedy-Maszák Aladár washingtoni követ levélváltása (1947–1948),” *Levéltári Közlemények* 85 (2014): 112.

54 == BFL XXV. 4. - 0537/53, No. B. törv. III.1689/2., Resolution of the Supreme Court of the People’s Republic of Hungary, December 17, 1956.

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K 64 Reserved papers of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 1941

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Portrait of General Rudolf Andorka  
in 1961.

Júlia Andorka's  
private collection

***Keywords***

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*Secret intelligence, State security, Show trials, Diplomacy,  
Second World War*



===== Éva Lesz =====

## **/// The Fate of People Displaced to Hortobágy after Stalin's Death**

**Based on Examples from Somogy County**

### **== Introduction**

Several times in Hungary's twentieth-century history, people and entire groups were forced for various reasons to leave their place of residence. One of these instances was the case of resettlement from the border strip established in the southern and the western parts of the country between 1950–1953.

After the formation of the post-war, bipolar world, Soviet leadership was afraid of a land attack carried out by the Western powers via the territory of Hungary. Therefore, the Hungarian leadership decided to close the southern and western borders of the country, and to eliminate the so-called “internal enemy,” meaning all those who could have facilitated this attack in any way.<sup>1</sup> To achieve this, on June 1, 1950 a fifteen-kilometre-wide border strip covering seven counties was created, then subsequently expanded to twenty-five kilometres in 1952.<sup>2</sup> The people from here were taken and sent to one of the twelve closed labour camps established in Hortobágy.<sup>3</sup> Their properties that had been left behind were confiscated, and their movable assets were auctioned off.<sup>4</sup>

1 = = Lajos Srágli, *Erődország. A déli határvédelmi rendszer létesítésének és lebontásának története, 1948–1958* (Budapest: Város- és Faluvédők Szövetsége, 2007), 13–19.

2 = = István Orgoványi, “A déli határsáv 1948 és 1956 között,” *Bács-Kiskun megye múltjából* 17 (Kecskemét, 2001): 277.

3 = = Mária Nagy and József Saád, eds., ‘Péntek volt és 23’. *Kitelepítések 1950–1953 között a baranyai határsávból* (Mohács: The Settlers' Social Museum Foundation, 2011), 1.

4 = = Zsuzsa Hantó, János Takács, Miklós Füzes, and József Saád, eds., *Kitaszítottak* (Budapest: Alterra, 2001), vol. 1, 10; István Novák, *Ítélet nélkül, ártatlanul. Fejezetek a csurgói járásból 1950–53 között, a hortobágyi zárt kényszermunkatáborba elhurcoltak életéről* (Gyékényes: Chronicle of Gyékényes, 2011), 17; MNL SVL XXIII-898-d. Confidential document of the Ministry of Finance Nr. 0982/2/1952. January 11, 1952.

These measures in Somogy affected mostly the districts of Barcs, Csurgó, and Nagyatád, but they also dragged away people from the central and the northern parts of the county. According to the present state of the research, 702 people were taken away from forty-seven settlements of Somogy,<sup>5</sup> the vast majority of whom ended up in one of the Árkus, Borzas-Mihályhalma, Elep, Tedej, and Tisztaszentimre camps.<sup>6</sup> Here they “lived” in the still-intact farm buildings of the former farms, working on the territory of the state farms under police supervision, where, among other things, no ordinary plants were grown: rice, cotton, and rubber dandelion.<sup>7</sup> The rice growing areas were established on the saline soil of Hortobágy within the framework of the large-scale, nature-transforming activities taking place in Hungary at that time based on the Soviet model. The inhabitants of these camps weeded in summer in water teeming with leeches, and in late October or early November harvested rice, knee-deep in cold water.<sup>8</sup>

This study attempts, with the help of some examples from Somogy and interviews with former abductees, to present the fate of these people after their release and thus the impact of the Hortobágy events on their further lives.

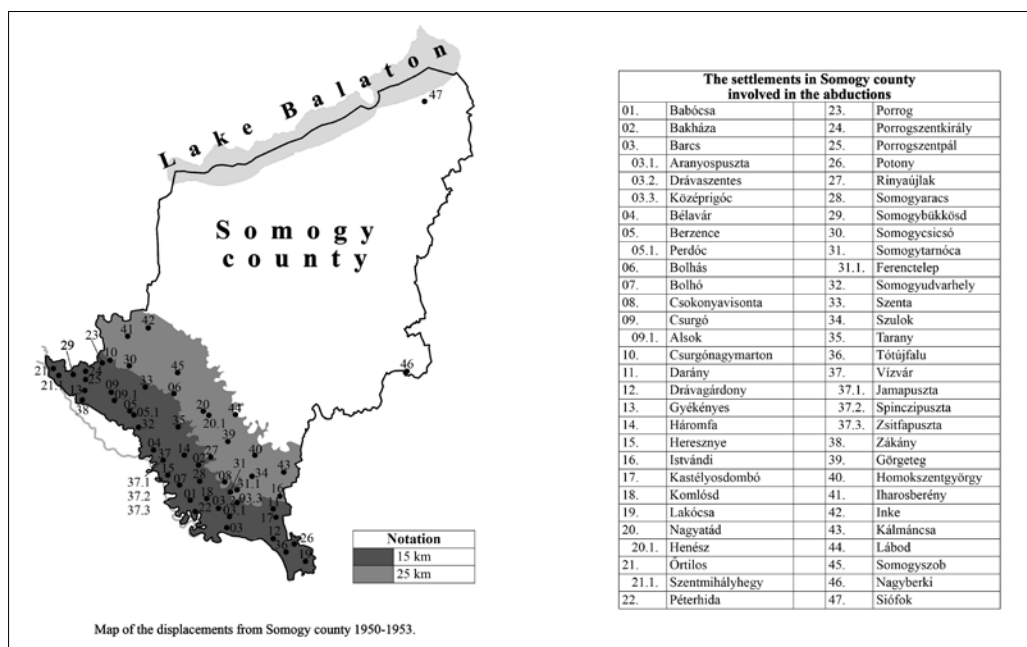
This theme demonstrates the utilitarian functioning of the communist system and revives a forgotten piece of Hungarian history. The communist government condemned these forced removals and labour camps to oblivion, and they were a taboo theme until the change of the political system in 1989/1990. In this study, I have used the books of those historians who first wrote about it and the memoirs of survivors. I have augmented these with sources from the Hungarian National Archives and Somogy County Archives, and I have additionally conducted interviews with the former prisoners.

5 = = Babócsa, Bakháza, Barcs, Bélavár, Berzence, Bolhás, Bolhó, Csokonyavisonta, Csurgó, Csurgónagymarton, Darány, Drávagárdony, Görgeteg, Gyékényes, Háromfa, Heresznye, Homokszentgyörgy, Iharosberény, Inke, Istvándi, Kálmánca, Kastélyosdombó, Komlósd, Lábod, Lakócsa, Nagyatád, Nagyberki, Őrtilos, Péterhida, Porrog, Porrogszentkirály, Porrogszentpál, Potony, Rinyaújlak, Siófok, Somogyaracs, Somogybükkösd, Somogyicsicsó, Somogyszob, Somogytarnóca, Somogyudvarhely, Senta, Szulok, Tarany, Tótújfalu, Vízvár, and Zákány.

6 = = Nagy, *Péntek volt és 23*; József Saád, ed., *Telepessors* (Budapest: Gondolat, 2004), 48; MNL SVL XXIII-202.; XXIII-220-a.; XXIII-277-a. Protocols of meetings on relevant dates, September, 1956 – December, 1957.

7 = = Pál Breuer, *A hortobágyi kitelepítések igaz története 1950–53* (Pécs: B&D Stúdió, 2005), 18; Kinga Széchenyi, *Megbélyegzettek* (Budapest: Helikon, 2015), 96.

8 = = Interview with Mrs. D. R. in 2017, who was fourteen years old when she was taken from Nagyatád together with her family in 1952 because her father was a military officer in the Horthy era and did not want to join the Hungarian People's Army. The interview—similarly to the other ones—is owned by the author for the time being. In order to protect personal rights, the interviewees are identified only by initials. Here I would like to thank my colleague László Fejes, who contributed to the interviews with the displaced persons.



Map of the displacements from Somogy county, 1950–1953

### = = The first phase of the thaw: 1953

After Stalin's death on March 5, 1953, the new Soviet leadership – in order to stabilize the system – committed itself to foreign and domestic policy changes. As part of this undertaking, they admitted that the likelihood of an attack from the west or the south, and with it the potential outbreak of a Third World War, gradually decreased from the middle of 1953. Thus there was no longer a need for either the expensive – and in any event not-very-effective – border strip or the forced labour camps established for defensive reasons.<sup>9</sup>

All of this change affected political life in the other states belonging to the Soviet bloc, including Hungary. The government established under the leadership of Imre Nagy set a new political and economic direction, through which the strained relations with the country's southern and eastern neighbours began to ease. In terms of domestic politics, the amnesty decree issued on July 26 abolished the punishment of political prisoners interned for less than two years.<sup>10</sup> However, this decree did not affect the people held in Hortobágy, as they had never been convicted. Their internment was abolished by a decision of the Council of Ministers made at the same time as the amnesty; this decision set the date for the full closure

9 = = Imre Okváth, *Bástya a béke frontján. Magyar haderő és katonapolitika 1945–1956* (Debrecen: Aquila, 1999), 277.

10 = = Orgoványi, "A déli határsáv 1948 és 1956 között," 278.

of these cases on October 31, 1953.<sup>11</sup> The prescribed deadline was met, in spite of the fact that the release progressed very slowly. Initially, it was mainly the sick, the elderly, mothers with little children, and pregnant women who were released, as the supervisors of the camps wanted the detained people to remain fit enough to perform the agricultural work of harvesting, plowing, and sowing. At the same time that the prisoners were released, the farms tried to recruit a labour force among the people released, offering them a contract, better payment, and suitable working conditions.<sup>12</sup> Of the 2,524 families (7,241 people) released from the camps, only 107 families (288 people) took advantage of this opportunity.<sup>13</sup>

At the time of their release, the camp residents were told that *“It was a mistake, forget it,”* or, *“Then not a word to anyone about what happened here, because you might be sent back.”*<sup>14</sup>

The decree announcing their release did not allow the former prisoners to return to their former place of residence, to other settlements within the border zone, to cities subject to a settlement permit (Koml6, Miskolc, Szt6linv6ros,<sup>15</sup> and V6rpalota), or even to Budapest. The settlement applications submitted were judged strictly by the authorities, and permits were only given to very old and sick former prisoners of Hortob6gy, who essentially returned home to die. The requests of the others, however, were rejected. In addition to this, neither the settled nor the rejected individuals could reclaim their confiscated movable or immovable properties.<sup>16</sup> Thus the families who were displaced and made homeless could only rely on relatives, friends, acquaintances, or benevolent strangers living outside the border zone to help them find work and housing. These circumstances made it possible, then, for people who were taken from Csokonyavisonta to end up in L6bod, while those from Barcs got to Fony6d, to Rinyahossz6falu (at present it belongs to L6bod), or even to P6cs.<sup>1</sup> Upon release, most of the residents of Somogy managed to return to the county, usually to one of the settlements near the border zone. However, even in this case it was hard for them to get by. The former prisoners were kept under ob-

11 == Sz6chenyi, *Megb6lyegzettek*, 222.

12 == B6la Tantalics, *Az 6t- 6s kitelep6tett politikai 6ld6z6ttek sorsa Zala megy6ben a hat6r ment6n 1950–1953* (Lenti: Honismereti Egyes6let Lenti, 2017), 52.

13 == Nov6k, *6t6let n6lk6l, 6rtatlanul*, 20.

14 == Gyula Guly6s and J6nos Guly6s, *T6rv6ny6s6rt6s n6lk6l* (Budapest: L6ng, 1989), 11.

15 == Today: Duna6jv6ros, Fej6r County.

16 == Nov6k, *6t6let n6lk6l, 6rtatlanul*, 20.

17 == Interview with Mrs. H. Gy., who was nine years old when she was taken away from Barcs together with her family in 1950 because her father had a dry goods store; interview with Mrs. G. J., who was nine years old when she was taken from Koml6sd together with her family in 1951 because her father had an oil crusher mill, a milk shop, and a carbonated water-producing machine; interview with Mrs. S. M., who was seven years old when she was taken from Csokonyavisonta together with her

servation until the change of regime of 1989/1990; the young people could not study further because of their “bad record from Hortobágy,” or not in the field they would have preferred, while employers were reluctant to employ them and could dismiss them any time. In short, their rehabilitation could only be discussed after the end of the communist era.<sup>18</sup>

### **= = The second phase of the thaw: 1956**

As a result of the improved relations between Hungary and its neighbours, the fifteen-kilometre border strip was abolished in January 1956, and only a 500-metre guard lane was maintained. Within it was a one-hundred-metre restricted zone, which was still strictly controlled by internal affairs organisations without harassing the surrounding population. On March 12, 1956, the whole southern border zone was abolished, including the former guard lane.<sup>19</sup>

In spring of 1956, the kulaks<sup>20</sup> were reconsidered, and many of them were deleted from the kulak lists. As a result of this, they were more likely to submit their application for settlement and support to the authorities.<sup>21</sup>

On August 1, the settlement was no longer tied to a permit. Thus, from then on the former deportees could return without restriction to Budapest, to those towns that had previously required a settlement permit, and (except for those expelled for crime) to the border strip, where they could try to regain their former homes.<sup>22</sup>

From September 1, 1956 to December 31, 1957, they could submit applications for the recovery of their confiscated real estate assets, as well as for the disbursement of aid of up to 5,000 HUF and state loans of up to 10,000 HUF per family (taking into account their financial and social situation). The latter form of aid could be spent on fixing their apartment buildings and starting their businesses. This aid could also be requested by those who had not returned to their former place of residence. However, their confiscated properties were not returned, nor was compensation paid. To meet the ongoing needs, the Ministry of Finance provided additional loans of HUF 2.2 million for the counties of Baranya, Bács-Kiskun and

family in 1950 because her grandfather was classified as a kulak; interview with Mr. M. J., who was six and a half years old when he was taken from Barcs with his family in 1951 because his father, who had been a member of the Social Democratic Party and who, after the union with the Communist Party in 1948, did not want to be a member of the HWP.

18 = = Széchenyi, *Megbélyegzettek*, 242.

19 = = MNL SVL XXIII-2-c. 12/1957./Tan./Tük. Decision on the re-establishment of the southern border zone, February 5, 1957.

20 = = Wealthy farmers.

21 = = Miklós Füzes, *Törvénysértéssel* (Pécs: Pannónia könyvek, 1992), 30.

22 = = Novák, *Ítélet nélkül, ártatlanul*, 21.

Somogy as well as the city of Szeged, and HUF 1.5 million for Zala County.<sup>23</sup> The Kádár government made HUF 12.5 million available to the councils.<sup>24</sup>

The exact amount of the aid was determined and allocated by the executive committee of the district (city) council responsible for the returned person's place of residence, while the loan was provided – based on the recommendations of the same committees – by the county branch of the National Savings Bank.<sup>25</sup>

The decree on the enforcement of property rights regulated in detail the procedure for returning state-owned real estate. However, numerous problems arose during its practical implementation. Only roughly 10 percent of the residential buildings could be returned to their former owners; the rest had to be obtained from replacement properties.<sup>26</sup>

In addition, local party and state authorities were generally afraid of the situation with the returnees because they should have admitted their responsibility and should have returned the confiscated property, from which they also continued to benefit. For this reason, they tried in every possible way to prevent or even to prohibit the return of the abductees. The Executive Committee of Somogy County Council advised district councils to prevent the return of the displaced persons, and the county council instructed the village councils not to fulfill the needs of the returnees. In Zákány, for example, which is in the Csurgó District, one of the returnees registered as a permanent resident was automatically reported back to the previous place of residence by the district department. Because of this, he was unable to return home.<sup>27</sup> In its decision on June 27, 1956, the management of the village Lakócsa in the Barcs District allowed the displaced people from the village to return, but only if they were able to provide housing for themselves.<sup>28</sup> The returned former abductees were kept under surveillance by the district departments of the State Defence Authority, and were immediately banned from the given settlement in the event that their behaviour was considered hostile.

Another problem was that, due to their previous abduction, the evicted requested a written certificate stating that their evicting was illegal and guaranteeing that they could not be harmed again. These cases were finally decided on an individual basis. Several people asked for their personal belongings (mainly their furniture) to be

23 == Novák, *Ítélet nélkül, ártatlanul*, 21.

24 == Füzes, *Törvénytéséssel*, 31.

25 == MNL SVL XXIII-204. Decree Nr. 29/1956/IX. 8./ M. T. on the on the enforcement of the property rights claims of certain persons affected by the former southern border strip, September 8, 1956. The basis of reference for the following paragraphs is the same.

26 == Füzes, *Törvénytéséssel*, 32.

27 == Orgoványi, "A déli határsáv 1948 és 1956 között," 279.

28 == MNL SVL XXIII-820-a. Protocols, Decision of the executive committee Nr. 19/1956, June 27, 1956.

returned. However, some of these requests were made by individual district party and council bodies, farmers' co-operatives, and state farms, so it was not clear whether they had to be returned and, if they had been sold, whether the amount received had to be refunded or not. In the end, a decision was made that if the "usurper" of the furniture did not really need it, and the origin of the object could be proven beyond all doubt, then it had to be returned to its original owner.<sup>29</sup>

A question arose in the Csurgó District over who was considered rehabilitated: those who were evicted by the authority by force, or those who left voluntarily for another settlement out of fear. It was also a problem that several people only asked for their houses back, since in the meantime they had already established an employment relationship in addition to which they could not undertake cultivating the land. There were some people who wanted to regain only their vineyards and orchards, but they could only get them together with the unwanted fields. It was yet another problem that they could sell only part of their movable property and were able to pay only for its smaller portion. In the end, the solution was simply that the authorities involved in the cases did not deal with the question of compensation.<sup>30</sup>

The authorities usually allowed borrowing and gave the maximum of HUF 10,000; only in a few cases did they pay HUF 6,000 to 8,000.<sup>31</sup> On rare occasions HUF 5,000 in aid was granted, with the applicants usually receiving between HUF 1,500 and 3,500. Still, it sometimes happened that the aid granted was withdrawn and repaid in full for all kinds of reasons (such as the person's financial circumstances, residing outside the territory of the district, or a relative in the same household having already received aid).<sup>32</sup>

### **= = = The period of temporary repression: 1957–1958**

Following the defeat of the Revolution that broke out on October 23, 1956, the Hungarian Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government was established under the leadership of János Kádár. As many people, in order to escape the reprisals, fled the country through the territory of the former border zone, Ferenc Münnich, the new government's Minister of Armed Forces and Public Security, ordered the restoration of the southern border strip and the re-introduction of the former rules in his Order Number Six that went into effect on February 2, 1957. According to the order, warning signs for the border zone had to be erected immediately in their former places, and the local police stations – or in their absence, the village executive committees – were once more required to keep records of the people entering

29 = = Novák, *Ítélet nélkül, ártatlanul*, 21.

30 = = Novák, *Ítélet nélkül, ártatlanul*, 22.

31 = = MNL SVL XXIII-301. 14-234/1956. The case of Mr. B. J., resident of Bolhó, October 25, 1956.

32 = = MNL SVL XXIII-334. Protocol of the council meeting, June 6, 1957.

the border zone. However, the previously existing minefield in the southern border section was not restored.<sup>33</sup>

In 1958, the assessment of applications for reviewing the nationalized properties continued. In the district of Marcali, seventy-two applications were assessed; in twenty-seven cases, the property was released from state ownership, while in forty-five cases the applications were rejected due to various exclusionary reasons.<sup>34</sup> The most common of these reasons was the classification of the petitioner as an exploiter, oppressor of the people, or participant in revolutionary activities. Before considering the application, the executive committee was obliged to request information from the police of the relevant territory to verify that the applicant did not belong to one of these categories that would prevent the property's release.<sup>35</sup> Applications were assessed in other districts of the county as well; the table below shows the current status of the research:

**The numbers of the accepted and the rejected applications in the districts of Somogy county in 1957–1958**

District	Number of accepted applications (pieces)	Number of rejected applications (pieces)
Barcs	19	48
Csurgó	1	12
Fonyód	16	64
Kaposvár	22	84
Marcal	27	45
Nagyatád	1	5
Siófok	49	105
Tab	15	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>415</b>

Most rejections were due to the applicant's "pre-liberation" activities. If they were classified as a kulak, exploiter, or oppressor of the people, if they had held some office during the Horthy regime, or if perhaps they were a military officer, gendarme, or police officer, the submitted application was rejected. Additionally, other common reasons for rejection included the following: when the number of rooms classified as rooms for living exceeded the permitted six; if at least 50 percent of the building

33 = MNL SVL XXIII-2-c. 12/1957./Tan./Tük. Decision on the re-establishment of the southern border zone, February 5, 1957

34 = MNL SVL XXIII-264. Protocol, January 15, 1958.

35 = MNL SVL XXIII-2-c. 049/1958. Exemption of nationalized properties, April 10, 1958.



was used by a public body or a state body; if the applicant could not or did not want to pay the remainder of the cost that exceeded the HUF 5,000 paid by the state on the property; if the applicant had another residential property; or if the applicant's relative had died before the legal decree on nationalization came into force (on February 17, 1952). In the latter case, the widow(er) did not acquire ownership of the property, so they could not reclaim as the legal heir. However, in some cases an interesting justification was given: despite having been divorced and having married another man, an applicant did not recover the property that had been taken from her because her first husband had been a member of a right-wing extremist organization. In still other cases, the person was unable to reclaim their house because it had already been given to another claimant as an exchange property.<sup>36</sup>

### == Conclusion

The “meltdown” surrounding the former abductees began in 1988 with the documentary film *No lawless...* by János Gulyás and Gyula Gulyás. It intensified after 1995, when the relevant documents became researchable and historians began to publish works on the subject. At the same time, the survivors also began publishing their memoirs. On June 23, 1990, on the first anniversary of the first deportation, the former prisoners erected the Hortobágy Cross near the famous Nine-arched Bridge. This monument was the work of the architect Sándor Haranghy and was constructed from railway tracks as a reminder of the fact that they had been deported by rail.<sup>37</sup>

Starting in 1990, the former deportees could request an official certificate, for which they received a standard pension supplement of HUF 500. Later, a HUF 11,000 “pain fee” was paid in the form of a compensation ticket after each month spent in resettlement. From the year 2000 on, those persons whose detention period had been at least three but less than five years received a monthly allowance of HUF 20,000. In 2013, this rule was modified so that if the person's total detention period had been less than three years, they would receive HUF 15,000 benefits per month, while if the person's detention period had been at least three but less than five years, they would then receive HUF 30,000 benefits per month. However, those who had been taken in the last big wave of relocation and who thus had spent less than a year

36 == MNL SVL XXIII-202. Protocols of the executive committee meetings, March 28 – October 25, 1958; MNL SVL XXIII-220-a. Protocols of the executive committee meetings, January 11 – October 31, 1958; MNL SVL XXIII-232. Protocols of the executive committee meetings, March 21 – October 17, 1958; MNL SVL XXIII-247. Protocols of the executive committee meetings, January 25 – November 1, 1958; MNL SVL XXIII-277-a. Protocols of the executive committee meetings, January 25 – October 20, 1958; MNL SVL XXIII-291. Protocols of the executive committee meetings, February 13 – December 31, 1958; MNL SVL XXIII-308. Protocols of the executive committee meetings, February 8 – December 20, 1958.

37 == Zsuzsa W. Balassa, *Hortobágyi kényszermunkatáborok 1950–1953* (Veszprém: Veszprémi Nyomda, 2005), 9.

in Hortobágy did not receive any compensation. As for moral rehabilitation, after the change of the system, the Antall Government issued a one-sentence apology for the wrongful harm these individuals had suffered.<sup>38</sup>

In 2000, the Association of Hortobágy Forced Labour Camps Deportees was established, which primarily produces publications and documentaries, holds school lectures, and operates a website. During the 2000s, it had memorials erected at the sites of all former camps, commissioned a commemorative plaque, built the ecumenical Jesus the Good Shepherd Church, and every year, on the anniversary of the first wave of deportation, organized a commemorative trip to the former camps.<sup>39</sup> Today, in several settlements of the country and in collaboration with the local governments, memorials have been erected to the memory of those who experienced atrocities during the communist rule. In Somogy County for example, in 2002 a commemorative plaque was installed (among others) in Nagyatád and dedicated to those who were innocently displaced, while in Kaposvár in 2005 another was dedicated to the memory of the victims of communism. The Settlers Social Museum Foundation is also active and has organized a conference on the topic. In 2019, sixty-nine years after the beginning of the events, the establishment of the Hortobágy Deportees' Memorial Place, an educational and memorial centre, also began. On June 13, 2000, the Hungarian Parliament declared February 25 as Memorial Day for the Victims of Communism.<sup>40</sup>

However, only a few of the former Hortobágy residents lived to see it. Those who were already old at the time of the deportation died either in the camps or after their release, when they could not get home. Of those who were deported to the camps as adults and who thus bore the primary responsibility of feeding their family members through their work, many died a few years later from various illnesses. Due to this factor as well as the passage of time, only those who were children, teenagers, or young adults in their twenties during the resettlement are alive today. They are now in their seventies, eighties, and nineties – as for example are those we interviewed about the events in Somogy County. Ten of our interviewees were between seventy-one and seventy-nine, two were eighty-two and eighty-three years old, and one was over ninety years old. We also conducted five more interviews: three

38 == Széchenyi, *Megbélyegzettek*, 264; interview with Mr. K. J., who was fourteen years old when he was taken away together with his family from Komlósd because the authorities wanted to set an example so that no one would feel safe. There were twelve siblings in the family, and his family was the poorest in the village; interview with Mr. Á. G., who was seven years old when he was taken away together with his family in 1952 from Órtilos, where his father was a ferryman. Due to his work, he had to cross over to Yugoslavia several times, so he was classified as a spy.

39 == Interview with Mrs. R. A., who was sixteen years old when she was taken away together with her family in 1951 from Barcs because her father had a small pálinka (special Hungarian brandy) brewing business.

40 == Decision of the Hungarian Parliament Nr. 58/2000.

with persons deported from Baranya County, and two with individuals from Zala County, all of whom were between seventy-four and eighty-nine years old.

In conclusion, it can be said that during the early 1950s in Hungary, the “Hungarian Gulag” was established: twelve forced labor camps in Hortobágy. It was here that the communist government tried to realize its flawed and problematic ideas through the forced labour of more than 8,000 innocent people.

The story of the people abducted from Somogy County shows how the major political events made their impact felt at the local level. These people could survive camp conditions and the decades of enduring discrimination after their release with only the help of their faith, solidarity, willpower, and ability to fight. Besides all this, even after the regime change, they had to fight: not only for compensation, but against being condemned to oblivion.

Yet in spite of it all, they do not desire revenge. Rather, they would be fully satisfied if their story could receive sufficient attention, both in the public discourse and in public and higher education.

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#### *Keywords*

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*Communist Hungary, Hortobágy, displacement, border strip,  
forced labor camps*



Nine-arched Bridge, Hortobágy (Hungary), 1950.

Fortepan / Magyar Rendőr

==== *Marius Tăriță* =====

## **/// in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic after Khrushchev's speech (1956–1959)**

The topic of Moldavian nomenklatura is specifically important due to the widespread idea of the existence of a Moldavian clan, faction, or feud. This was a later idea which emerged during the Leonid Brezhnev era, especially in some Western publications linked with those authors who had left the USSR. It also appeared during Yuri Andropov's campaign against specific forms of corruption,<sup>1</sup> as exemplified in statements such as those of Mikhail Voslensky.<sup>2</sup> Formally, the idea of this faction is explained by the young Brezhnev's stay of more than two years (between July 1950 and September 1952) at Chisinau as the Republic's first secretary. This idea, in fact, is disputable. I would pay attention to some highlights of Moldavian nomenklatura around the beginning of 1956 and after Khrushchev's secret speech. One problem in approaching this issue in the Moldavian case arises from the relative lack of historiographical approaches. Among key contributions we can enumerate those of Igor Casu (especially aspects of anti-regime resistance and KGB presence), Gheorghe Cojocaru (who dealt mainly with cultural issues and Romanian emergence), and Will Prigge – this last contribution focusing on a comparative study of purges and Nationalist topics in Latvia and Moldavia, specifically in 1959-1961.

This relative lack of existing scholarship is one of the reasons why it is not so easy for me to approach this topic. I can base my work mainly on archival evidence (which assuredly has its limits), and on the few statements of the above-mentioned

1 == "Fief des 'brejnéviens.' Le Parti communiste de Moldavie fait son autocritique," [Feud of the 'Brezhnevans. The Communist Party of Moldavia is self-critical] *Le Monde*, February 7, 1984, 2.

2 == Michael Voslensky, *Nomenklatura: The Soviet Ruling Class* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1984), 252–53.

historians. As a result of this, my own statements may be easily contested by a subsequent scholar.

In this paper, I propose to make only a tentative introduction to the subject. I aim to devote attention to the following: some theoretical aspects concerning the possible existence of a Moldavian faction; what changes can be observed and to what degree within the Moldavian high-level *nomenklatura* (secretaries, Bureau, CC, and Council of Ministers); the strange ascendancy of Ivan Bodyul; and how different or not the elite of the late 1950s was (i.e., whether it was still hard Stalinist at its core, or whether it had arrived at a softer approach). Sources for this paper derive mainly from Party archive documents, preserved at the Directia Arhivei Organizatiilor Social-Politice in Chisinau (Moldova). Unfortunately, apart from some separate remarks and the comparative study of Will Prigge on Moldavia and Latvia in late 1950s, there is no other study to serve as a parallel reference. In this paper, I would also give brief attention to the historiography of Soviet *nomenklatura*, after which will follow certain remarks about the specificity of the Moldavian *nomenklatura*, Ivan Bodyul's rise to prominence, the Rudy case, tensions between the district-level Communists and *nomenklatura* in Chisinau, and two examples of erased or omitted information in 1959.

### **= = = Short overview on Party *nomenklatura* historiography**

An important contribution to the study of the Party *nomenklatura* belongs to the American scholars of the 1960s–1980s. These scholars typically did not have access to the Soviet archives, and their main strength lay in their analysis of both official information and the books of the Communists who fled the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup>

In his book, the scholar M.C. Lodge (1969) remarked that the “system is not monolith” and that there existed an interdependence between Party and specialist. He also paid attention to an infrequently discussed issue, which he projected to the 1960s: the so-called “groupism” (in Russian, *gruppovshchina*). In reality, the archival evidence in the Moldavian case shows that this groupism existed since the end of World War Two. Groupism was officially criticized for distorting Party politics, but in fact it seems to have been the intrinsic characteristic of the system. Groups with poorly established roots used the context (e.g., of a campaign) to marginalize or purge their Party colleagues from other groups. While I will not foreground this issue in the present paper, it is nevertheless important to remark the contribution of Lodge.

<sup>3</sup> = = One example of such a book is *The Communist Party Apparatus* by Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov, published in Chicago in 1966. Also the book on “Corrupted society” by Alec Nove and much later the “*Nomenklatura*” of Voslensky. There is also the book of Milovan Djilas (*The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System*, New York: Praeger, 1957), which was somehow cited more frequently than expected in the Political Sciences.



The issue of interest groups in Soviet politics was extended by H. Gordon Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths (1971). Skilling considered the political interest group to be, even if not a dominant factor, an important element, the neglect of which makes the picture of the Soviet political system incomplete. In addition to the “Party *apparatchiki*,” they also distinguished the interest groups of the Security Police, Militaries, Industrial Managers, Economists, Writers, and Jurists.<sup>4</sup> For his part, Kenneth Jowitt dealt with the politics of inclusion that began in Communist parties in the late 1950s. Importantly, in his remarks he observes the appearance, in the 1970s, of a new type of Party cadre with socio-manipulative skills. This cadre differed greatly from previous Stalinist and Brezhnevist types, which were generational in practice and less competent.

Jerry Hough dedicated a study to the Soviet elite.<sup>5</sup> Additional studies on regional *nomenklatura* were also made and usually appeared at the *obkom* level. Robert E. Blackwell analysed alternative recruitment methods at the regional level.<sup>6</sup> In the same year, he together with William E. Hulbary dedicated an analysis to the political mobility among Soviet *obkom* elites, their social backgrounds, and career development.<sup>7</sup> There are also other numerous more or less well-known contributions of American scholars which I would not mention here, but all of which should be overviewed in some future retrospective study.

One important post-Soviet contribution on the study of Party *nomenklatura* belongs to T. Huszár. Unfortunately, his work “Az ellittől” has not circulated in the English language. It seems to me that there is a lack of such an approach in other former Socialist countries. I share some of this author’s ideas, but I remain unsure of how ideas concerning the transition from Socialist *nomenklatura* can be supported. It is a broad discussion, which must be approached in the future. Additionally, some other study cases would help any scholar dealing with the Communist period on the aspect of *nomenklatura*.

### **=== Technical remarks and the idea of specificity of Moldavian *nomenklatura***

The Moldavian *nomenklatura* which developed in the little republic after August 1944 was an heterogenous one. Beside this, I would make a remark which I hope will be supported in a future study: namely, that the State Security Department

4 == Gordon Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths, *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971).

5 == Jerry Hough. “The Soviet Elite I,” *Problems of Communism* XVI, no. 1 (1967): 28–35.

6 == Robert Blackwell, Jr., “The Soviet political Elite. Alternative Recruitment Policies at the Obkom Level: An Empirical analysis,” *Comparative Politics* 6, no. 1 (1973): 99–121.

7 == Robert Blackwell, Jr. and William E Hulbary, “Political Mobility Among Soviet Obkom Elites: The Effects of Regime, Social Backgrounds and Career Development,” *American Journal of Political Science* 17, no. 4 (1973): 721–43.

(later Ministry and later Committee [KGB]) was a parallel world. In fact, it was not subordinated to the Party and experienced several conflicts which did not become public and which have not previously been studied.

Concerning *nomenklatura*, it was mainly composed of a portion of the former *nomenklatura* from the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic: mainly people promoted during the Great Purge. There were a few survivals, such as Stepan Taranov, but these were rather an exception. This left-bank *nomenklatura*, who during the war took refuge in Moscow and Chkalov, came back to the republic in autumn of 1944. The other portion of the *nomenklatura* was composed of persons sent from Russian or Ukrainian regions. Also, up until 1950 there was some representation of Moscow by means of a Bureau. Some historians also pay attention to, and exaggerate the role of, the second secretary. As we would see, in the case of Moldavia, the second secretary would not be so important. For the most part, these left-bankers and Russian-speaking Communists (and to a lesser extent the local Bessarabians) were the ruling class in the Republic during the late Stalinist years.

A lack of high-level rulers was visible after the departure of Leonid Brezhnev in September-October 1952. Shortly afterward, Dmitry Gladkiy became the leader, but he is not remembered as having high authority in the Republic. Rather, it seems that he ruled in the name of a collective group. In 1954 the role passed to Zinoviĭ Serdyuk. Since Serdyuk, who was sent to the Republic from outside, became the first secretary, it can be stated clearly that in the Moldavian case, the rule of the second secretary did not apply: a fact which would be also confirmed by the ascension of Ivan Bodyul.

After Stalin's death, the most important thing on which a scholar must focus is whether there were real purges and conflicts in the Moldavian Communist Party. Analysis of the changes to the CC membership and of the discussions at the CC's plenum shows conflicts, but of another type. In the case of Moldavia, there were no connections to or accountability for the previous period. Even the KGB chief, Iosif Mordovets, was dismissed (and replaced by the Ukrainian Andrey Prokopenko) only in January 1956 and formally because of his age. Historian I. Cașu states that in several republics, after the Khrushchev speech, there appeared an external pressure on cadres. Constantin Chernenko, who was for eight years chief of the Propaganda and Agitation Section, wrote a letter to Moscow with the request to be transferred anywhere in Russia.<sup>8</sup>

The main conflict that can be seen in discussions arose from Khrushchev's frequent reforms and the fact that, due to this, several tensions developed between

8 = = Igor Cașu, "Revoluția silențioasă: Revizuirea identității naționale în Moldova sovietică în anii 'dezghețului' lui Hrușciov (1956-1957)." *Plural* 3, no. 1 (2015): 122.

Communists from the reynons – districts (David Lane uses “district” for this unit)<sup>9</sup> level and those from Chisinau. Here it is important to make a remark regarding the accuracy of the sources. Several Western scholars who came to the former Soviet archives worked with the corrected transcripts,<sup>10</sup> although in the archives were also accessible the versions made before the proofreading. These versions contains several corrections by pens in blue or red ink, or by pencil. In these can be seen some critical voices that are still unknown in Moldavian and Romanian historiographies.

On the basis of an analysis of these media, it can be supposed that the Party intentionally changed their tone. The discontent of the people was a real one, but the Party had not begun implementing punishments at a high level. There were no known cases of Stalinist functionaries who were opposed to justice. In fact, the Party played a game against the local nomenklatura in districts, the corruption and factions of which are even less studied than those in Chisinau. What is important is that despite this, it was not the district elites who were guilty in the highest degree for repressions. The arrests, deportations, forcible collectivisation, and other totalitarian processes were managed from Chisinau. KGB officials were implicated, as well as prosecutors and Bureau members. Additionally, the Government played an important role in the technical or formal implementation of the Party policies. It is for this reason that a portion of our paper below will shortly reflect on the case of Gerasim Rudy, the chief of the Council of Ministers of Moldavia, between 1946 and January 1958.

In January 1956, some time before the secret speech, an editorial on bureaucratism appeared in the Russian-language republican newspaper *Sovetskaya Moldavia*. This editorial criticized various Soviet officials at the district and provincial levels, but especially attacked the issue of workers’ letters and requests addressed to the institutions. After stating that the ignorant approach in the letters was not proper for Soviet functionaries, the editorialist gave several examples. The approach was named “formal-bureaucratic,” and the cases were presented separately.<sup>11</sup> The problem is that people who read such articles may have perceived them as some kind of democratisation, while in fact at the high level no changes occurred.

One can also view this in the light of Voslensky’s ideas. While these can be challenged, they can also show us a possible unknown world, in which the quiet little republic played a more important role than it might at first seem:

9 == During the Soviet period, the division of the Moldavian SSR varied from 40 to 60 small districts, which were in fact less practical than the previous Romanian județ. Every district had its own Party committee, at least one surveyor from the KGB, and all the necessary structures.

10 == Also, we note that the discourses of some delegates at plenums and Congresses were published in the press according to shortened transcripts.

11 == “Chyutko otnositsya k pis'mam i zhalobam trudyashchikhsya,” [Treat the letters and requests of the workers with attention] *Sovetskaya Moldavia*, January 7, 1956, 1.

That is the utterly prosaic explanation of the Brezhnev-era overrepresentation at the highest level of the Dnepropetrovsk and Moldavia. Those regions must be regarded as a breeding ground not of Russian genius but of the Brezhnev clan. That those people were Brezhnev's proteges was frankly admitted at the ceremony in September 1977 at which Scherbitsky was decorated with the Order of Lenin...<sup>12</sup>

At the end of this paragraph, it is necessary to refer to an afore-mentioned scholar's statement on the divisions in Moldavian *nomenklatura*: namely, that of American historian Will Prigge. Even if I would challenge some of the nuances of what he describes, his remains the first step in addressing this topic. He distinguishes several subgroups within the Moldavian Party organization:

The first group would be the Khrushchev faction, such as First Secretary Zinovie Serdiuk. The Dniepropetrovsk, or the (Leonid) Brezhnev Faction, is a second. A third is comprised of the Bessarabian Diaspora, which extends all the way to the Dnieper, but whose families had lived among Ukrainians for generations and had largely assimilated. First Secretary Ivan Bodiul would be such an example. The final sub-group are All-Union imports who came from all corners of the Soviet Union, spent only a few years in the republic, then moved on. Phillip Kashnikov was secretary of agriculture for Moldavia and would eventually go on to serve as second secretary in Latvia, before being voted out of that position in 1958 (in favor of a Latvian!).<sup>13</sup>

In my opinion, the factions were organized differently: between the hard Stalinists and the pure ideologists (these last being especially prominent in propaganda and in republican newspapers and Party journals). The persons from this group were mainly from Russia, highly educated, and generally critical of locals. They never were dominant, but they played a role in certain situations (e.g., the Ivan G. Batov case in 1948, the Nikolay Zverev case in 1953, the case of Secretary Boris Gorbany,<sup>14</sup> and others). The main part of the *nomenklatura* consisted of a mix of left-bankers and émigrés from Russia (in this case, with no higher education). This population contained at least two conflictual groups; one had built a strong relation with the centre (as it seems to be also in the Rudy affair), while the other did not participate in plots. The last were also more tolerant of National elements. This possibly ex-

12 = = Voslensky, *Nomenklatura*, 252–53.

13 = = Will Prigge, "Latvian and Moldavian Communist Parties (1959–1961): A Comparative Study," *Tyragetia* 2 (2022): 230.

14 = = Discharged from the position of "secretary of the CC" in February 1954.

plains why certain of them were dismissed between 1959 and 1961. But these are only general remarks which need to be elaborated. In any case, while Serdyuk criticized Dmitry Tkach (one of the CC secretaries) for ideological mistakes, it was also because Tkach tolerated both the “Corobanists”<sup>15</sup> and the mistakes made by the Moldavian literary journal *Nistru* (previously known as *Octombrie*). Additionally, in my opinion there was also a parallel group that was completely omitted in Moldavia: those which belonged to the KGB, which had its own interests and rivalries. This group comprised both Russians and Ukrainians, and its members were present both in urban areas and rural districts.

As an interesting aside, linked mainly with the second large group were some Communists who had been in the CC for some thirty years. These were the Russian-speaking Communists who appeared in the CC in the mid-1950s, and who stayed on during the next thirty years in several important Party and Soviet jobs in the Republic (being finally discharged in 1986-1987). Among them were Pavel V. Voronin, Gleb Dygay, Mikhail Dyeur, and others.<sup>16</sup> These were more long-lived in the CC than the future first secretary I. Bodyul; they appeared before his ascendancy and left some six to seven years later after he had been transferred to Moscow.

### **== The case of Ivan Bodyul's ascendancy**

The analysis of the Bureau's lists of members and chiefs of sections, as well as the CC's members from 1956 to 1959 does not produce a clear picture. There were no radical changes among the members of the CC of the CPM (Communist Party of Moldavia). A red flag for many mainstreamers was the promotion of I. Bodyul, who was sent to the Republic after receiving political education and holding positions in Moscow. His rise to prominence became clear in April 1959 and ended with his election as first secretary in May 1961. It was at this very moment that Serdyuk, the first secretary who hailed from outside the Republic, was transferred to Moscow. I have examined Bodyul's ascendancy in paragraphs within several of my own studies, but I have heretofore not identified precisely what was his milieu was, or who played the role of his “praetorians.” For several years after April 1959, many Communists of the late Stalinist *nomenklatura* were discharged one after another. The puzzle is that they were not removed because of their activity during the Stalinist age. It also seems it was too late for any kind of justice; indeed, such a development would have been expected between 1954 and 1958. They were removed rather because they had their own opinion in face of the newly arisen I. Bodyul, who at this point was already second secretary. Another instance of the rules not applying in the specific case of the Moldavian SSR appeared when (apart from the two cases of the foreign

<sup>15</sup> = =aNamed after Vasile Coroban, a Bessarabian literary critic.

<sup>16</sup> = = Marius Tăriță, *Moldavian SSR Fall 1986–Summer 1987: Questions. Hopes & Pains* (Wrocław: Amazon, 2021), 74-81.

first secretary, Brezhnev and Serdyuk) someone from the locals, albeit Russified, was appointed as the second secretary.<sup>17</sup>

The transcript of the Eighth plenum of the CC of the CPM on April 14–15 shows an unusual atmosphere. Serious criticisms came from the lowest to the highest members (e.g., Ivan D. Mikhailov; see the penultimate paragraph of this paper). In the end, Serdyuk managed to effect some significant changes, first of which was the transfer of D. Gladkiy (which represented, in fact, his exclusion from the first echelon). Another change was the exclusion from the CC of Trofim Bagrin, Mikhail Dyomin, and Vasily Selivestrov,<sup>18</sup> the lattermost having previously served as the secretary of the Chisinau City committee.<sup>19</sup> At the same plenum, Bodyul was appointed second secretary. The way in which this happened is relevant for how the decisions were taken, and it also shows the Communist Party of Moldavia's lack of autonomy in high-level nominations.

Using the third person, Serdyuk proposed Bodyul as a candidate and, as the archive proves, this was accepted without a murmur:

COMRADE SERDYUK. Hereby is made the proposal of electing, as second secretary of the CC, the comrade Bodyul Ivan Ivanovich, former first secretary of the Volontiry and then the Oloneshty Party district committees. He afterward studied in Moscow at the High Party School, and he now works in the (erased: orgotdel of) CC of the CPUS. He is a member of the CC of the CPM. It seems you know him?

VOICES. We know.

COMRADE SERDYUK. What thoughts do you have?

VOICES. To approve.

COMRADE SERDYUK. Are there any questions?

VOICES. No.

COMRADE SERDYUK. Is it desirable that anyone express his opinion?

17 = = Here I would like to comment on the approach of the Lithuanian historian Saulius Grybkauskas who considered the institution of the "Second Secretary" (in the National Republics of the USSR) as a "general governor." The Moldavian case does not validate this theory. And what arguments could there be for this Moldavian exception? My hypothesis is that the group of Communists in Moscow who managed the Moldavian case simply did not have confidence in Moldavians to govern themselves. This could be due to the agricultural character of the region and to the religiosity of the local communities.

18 = = It is interesting to recall that secretary D. Tkach—who was removed in January 1960—was a colleague of Selivestrov in 1946. While Tkach was editor of the Republican Party newspaper "Moldova Socialistă," Selivestrov was the secretary of the Party organization of the same newspaper. I propose at this moment the hypothesis that Selivestrov could have been an opponent for Bodyul's candidature.

19 = = DAOSP, Fund 51, inv. 19, f. 11, 447. Record and transcript of the Eighth plenum of the CC of the CPM, April 14–15, 1959.

VOICES. No.

COMRADE SERDYUK. It this case, please permit me to propose the voting. Who is for electing, as second secretary of the CC of the CPM, the comrade Bodyul, please – hands up. Please – hand down. Who is against? No. Who abstains? Decision is taken unanimously. Due to the election of comrade Bodyul as second secretary, there is a proposal of electing him also as a member of the Party Bureau. Is there any objection?

VOICES. No.<sup>20</sup>

This excerpt from the transcript shows a typical Stalinist session. The proposal was introduced unexpectedly and without any prior consultation. In reality, Bodyul was brought in to replace D. Gladkiy, who had been transferred to another institution.<sup>21</sup> There was no alternative, no question, and no discussion of his introduction. Because this simulated election was not announced on the agenda of the meeting, it is possible that the factions who might have been able to react more aggressively were too surprised to do so. But the most important element here is the role of the CC of the CPUS. The rise of Bodyul had originated there and was part of a plan that corresponded to the intention of a faction from Moscow. The question is, who were these people? Why in fact was Gladkiy removed? Did he know something about Bodyul? What was his place in the plan, and what was the purpose of the plan by which Bodyul was promoted? It is now easy to see that this was one of several steps leading to his promotion to first secretary in May 1961.

Another step was the exclusion of D. Tkach in January 1960. Here the reason for which Serdyuk attacked and dismissed Tkach is relevant. Tkach appears in Serdyuk's report published in *Sovetskaya Moldavia* on January 29, 1960; in this report, Serdyuk referred to the mistakes of writers and historians, for which Tkach was primarily responsible:

The community of writers and historians have discussed neither seriously nor critically the handbooks of the history of Moldavian literature, the articles and books dedicated to the history of the Socialist revolution in Moldavia, the literary essays of G. Menyuk like "The Breaking River", and some certain articles of V. Coroban, N. Romanenko, and some others.

This is why, at this Congress, one has to say with Bolshevik directness that the actual extent of management of ideological activity does

20 == DAOSP, Fund 51, inv. 19, f. 11, 395. Record and transcript of the Eighth plenum of the CC of the CPM, April 14–15, 1959.

21 == Dmitry Gladkiy became secretary in September 1951, when Brezhnev was in Chisinau. At that moment he replaced D. Tkach who was in the first team of Brezhnev for a year. After 1955 he was colleague with Dmitry Tkach who regained the position of secretary of CC of CPM.

not correspond to the tasks which the Republican Party organization faces. Especially in this sector one finds great deficiencies and omissions. Responsibility for this lies with the Bureau of the CC of the CPM, its Propaganda and Agitation, Science, Schools, and Culture divisions, and most of all, the secretary of the CC: comrade D. G. Tkach.<sup>22</sup>

It can be remarked that Tkach's offense was tolerating some texts perceived as Nationalist, even if it was not said directly; otherwise, it would be strange that he was the only guilty party to be named. It is also strange that he was not defended by the community of writers. About two years later, when writers and artists began to attack the secretary Evgeniy Postovoy, Bodyul and his "praetorians" would sacrifice him; i.e., Postovoy was simply discharged from office. At the very least, this attack on Tkach appears strange. Was this accusation on the secretary a formal one? Or did it reflect his protective stance toward the mistakes of writers and historians?<sup>23</sup>

Whatever the case, he was an older cadre and he certainly knew more details and secrets. As a problem for Moldavia, I would add here, that there do not exist published memoirs. But I suppose that there could be memoirs or diaries of such persons as V. Selivestrov, D. Gladkiy, D. Tkach or M. Scurtul.

As one final point regarding Tkach: the writer Menyuk, whose work *The Breaking River* was omitted on ideological grounds by Tkach, proceeded normally in his career. In September 1960, he and other Bessarabian writers received the distinction of the Byelorussian SSR Supreme Soviet.<sup>24</sup>

### **= = = The Rudy case**

The Rudy case is an interesting one, even if it is mainly a case which necessitated justice. In the rumours of the second-echelon *nomenklatura* is recalled a special relation between Rudy and Brezhnev up to Brezhnev's late years. Before Brezhnev's death,

22 = = "Doklad sekretarya CK KPM Z.T. Serdyuka na IX s'ezde 28 yanvary 1960." [Report of Z. T. Serdyuk, secretary of CC of CPM at the Ninth Congress on January 28, 1960] *Sovetskaya Moldavia*, January 29, 1960, 2.

23 = = The writer's community in Chisinau was dominated by Bessarabians and some of partners they found in left-bankers. However, some of the left-bankers were ejected; such was the case of the writer Ion Canna. He was accused of plagiarism by Bessarabians and dismissed from any position in 1954. Generally, the attacks on him had the appearance of a Stalinist purge. In 1955, Canna was admitted to the hospital from where he wrote a letter to the secretary D. Tkach. Tkach did not respond to it. The only one who tried to defend Canna was another Moldavian, Maksim Scurtul.

24 = = "Decorați cu gramota de cinste al Sovietului Suprem al RSS Beloruse," [Awarded with honorary diploma of the Supreme Soviet of the SRR of Byelorussia] *Tinerimea Moldovei*, September 28, 1960, 1.



Rudy was the director of the Agricultural Institute in Chisinau. There were some attempts in 1970s to dismiss him, but they met with no result. As Petru Luchinsky, formerly a young Moldavian secretary of the CC in the 1970s, recalled, it was suggested to him that he should leave “the old man in peace.”<sup>25</sup>

What was astonishing is that even after the death of Stalin, Rudy retained his position as chief of the Council of Ministers, which he had held since summer 1946. His career was linked with the career of Nikolay G. Koval, the first secretary from summer 1946 to June 1950. In early July, L. Brezhnev was sent to Chisinau to check on the situation in the Moldavian Party’s organization. The result of this visit was the dismissal of N.G. Koval and the “election” of Brezhnev to take his place. This was a rare case in the Soviet Union of an outsider becoming first secretary of a republic. However, in the case of Moldavia, it would not be the last.

In October 1950, at the scheduled Party plenum, the head of the Council of Ministers G. Rudy was harshly criticized. He admitted his mistakes and promised to improve, and he was thus left in office. None of the Moldavian historians after 1991 has had the courage to study and analyse the corruption during Rudy’s era. The fact that he remained in office after Stalin’s death is also strange. However, if the idea of his close relation with Brezhnev during late years is true, the roots of their possible friendship would have been in the early 1950s. So, if he was being protected by Brezhnev, it must have been clear that he was untouchable. Despite all this, in January 1958 the members of the Bureau of the CC of the Communist Party of Moldavia finally had the courage to dismiss him.<sup>26</sup> I should remark here that I have found details on his case in a folder that was catalogued in a Party archive only in the 1970s. Also, in the post-Stalinist years, the Council of Ministers remained untouchable; only in January 1958 was he dismissed. The folder on him contains serious complaints from different years. There were even enumerated cases involving contraband Moldavian agricultural products. In this case, the members of the Bureau ruled by Z. Serdyuk acted unanimously and finally discharged him. But this was the only punishment for Rudy – the loss of his office after around twelve years. A strange process began soon after his discharge; the members of the Bureau were sent to other jobs, or simply dismissed one after another. Rudy came back to the CC in the first part of 1960 and remained there up to his death. Additionally, in April 1962 he was appointed director of the Agriculture Institute in Chisinau. Beside this, the comeback in 1960 of N. G. Koval, the generational colleague of Rudy, as chief of the Planning Committee was also symptomatic.

25 == I obtained this information during an interview conducted by Will Prigge and myself with P. Luchinsky on October 13, 2022 in Chisinau.

26 == “The information about his exclusion from the Bureau of the CC of the CPM “Informatsionoye soobshcheniye,” [Announcement] *Sovetskaya Moldavia*, January 24, 1958, 1.

## **= = = The tensions between the district-level Communists and Chisinau nomenklatura**

The main challenge for the Chisinau Party nomenklatura was the courage of the Communists from the districts in critiquing them. Even if it was not done frequently, some of the district committees' delegates criticized the Bureau, Sections, and Council of Ministers. These Ministries were criticized for not facilitating the delivery of supplies necessary for the districts; indeed, sometimes the local hierarchy was forced to contact enterprises at great distance from Moldavia to obtain wood, stone, technical pieces, and so forth.

The problem, however, is that not all delegates took such a critical approach. Several enumerate their alleged successes and made promises. At the Seventh Congress of the CPM on January 28–30, 1958, the secretary of the Faleshty district gave certain examples. He mentioned cases in which the Council of Ministers promised them forty tonnes of stone. Since these were unfortunately dependent on the production of Moldavian mines, the district did not receive the stone. The ruler of the district, Vasile K. Moldovan, succeeded in obtaining wood instead from far-off Petrozavodsk (in Karelia). Another example he referred to was that the technology for the Faleshty sugar enterprise was transmitted to the Drokia sugar enterprise.<sup>27</sup> In this case, a strange fact is that four years later Moldovan would become the chief of the Organizational Section of the Council of Ministers. It is hard to say whether he obtained this position thanks to his criticisms or because of his merit, or if he improved management in relation to the districts.

Another secretary, this one from the Ungeny district, paid attention to the artificial equivalencies between districts that were encouraged by the centre. In fact, the reported results were ordered statistically in reports, but in fact the resources, prospects, and expanses of the districts were different. He also mentioned the fact that in 1957, not one of the members of the Agriculture Bureau had visited the district.<sup>28</sup>

One of the most critical discourses I have found in the archive belongs to I. D. Mikhailov, the secretary of the Komrat district. He spoke during the Eighth plenum on April 14–15, 1959, at the conclusion of which Bodyul was promoted to the second secretary of the Republic. First, it is clear that Mikhailov's discourse was ignored. Second, Mikhailov showed on a structural level the distorted ways in which the Khrushchev reforms were applied to the Moldavian case. For this reason, I will cite a larger piece from this discourse at the end of this paper. The problems

27 = = "Rech tov. Moldovana V.K., sekretarya Faleshtskogo raykoma partii," [The speech of comrade V.K. Moldovan, secretary of the Party Committee in Faleshty district] *Sovetskaya Moldavia*, February 1, 1958, 2.

28 = = "Rech tov. Smirnova L.P., sekretarya Ungenskogo raykoma partii," [The speech of comrade L. P. Smirnov, secretary of the Party Committee in Ungeny] *Sovetskaya Moldavia*, January 30, 1958, 3.

which appeared as a result of parallel administrative reforms were ignored by the Bureau of the CC of the CPM. Additionally, another vital conclusion is that one could not criticize the upper hierarchy – and that even if one would do so, they would soon regret it.

I would like to make some remarks on the address of the CC and the Council of Ministers regarding the problem of work with the cadres. We, the locals, do not understand where the cadres, which were discharged in result of merging of the twenty districts and republican departments, disappeared. Anyone knows, and comrade Serdyuk has reported at this plenum, that in the republic twenty *districts* were merged, and half of the central apparatus of the departments was reduced. Despite this, district three functionaries from the reduced one came to our district. There is no functionary from republican departments that reduced their apparatus. At this moment in our district, there is an acute lack of specialists and functionaries for chief positions. [...] From Komrat district, twenty persons left to study at the Republican Party High School. Only three of them came back to the district. I think that one must finish with this!

Concerns criticism, I think my colleagues will support me. It seems that one receives a lot of criticism from above, but from below (erased: to those who are on us) there is little (laugh, liveliness). It is clear that this also depends on us. But I would say how it depends on us. You criticize the chief of a CC department or the deputy president of the Council of Ministers, and after that they look at you with askance. They do not travel to your district. They do not support the district. Who among the chiefs of departments or their deputies has been in Komrat district? With the exception of Cranga<sup>29</sup> (but I have worked there for the last four and a half years), no one. Comrade Dudko has only passed through the Komrat district.<sup>30</sup>

In fact, such approaches as this would completely disappear in the 1960s, when there would be only the official mainstream approaches of the Brezhnev generation. Even when these criticisms existed (and they were not public, being voiced at closed Party plenums), the chiefs from the Bureau and Departments ignored them. On one hand, it was the sign of some form of limited, internal Party democracy, but on the other hand it did not produce any result. The subject remains open, and the

29 == Pyotr F. Cranga, who between November 1952–April 1959 was the chief of the Administrative and Finance Department of the CC of the CPM.

30 == DAOSP, Fund 51, inv. 19, f. 11, Transcript of the Eighth plenum of CC of CPM, April 14–15, 1959.

present paper has only an introductory character.<sup>31</sup> What follows is two examples from a thousand on how the texts of the transcripts were edited.

### **= = = Comments on Party transcripts and what was erased from them**

While approaching Soviet Party documents, several Western scholars use the final or so-called “corrected” transcript, in addition to published sources. What is overlooked is that there are also two or three complementary versions (of Party plenum discussions) that contain the live version: the initial, typed document, and frequently also the questions, which were omitted. These are the transcripts (in Russian, the so-called *nepravlennaya*) as they existed before being proofread, or reports before they were submitted in a final version. Frequently, there are considerable differences between these versions. Even if these documents had only an internal Party circulation, some of the harsh remarks, criticisms, and conclusions unpleasant for the Party establishment were simply erased from the first version. Because of this fact, some information was never accessible even for loyal Communists of the second echelon in Chisinau, let alone for those from the provinces. This also raises a subsequent question: how truly accurate are all the Party documents from the Soviet Union that were published after 1991?

The first example I would refer to is the final page of the report on the implementation, by republican Ministries and Departments, of the resolution of the Eighth plenum of the CC of the CPM (August 1959) regarding management of the cadres. For little-known reasons, the following paragraph was eliminated from the official version, although it does not seem to contain any special information. Indeed, it only remarks a phenomenon that existed well up to the 1980s: that the Ministries did not consult anyone while promoting their cadres in the provinces. At the recent plenums and meetings of the districts’ and towns’ committees activists, several ministries and departments of the republic were criticized for deficiencies in managing the cadres. Attention was paid to the weak relation with the local Party’s and Soviet’s organs in solving the questions of nomination and the transfer of the cadres. Facts about a formal-bureaucratic approach were remarked in this question.

Generally, and as I remarked above, the problem of formalism-bureaucratism was present in the Party’s press since January 1956. But if in that case it involved the attitude towards citizens’ letters and the complaints from the Soviet cadres, here it involves the same approach, but in the central ministerial and departmental branches appointing the cadres in the provinces. The erasure of this information shows

<sup>31</sup> = = In a previous study, Tăriță, “The Purges of the Members of the Central Committee of Communist Party of Moldavia in 1958-1963,” *Tyragetia 2* (2022): 221–27. I made an analysis of the changes in the CC between 1958 and 1963, but the image of what the real factions were, who promoted and supported Bodyul, and why former Stalinists were brought back in early 1960s, remained unclear for me.

that those who ruled the Moldavian Communist Party believed that second-echelon Communists were not to know about it.

The second example refers to the elimination of a reference to incompetence in supply management from the first version of a report (August 1959). It is an example of Party inefficiency; for example, it refers to the fact that while twenty-two people were accepted for the job, only nine of them had proven their education, while for the remaining thirteen the only remark was about unsupported information from the completed questionnaire. Also omitted from this text was a conclusion on the state of the facts (some parts were circled in blue, and others were erased):

This is how easily and simply the question of fulfilling the apparatus by the chiefs of this Direction is approached. It is evident that people who do not have special education and experience are not able to understand the nomenklatura of the supplies and technology and are not able to solve correctly the issues involved in supplying the enterprises.<sup>32</sup>

Usually such a report after a Party plenum had to be published in brochures for internal use. The printed versions were sent to all Party committees for consideration as they solved the final issues. The instance given above was not a formal one, and it seems that it reflected a widespread phenomenon. The question is: did this not confirm once again to the district-level Communists something they knew, they saw, and they were discontented with?

### **=== Conclusions**

In this paper, I have only made an introduction to the issue of the nomenklatura's evolution in the case of the Moldavian SSR beginning in 1956. It must be mentioned that no public dismissals of Stalin post-war era functionaries occurred. On the contrary, one of them, the President of the Council of Ministries, even remained in his position until 1958. Also, the context of the ascendancy of I. Bodyul. In April 1959, he simply appeared at the plenum and was "elected" as second secretary of the CC of the CPM with no discussion. What was this: a promotion managed by the Party from Moscow (the Administrative Section of the CC, or perhaps the Bureau itself), or maybe a stratagem by a faction that simply knew that there would be no opposition? If the second of these is true, this may explain why during the next period, several persons from the Bureau of the CC of the CPM were discharged. The main case for a future study may be that of D. Tkach, who was incongruously accused of missteps on the ideological-cultural front. On the other hand, despite

<sup>32</sup> == DAOSP, Fund 51, inv.19, f. 146, 77. On execution by Ministers and Departments of the republic of the resolution of the VIIIth plenum of CC of CP of Moldova. Draft version, August 1959.

this ideological direction, the Party “masses” (the Communists) from the district level were in some kind of opposition to Chisinau. This was driven by a lack of supplies, neglect of local issues, ignoring their voice, and simply uncontrolled cadre politics (in the case of the representatives of the Ministries). Unfortunately, this opposition did not develop into something strong. And last, there is the issue of approaching the Party transcripts of that age. It shows the tendency of those who were at the head of the CC of the CPM to erase paragraphs from plenum transcripts, even including the final reports which usually were sent also to districts in printed form. A future analysis should examine why criticisms, despite the supposed context of the “thaw,” were so “painfully” perceived by the Party’s elite, and why real problems were erased from the Party’s agenda.

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October 13, 2021.



Roșietici, Soviet Union (now: Moldova), 1958.

Fortepan / Zaharia Cusnir

**Keywords**

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*Soviet Union, Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, Nomenklatura,  
Stalinism*



==== Gabriella Murvai-Bóke =====

## **/// From mass songs to The miracle of God:**

### **Changes in the repertoire of the Hungarian People's Army Male Choir in light of the 1950s political changes**

#### **=== Introduction**

After the Second World War, the Central and Eastern European region became part of the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union, which purposely sought to distinguish itself from Western culture. Moscow's control was thus not only political, military and economic, but also cultural.<sup>1</sup> Although the Soviet Union did not systematically seek to propagate a socialist worldview in the satellite countries, the centralising elements of the system were applied flexibly by local leaders, who wanted to follow this pattern as closely as possible in all areas as a sign of their loyalty.<sup>2</sup> The cultural policy leadership therefore gave priority to education and the arts in order to rapidly re-ideologise society. From 1948 onwards, they gradually restructured and centralised the artistic institutions thus promoting the autocracy of socialist realism and seeking to destroy cultural diversity.<sup>3</sup> Soviet musical decrees restricted the freedom of creators, and the folkloristic, national classicist style of Kodály and his pupils, which was in line with political expectations, was elevated to the official level.<sup>4</sup> Although the arts were democratised and concert halls were opened up to all levels of society thanks to low ticket prices, the state-sponsored schematic mass culture led to a decline in quality.<sup>5</sup> In education, as in other areas, the increase in the number

1 == Melinda Kalmár, *Történelmi galaxisok vonzásában. Magyarország és a szovjet-rendszer 1945–1990* (Budapest: Osiris, 2014), 42.

2 == Kalmár, *Történelmi galaxisok vonzásában*, 44.

3 == Kalmár, *Történelmi galaxisok vonzásában*, 57.

4 == Anna Dalos, "Nem Kodály-iskola, de magyar": Gondolatok a Kodály-iskola eszméjének kialakulásáról," in *Kodály és a történelem. Tizenkét tanulmány* (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 2015), 122.

5 == Ignác Romsics, *A 20. század rövid története* (Budapest: Rubicon-Ház Bt., 2007), 330.

of students was not accompanied by an increase in quality, partly due to secularization and to significant restructuring of the curriculum.<sup>6</sup> The Sovietisation of the arts took place on several levels. The translation and distribution of Soviet publications, the work of visiting Soviet consultants, and guest appearances of Soviet artists also contributed to the transformation. From the 1940s onwards, the Soviet Union used its guest performance folk ensembles throughout Europe as a mean of representing its own power and asserting its *soft power* in international relations.<sup>7</sup> These guest performances led to the formation in the region of amateur and then professional ensembles, which enjoyed the full cultural and political support of the Sovietising satellite countries. Based on his archival research, Czech historian Václav Šmidrkal believes that the professional ensembles in the Eastern Bloc were mere imitations of Soviet groups, and that the ensembles that enjoyed their golden age during the Stalin era went into decline after Stalin's death, as they lacked a real artistic identity.<sup>8</sup> The importance of these guest performances abroad, which had replaced diplomatic contacts that had been reduced after the war, declined from 1955, after the signing of the Warsaw Pact.<sup>9</sup> The process of de-Stalinisation also led to changes in the way politics was conducted both in social policy and in cultural life, and this entailed the dismantling or rationalisation of propaganda organisations.

This pattern can also be observed in the case of the Hungarian People's Army Performing Arts Ensemble that operated under the aegis of the Hungarian People's Army beginning in 1949. The ensemble aimed to disseminate socialist-realist music and thus reflected both the cultural policy of the Hungarian Workers' Party (MDP) and the expectations placed on musicians under state socialism. This was particularly true of the male choir, whose members were also involved in teaching the soldiers political mass songs. In my paper, I wish to explore the changes in the repertoire and programme policy of the male choir in order to gain a more accurate picture of how political expectations of musicians changed and how Hungarian music life began to transform in the early years of the post-Stalinist period. I examine the changing status of the male choir on the basis of contemporary press materials, the legacy of the conductor Lajos Vass, and the archival materials of the ensemble.

6 = Tibor Tallián, *Magyarországi hangversenyélet 1945–1958* (Budapest: MTA ZTI, 1991), 5.

7 = Tallián, *Magyarországi hangversenyélet*, 32.

8 = Václav Šmidrkal, "Song and Dance Ensembles in Central European Militaries," in *Theatre, Globalization and the Cold War*, edited by Christopher B. Balme and Berenika Szymanski-Düll (Munich: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 96.

9 = Šmidrkal, "Song and Dance Ensembles in Central European Militaries," 96.

### = = = 1953: The beginning of change

On September 28, 1953, on the occasion of the Hungarian People's Army Day and on behalf of Presidential Council of the People's Republic of Hungary, István Dobi awarded the Hungarian People's Army Art Ensemble with the Order of the Red Star in Parliament. At the same time, the Minister of Defence, Mihály Farkas, promoted the leaders of the ensemble to a higher military rank.<sup>10</sup> The Order of the Red Star, which was based on the Soviet model, can be seen as a ritual element of state socialist propaganda that was intended to reinforce the primacy of the ensemble's work in spreading socialist ideology as it increasingly expanded its classical music repertoire. The ensemble, which had been founded five years earlier in 1948, had from the outset served to build a common cultural identity in line with the ideology of the regime. Within the People's Army, the cultural policy of the leadership saw the ensemble as a "gentle weapon," and according to its founding document, defined its mission as both the universal education of the armed forces and the setting of an example for amateur ensembles.<sup>11</sup>

The emphasis on the importance of the army in cultural education may at first glance seem unusual, but the newly reorganised army provided a convenient platform for the rapid ideological education of society. In Hungary, the new constitution of 1949 provided for three years of compulsory military service in the Hungarian People's Army (its official name only from 1951 to 1990). The Army numbered over 200,000 in the 1950s, so it is no wonder that the political leadership gave priority to its cultural work.<sup>12</sup> In particular, the male choir, created a few months after the dance group and comprising talented but largely musically untrained soldiers and civilians, was expected to take a leading role in spreading mass songs among the military and the working classes. Although Zoltán Vásárhelyi, a leader of the male choir and a teacher at the Liszt Academy of Music, sought from the outset to build a systematic musical education system to eliminate musical illiteracy "in the service of Zoltán Kodály's genius for educating the people," he was

10 = = Gábor Mészöly, *Honvéd Együttes – 70 év művészet és történelem* (Budapest: Zrínyi, 2019), 12.

11 = = The first historiography of the Hungarian People's Army Performing Arts Ensemble between 1949 and 1952 was published in 1953 under the title "V.1948–IX.1952." It was published for internal use by the working group of the ensemble – Károly Aszalós, László Bodó, László Boldog, Elemér Gidófalvy, Károly Illés, János Klein, László Kozma, József Maklári, Lajos Mészáros, Pál Monostori, László Sásdi, Iván Szabó, József Szomolányi, Vilmos Tauber, Lajos Vass, and Károly Veres. The 200-page, typewritten documentary volume, produced in duplicate, tells the story of the first four years of the ensemble, with information on the repertoire, annual statistics for the Ministry of Defence, and a summary of foreign reviews of guest performances, sometimes with accurate translations. HEL, "1948 V.–1952 IX.," 9.

12 = = Szabolcs Bodó, "A hadkötelezettség történeti áttekintése Magyarországon," *Hadtudományi Szemle* 15, no. 1 (2022): 15.

a staunch communist and directed the ensemble in accordance with cultural policy guidelines.<sup>13</sup> In the early years, the choir's programmes were thus characterised by a peculiar dichotomy, comprising both imported Soviet mass songs, choral works and cantatas, and works by Bartók, Kodály, and his students in line with Zhdanov's guidelines.<sup>14</sup> In addition to prescribed performances and "estrada" productions in the barracks, the choir gave solo concerts and as early as 1951 presented new contemporary Hungarian pieces at the First Hungarian Music Week. However, all of these were written within the strict limits of a folk-national style with socialist content composed to avoid accusations of formalism and naturalism.<sup>15</sup>

After 1953, the process of de-Stalinisation also began in cultural life, which brought with it a change in the image of the ensemble that gave greater scope to the ideas of artistic leaders. In the immediate aftermath of Stalin's death, both commemorations and awards ceremonies provided an opportunity for public expression in the political and artistic spheres, thus emphasising the 'legacy' of Stalinism. Regarding the music profession, and in accordance with the decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on February 10, 1948 (which was subsequently extended to the member states), the Muscovite composer Ferenc Szabó proclaimed a "meaningful" socialist realist art that would be in integral contact with the people and based on the classical tradition, folk music, vocal genres, and the nationalist tradition of the nineteenth century. As he wrote, "Comrade Stalin taught us that art is a sharp and sensitive weapon, that there is no middle way, no neutrality in art, because it either supports and strengthens the struggles and struggles of our people, or treacherously and insidiously attacks them from behind."<sup>16</sup>

Despite these declarations and the creation of the musical Copyright Office in 1953, which provided a good living and playing opportunities for a wide range of composers under the socialist regime, the year 1953 can nevertheless be considered a turning point in musical life. As Tibor Tallián's research confirms, from 1953 onwards many composers returned to a neo-classical, divertimento style of composition, rather than programmatic genres.<sup>17</sup> Despite the years of restraint, the requirements of the Zhdanov Doctrine, and the need to meet the aesthetic demands of politics, the works submitted for discussion and the contributions to the Second Hungarian Music Week showed an easing of censorship.

13 == HEL, 42.

14 == The list of the first years' repertoire in HEL.

15 == Tibor Tallián, *Magyar képek. Fejezetek a magyar zeneélet és zeneszerzés történetéből 1940–1956* (Budapest: Balassi, 2014), 290.

16 == Ferenc Szabó, "J. V. Stalin," *Új Zenei Szemle* 4, no. 4 (1953): 1.

17 == Tallián, *Magyar képek*, 378.

The importance of the so-called “folkloristic national classicist” style started to break down in 1955 among contemporary composers, against whom the cultural policy, by the 1960s, no longer wished to take administrative action. However, the period from 1953 to 1956 already saw a transition in the fact that propaganda ensembles could include in their repertoires music proposed by artistic leaders and written outside the Soviet political system.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the restructuring of the army played a major role in transforming the programme policy of the male choir. Although after Stalin’s death Soviet military advisers replaced those dismissed in 1953 and their number doubled in the next three years, the permanent staff of the Hungarian Army was reduced by 25 percent.<sup>19</sup> By this time, it had become clear that the overstretched five-year plan was not in line with the country’s economic capacity, and efforts to economise were also reflected in the cultural elements of the army.<sup>20</sup> This is indicated by a letter by the leading conductor, Lajos Vass, who in 1954 reported to his military superior about the impossible working conditions and called for finalising the staff’s pay raises that had been dragging on for a year, “since starving people can neither do serious artistic work nor even inspire others for a long time.”<sup>21</sup>

Partly due to these circumstances, the ensemble’s public appearances increased. From 1953 onwards, music magazines reported on the ensemble’s “high-quality, artistic” performances and noted that the majority of its performances so far had been in Hungarian rural towns and villages.<sup>22</sup> In 1955, András Rajki, in an article published in *Népszava*, bluntly stated that the ensemble had quietly, almost to the exclusion of the public, arrived at the ceremonial one-thousandth performance in Inota three years ago. In the meantime, with their concerts in military camps and barracks, they had done much to develop our musical culture with their rural and factory shows. The choir’s leaders and members regularly teach the soldiers, who are now singing noticeably better, to sing.<sup>23</sup>

18 = = Lóránt Péteri, “Az utolsó évtized: Kodály Zoltán és a Kádár rendszer művelődéspolitikája,” *Múltunk* 1 (2006): 263.

19 = = Magdolna Baráth, *A szovjet tényező. Szovjet tanácsadók Magyarországon* (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 2017), 130.

20 = = Horváth, “Honvédelem és hadügyek,” 413.

21 = = Members’ salaries were well below the average salary in Hungary, which in 1956 was HUF 18,900 per year.

22 = = Edit Lékai, “A Magyar Néphadsereg Központi Művészegyüttesének 1000. előadása,” *Új Zenei Szemle* 4, no. 7–8 (1953): 61.

23 = = András Rajki, “‘Itt az idő, most vagy soha!,” *Népszava* 84, no. 211 (1956): 1. The Inota event was in fact only the 978<sup>th</sup> concert. The figure in the press was the result of a misunderstanding; in order to celebrate this round number of performances, the Ensemble had put together a new show, which they called among themselves the thousandth show.

From the press material about the male group between 1953 and 1956, we can conclude that the “Estrada” appearances of the large ensemble diminished and the increasingly professional male choir’s concerts became accessible to the general public, not least the professional public, at representative venues in Budapest. This shift is also confirmed by the ensemble’s internal statistics.<sup>24</sup> In the first two years, they performed in military barracks, as stated in their charter, with few public concerts, until in 1951 they became a representative Hungarian group, performing to a mixture of military and civilian audiences. Although it is not possible, in the absence of adequate, reliable statistics, to give an account of the civilian audiences’ composition, Philharmonic booklets and concert posters after 1953 indicate that the number of performances at representative halls increased, especially from 1955 on. Even more strikingly, while the programmes of their first guest appearance in the Soviet Union were reviewed by a three-member “expert” committee – the Minister of Defence, Mihály Farkas, the head of the Propaganda and Press Department of the Political Committee, József Révai, and the head of the Political Group of the Hungarian People’s Army, Sándor Nógrádi – by the mid-1950s the conductor was actively involved in selecting the programmes.

**Statistics of the performances of the Hungarian People's Army Art Ensemble (1949–1955)**

Year	Number of performances	Audience (military /civil)	Total	Number of foreign appearances	Tour abroad	Foreign audience (military / civilian)
1949	67	120,000 / 40,000	160,000	–	–	–
1950	175	130,000 / 50,000	180,000	–	–	–
1951	301	100,000 / 180,000	280,000	15	SOVIET UNION (04.03–04.21. male choir and orchestra)	25,000 / 10,000
1952	250	140,000 / 80,000	220,000	16	POLAND (01.02–01.18. full ensemble)	10,000 / 5,000
1953	319	140,000 / 120,000	260,000	–	–	–
1954	304	210,000 / 140,000	350,000	–	–	–

24 = = HEL provides statistics for the first three years.

Year	Number of performances	Audience (military /civil)	Total	Number of foreign appearances	Tour abroad	Foreign audience (military / civilian)
1955	340	175,000 / 115,000	276,000	17	GDR (04.02–04.18. dance group)	5,000 / 5,000
1956	202		265,000	113	BULGARIA (04.01–04.16. dance groupe)  CHINA  (09.07–12.15. full ensemble)	100,000 / 200,000

### == The gradual transformation of broadcasting policy

The interest of the profession and the public was mainly related to the change in the male choir’s programming policy. Between 1953 and 1956, their prescribed performances on state holidays still mostly reflected Stalinist music policy. At the festive concert for the Hungarian People’s Army Day on September 27, 1953, and again about a month later on November 6 at the thirty-sixth anniversary celebrations of the Russian October Socialist Revolution, marches and mass songs about the party and its leaders were performed. However, only one choral work by Kodály and one by Liszt were included in the programmes of Hungarian works not written under the regime. Although the military leadership called for the inclusion of new mass songs in the repertoire – a move that was widely supported and in line with cultural policy guidelines – after the replacement of Zoltán Vásárhelyi as conductor in 1952, it opted to promote the writing of suitable choral works by launching a competition. According to the ensemble’s documentary collection, because of the unsuitability of the entries the Ministry of Defence eventually allowed the conductor to select from the abundant older and newer folk song arrangements and “progressive literature” to augment the repertoire.<sup>25</sup> This process had already begun in 1952 and was already having an impact in 1953. It was not until 1955–1956, and once the Soviet leadership made official (at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956) the thesis that every country had the right to chart its own path to socialism, that the ensemble’s status in Budapest’s musical life changed radically with the proliferation of public concerts.

<sup>25</sup> == HEL, 177.

The programmes of the representative concert venues now included an equal proportion of classical male choral literature and the predominantly political works of the first repertoire, thus departing considerably from their military performances. The expansion of the repertoire, which began under Miklós Forrai, professor at the Academy of Music, fundamentally defined the period between 1953 and 1956. Popular opera choruses and Franz Liszt's pieces for male voices were performed in the spirit of nineteenth-century revolutionary romanticism, but the *Verbunkos Suite* composed by Tibor Polgár, which reinforced national traditions, was also included in the repertoire. Rich polyphonic Renaissance pieces, mainly works by the church-affiliated composers Palestrina and Lassus that were popularised by Forrai with his own chamber choir beginning in 1948, were not performed until 1954. Why was it necessary for the ensemble, which had originally been established to educate soldiers, now to perform classical works in public for civilian audiences? And how did the Ministry of Defence, which had been responsible for the project, approach the issue? The personality and ambition of its young conductor, a follower of Forrai, played a key role in opening the choir to a new repertoire and new audiences. Lajos Vass, a 26-year-old composer-conductor, returned home from the World Festival of Youth in Bucharest in July 1953 – after barely a year in office – to learn that he had been appointed to replace the recently resigned Forrai as leader of the Male Choir of the People's Army Art Ensemble.<sup>26</sup>

Although according to 1955 data, there were 291 conductors and choral conductors in the country with a classical music licence, it is not surprising that the composer-conductor, who had been working as a music teacher and singer in the ensemble since 1949, took over artistic direction of the country's only professional male choir.<sup>27</sup> Vass had a musical background and four years' experience as a conductor and composer; he had also been active in the meetings of the Musicians' Association and had been unanimously elected to chair the debate on the issue of youth orchestras, mass singing, and marching bands.<sup>28</sup> His peasant origins, his young age, and the fact that his mass songs and folksong arrangements were recognised in professional plenums all made him a suitable candidate in the eyes of the political leaders of the association. From the very beginning, however, as artistic director he emphasised the importance of the choir's solo performances and the educational influence of classical music on the people. His letter to Major-General István Otta in 1955 could even be considered his *ars poetica* as a conductor:

26 = = Katalin Flitter. "A karnagy (Pályakép 1953–1992)," in *Vass Lajos emlékezete. Tanulmányok és dokumentumok*, ed. Melinda Berlász (Budapest: Püski, 1998), 26.

27 = = Tallián, *Hangversenyélet*, 94.

28 = = Tallián, *Magyar képek*, 302.



[...] we are also lovers of the art of the choir and we feel that the best of our knowledge and our educational skills can only be truly expressed [not in our estrada programmes, but] separately. [...] I suggest that the General Staff should write in capital letters among our tasks: one of the most important tasks of the Art Ensemble's choir is to promote choral literature within the army, and especially the Hungarian choral literature – especially the choral music of Kodály, Bartók and Liszt – which is outstanding worldwide. [...] I am convinced that in this way we will be able to provide more effective help both to the work of the choirs in the army and to the improvement of marching singing.<sup>29</sup>

Vass's desire to renew the repertoire reflected the ambitions of his master, Vásárhelyi. Although the young conductor, as a member of the second generation of the choral movement, could no longer learn directly from Kodály, he was indirectly linked to him by a thousand ties. Many of these ties were represented by his teachers at the Liszt Academy of Music, who, as active participants in the choral movement from the 1930s onwards, represented Kodály's concept of music education and "worked to fulfil Kodály's teachings through their compositions, music criticism and writings on music history, music education, the organisation of the choral movement and the running of a music publishing house."<sup>30</sup> However, the efforts of the military male choir to renew the repertoire were often rejected by the military leadership. In an undated letter, probably from 1954, Pál Ilku expressed the military leadership's strong opposition to Vass's requests: "[t]his booklet will – most certainly – be of great help in preparing for the Soviet Army Day and at the same time – hopefully – will also eliminate the incorrect view that there is supposedly no Soviet military song to learn."<sup>31</sup> Ilku's assertion is nuanced by the fact that the 1954 publication of sheet music for the choirs of the Hungarian People's Army contained only a few Soviet songs. The collection was already dominated by Hungarian pieces and the number of classical opera choruses had increased.<sup>32</sup> Ilku's letter nevertheless gives a vivid picture of the subordination of the artistic and military leaders of the ensemble during the 1950s.

Yet reviews of Lajos Vass's first concerts at the Liszt Academy in 1954, after six months as director, testify to his classical repertoire-building activities. Iván Vitányi and Tibor Gyarmati of the Institute of Popular Culture, in addition to highlighting in their reviews the clear intonation of the male choir and the rich dynamic skill

29 == OSzK SZT VL. Letter of Lajos Vass to Major General István Otta, May 10, 1955.

30 == Lóránt Péteri, "Zene, oktatás, tudomány, politika (Kodály és az államszocializmus művelődéspolitikája [1948–1967])." *Forrás* 39, no. 12 (2007): 45.

31 == OSzK SZT VL. Letter from Pál Ilku to Lajos Vass, undated.

32 == *Kórusművek a Magyar Néphadseregben működő énekkarok számára* (Budapest: Magyar Néphadsereg Politikai Főcsoportfőnökség, 1954).

of its elite members, also drew attention to the positive changes in the programme composition.<sup>33</sup> Although the composers included in the programme – Borodin, Mussorgsky, Mendelssohn, Schubert, Weber, and Liszt – cannot be considered unusual, as they were the most frequently performed composers in Budapest concert programmes, their works did require more technical preparation and thus testify to the rising quality of the male choir. The cultural policy expectations placed on the ensemble were, however, also clearly expressed here; Vitányi felt that the repertoire lacked new Hungarian works and military songs, which had been heavily promoted by the state.<sup>34</sup>

Presumably inspired by this criticism, the November concert held a few months later was based specifically on Hungarian choral works, and the professional reaction only criticised the artistic directors for the difference between performances for soldiers and those for the public, saying that “the programmes of everyday concerts should also give a taste of what and how the ensemble gives to the soldiers.”<sup>35</sup> It is already clear from the programmes of these concerts that the chief conductor’s aim was to perform pieces of higher artistic value that went beyond ideological education – a goal that provoked controversy both in the armed forces and in the press. It was no coincidence that a critic of the newspaper *Szabad Hazánkért* (“For our Free Country”) felt the need to defend the male choir in writing, as its abilities “not only allow but also require it to perform before a large audience.” As the journalist wrote:

the question is not whether our choir should sing popular works or more demanding but less known works, but whether an ensemble of internationally first-class quality can give up the opportunity to represent and promote our army before the masses of workers and even in the most prestigious forum of the musical arts, the concert podium of the Liszt Academy? The answer is clear: everything that represents the spirit and content of our popular and revolutionary army – which is true culture! Our enemies could only blush at the sight of the soldiers of popular democracy singing Beethoven, Brahms, Verdi and Kodály. We will applaud them all the more enthusiastically.<sup>36</sup>

33 = = Vitányi, “A Magyar Néphadsereg Művészegyüttese Énekkarának a cappella estje,” 22.

34 = = Iván Vitányi and Tibor Gyarmati, “A Magyar Néphadsereg Művészegyüttese Énekkarának a cappella estje,” *Új Zenei Szemle* 5, no. 5 (May 1954): 22.

35 = = Vitányi, Gyarmati, “A Magyar Néphadsereg Művészegyüttese Énekkarának a cappella estje,” 22.

36 = = “Népszerű énekkarunk,” 31.

In fact, this idea fitted well with the Stalinist idea of fighting the West on the cultural front – against the enemy’s decadent artistic currents – and it also reflected the practice of concert life between 1948 and 1954. Namely, while acceptable classical works were forcefully marketed, political discrimination almost completely excluded the classics of modern music, objectionable works, and contemporary modern, Western composers from the flow of information.<sup>37</sup>

In November 1954, however, the programme of the choir’s Hungarian Evening was an indisputable sign that censorship was easing. The first half of the concert was largely based on pieces from the 1949–1952 repertoire, and even the newly learned choral works in the second half of the concert were mostly military in theme and national-romantic in tone, which seemed to reflect earlier cultural policy expectations. The work of Lajos Bárdos, who was reprimanded in 1952 at a youth plenum moderated by Vass for his folk song arrangements, which he described as self-serving and technical, can be included here. Although music ideologists had already praised Bárdos’s work immediately after Stalin’s death in 1953 in the pages of the *Új Zenei Szemle* (“New Music Review”), and although the Soldier’s Drinking Song, performed by the male choir in 1954, revived the traditions of the national style of the nineteenth century, the appearance of the church musician-conductor Bárdos’s piece on the concert suggests a freer programme structure.<sup>38</sup> This easing of censorship is further substantiated by Vass’s statements, in which he spoke of his ensemble as a dedicated performer of the choral music of Kodály, Bartók, Liszt and Bárdos. Likewise, the works of Béla Bartók were not clearly among those supported. The modernist pieces by this composer – who died in America as an emigrant in 1945 – only became accepted in venues after the 1955 commemorations of the ten-year anniversary of Bartók’s death.<sup>39</sup> Although choral works were among accepted in Bartók’s two-part oeuvre, and his more complex vocal works were for a long time technically difficult for the choir, it was nevertheless a step forward that the *Four Old Hungarian Folk Songs* were learned and presented at this time instead of the single-sex choruses sung earlier.

The most obvious change, however, came in regard to Kodály’s pieces. Kodály remained an inescapable figure in musical life even under state socialism, even though he was considered a “bourgeois” at all levels. His widespread recognition and prestige did not allow him to be openly marginalised, and from 1951 on, the cultural policy leadership regarded him as a fellow traveller. As Lóránt Péteri’s research shows, after 1953 Kodály became an increasingly important symbolic figure, and one who was generally accepted among the vocal left-wing intelligentsia that openly

37 == Tallián, *Hangversenyélet*, 42.

38 == Tallián, *Magyar Képek*, 306.

39 == Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music Divided: Bartók’s Legacy in Cold War Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 149.

advocated a break with Stalinist political practices. However, the performance of certain of his works still met with opposition within the army.<sup>40</sup> In response to a long letter written by Lajos Vass to Major General Pál Ilku on the topic of programme policy, Ilku emphatically stated the following: “This would mean a complete abandonment of our principles, the introduction of a principle which we will of course never help, on the contrary, we will always prevent. I call for more principled firmness – alongside the development of artistic standards in leadership.”<sup>41</sup> Despite this unambiguous response, Kodály’s choral work *The Miracle of God* was performed at the Hungarian Evening a year later, and just two weeks after that it was sung again, accompanied by thirteen other Kodály choral works, in the concert hall of the Liszt Academy in honour of the master’s birthday. Kodály’s choral work on Petőfi’s political poem was composed in 1944, and its political parallels with the poem are obvious. Although Kodály omitted the third stanza on foreign occupation, this work – like *Nemzeti dal*, composed in 1955 – could have been interpreted as a forerunner of the revolution against the old regime and against oppression. Ilku’s objections were presumably only related to the title and to the increasingly emphatic statement in the chorus: “It is a miracle of God that our nation is still standing.” In addition to the content of the text, this recurring line is the key to the piece in terms of harmony. The uncertain tonality, given by the frequent chromatic passages and third-relations, serves as a kind of bridge between the individual stanzas. The tonal plan of the chorus and stanzas is quite unusual, partly due to the word painting used to express the music. Its constant increase in tempo and dynamics, almost madrigalistic setting, and unusual harmonic movements make this one of the most complex choral works of its kind. In this context, the fact that this work could be performed at the end of 1954 is a sign of a change in the practice of the Stalinist cultural policy, even if its performance is seen as a gesture by cultural politicians towards Kodály.

After 1953, Kodály’s importance in the eyes of the intelligentsia increased as a result of this change. Because his conception of the nation and his people distinguished him from nationalist conservatives, while his humanism clearly distinguished him from the frequently xenophobic thinking of the representatives of the popular movement, the intelligentsia could easily identify with him.<sup>42</sup> In his report on the Kodály evening, the composer Pál Járdányi had already strongly criticised the male choir’s previous performances, stressing that the ensemble had rarely been given tasks worthy of its abilities and expressing the hope that the group, which was of unparalleled ability, would henceforth only hone its skills with the noblest works.

40 == Péteri, “Az utolsó évtized: Kodály Zoltán,” 263.

41 == OSzK SZT VL. Letter of reply from Major General Pál Ilku to Lajos Vass, December 1953.

42 == Péteri, “Az utolsó évtized: Kodály Zoltán,” 263.

“The male choir should be used to showcase the unique gems of Hungarian male choir literature throughout the country and the world: the Kodály choirs.”<sup>43</sup> *Járdányi* clearly attributed the performance of Kodály works to Vass, who had made a great leap forward in his conducting career as a young but already renowned composer. In the previous concert, his otherwise convincing conducting had been marred by a teacher’s lack of maturity, a tendency to moderate his temper, while on this occasion he had “almost completely thrown off the brakes.”<sup>44</sup> In 1956, the famous critic of the *Népszava*, Sándor Jemnitz, praised the male choir’s perfect singing as a testimony to the highest vocal culture.<sup>45</sup>

In 1955, Pál Gergely, the leader of the Ensemble’s orchestra, attempted to Sovietise the male choir, which was playing an increasingly active role in Hungarian concert life. Gergely encouraged composers to write new marching songs and Soviet-style military songs:

In recent years, it has been proven on several occasions that our composers are also inspired and attracted by the possibilities of this great performing apparatus. But they have been deceived on more than one occasion [...]: a whole series of works have been written for the Ensemble – and not for the army! The means often became an end, even an end in itself! [...] They will only be able to fulfil their true vocation if they can find a close connection with the soldiers of the People’s Army, with their everyday life. It is only by knowing – and loving – this that army artists can become soldier-artists.<sup>46</sup>

His appeal also demonstrates that in 1955, contemporary composers were no longer compelled to compose vocal works in accordance with cultural policy guidelines. Rather, they were composing new works for them because of the quality of the male choir.

This change in programme policy also meant a decline in the political importance of the ensemble, especially the male choir, which meant fewer trips abroad and a reduction in their income. In 1954, Vass wrote in a letter to his Comrade Lieutenant General (without mentioning the military commander’s name): “[...] the news that the State Folk Ensemble was again going on a foreign tour lasting several months had a depressing effect on our ensemble. Not because they are going, but because we are not going anywhere. We know that the Bulgarian army ensemble

43 = = Pál Járdányi, “Két Kodály-kórus hangverseny,” *Új Zenei Szemle* 6, no. 1 (1955): 16.

44 = = Járdányi, “Két Kodály-kórus hangverseny,” 16.

45 = = Sándor Jemnitz, “A magyar muzsika ünnepi hangversenye,” *Népszava* 84, no. 210 (1956): 4.

46 = = Pál Gergely, “Zene a Néphadseregben,” *Szabad Hazánkért* 3, no. 5 (1955): 24.

is in China right now.”<sup>47</sup> At this time he also stressed that military ensembles in other annexed countries performed abroad to build diplomatic relations:

Czechoslovak and Romanian military ensembles have been there. These countries are also constantly exchanging ensembles with each other. This summer, for example, the military ensemble from Bratislava was in Bulgaria. The Czechoslovak ensemble has already been to the Soviet Union three times. In general, our members always know who is where, and every new piece of news causes a new and bigger wound.

In his letter, Lajos Vass openly expressed the need to revive international relations. However, the Political Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party did not allow the male choir to travel abroad for another two years; according to a note dated July 4, 1955, the Political Committee rejected the request of the People's Army Artists' Ensemble to perform in Bulgaria. When the tour eventually took place a year later, it featured only the dance group.<sup>48</sup>

The male choir's appearances abroad were approved by the Party only two years after the date of the letter quoted above. During a visit to Budapest in January 1956, Marshal Zhu De, the Chinese Minister of National Defence, invited the People's Army Art Ensemble to perform in China. Despite the long wrangling that had preceded the trip abroad, the male choir now represented their country with the works of Kodály, Bartók and Liszt in addition to two Chinese folk songs. They also performed Palestrina, Lassus, György Ránki, Ferenc Farkas, Lajos Bárdos, and Jenő Ádám at their concerts, along with folk songs, folk song arrangements, and both old and new military songs, all of which were mixed in their programme. The compilation, which had to be accepted by the major general in charge of programme policy, reflects the ideas of Lajos Vass, who stated in an interview before the tour that “we will perform the best songs of the past years at our concerts in China.”<sup>49</sup> This first period of success for the large ensemble, which had been touring China for three months at the time of the Hungarian Revolution, ended with a refusal to perform in Moscow, which had not been included in the preliminary schedule. However, the change in their programme policy and the increase in professional reviews also marked the expansion in a classical direction of the male repertoire between 1953 and 1956.

47 = = Károly Gáti, “Kodály 'Nemzeti dal'-ával búcsúzik a Néphadsereg Kínába induló művészei-üttese,” *Népszava* 84, no. 200 (1956): 4.

48 = = OSzK SZT VL. Letter from Lajos Vass addressed to an anonymous “Lieutenant General Comrade,” November 11, 1954.; Varga, *Az MDP Központi vezetősége Politikai Bizottsága és titkársága üléseinek napirendi jegyzései*, II. kötet (Budapest: Magyar Országos Levéltár, 2007), 217.

49 = = Gáti, “Kodály Nemzeti dalával búcsúzik a Néphadsereg,” 4.

Ultimately, this evidence shows that after Stalin's death, although Soviet influence and pattern following continued to be evident in the ensembles of the satellite countries, it was the leaders who determined the artistic direction of their ensembles – even in professional ensembles created mainly for the dissemination of propaganda.

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**Keywords**

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*Hungarian People’s Army Male Choir, Cultural policy, Stalin’s death,  
Soviet impact, Folkloristic national classicism*



The Hungarian People's Army Male Choir,  
1962.

Fortepan / Rádió és Televízió Újság

**= Book reviews =**  
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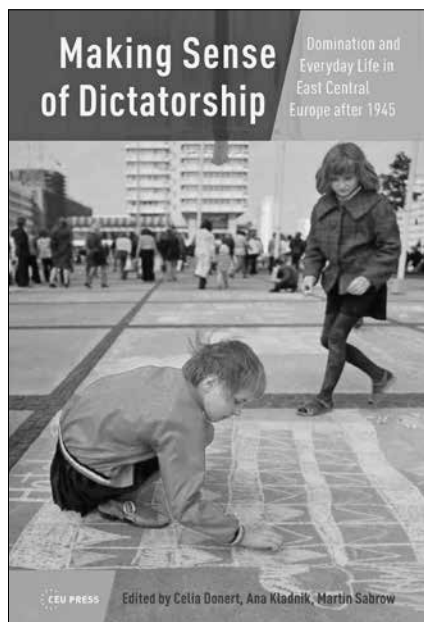


/// Gabriella Vámos

## === **Under Cracked Ceilings**

**Celia Donert, Ana Kladnik, and Martin Sabrow.**  
***Making Sense of Dictatorship. Domination and Everyday Life in East Central Europe after 1945.***

Budapest: Central European University Press, 2022. Pp 280.



Historians and social scientists in the former Soviet bloc have been interested in understanding the dynamics of socialism for years. Over the past three decades, the archival revolution in these countries has made many resources accessible.<sup>1</sup> This has resulted in a change from the previous totalitarian paradigm of public and political history to a greater emphasis on the history of everyday life. Due to the expansion of sources, it has become increasingly clear that the approach of both

1 = = Some examples summarising research based on a variety of archival sources are as follows: Jonathan Bach, *What Remains: Everyday Encounters with the Socialist Past in Germany* (New York: Columbia University Press,

2017); Laura Cashman, *1948 and 1968 – Dramatic Milestones in Czech and Slovak History* (London: Routledge Chapman & Hall, 2010); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Ben Fowkes, *Eastern Europe 1945-1969: From Stalinism to Stagnation* (London: Routledge, 2000); Kevin McDermott, *Communist Czechoslovakia, 1948–89: A Political and Social History* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015); István Rév, ed., *Centaurus* 61, no. 3 (August 2019), Special Issue: Technology and Information Propagation in a Propaganda War; and Tibor Valuch, *Everyday Life under Communism and After: Lifestyle and Consumption in Hungary, 1945–2000* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2021).

perpetrators and victims to understanding the period needs critical examination. By studying the diversity of individual and social actions, we can better understand the socialist period. The decade-long stability and sudden collapse of socialist rule raises the question: why did people accept dictatorship even though living standards visibly deteriorated and though the majority did not share the basic principles of communist ideology? Several important questions like these were raised during the research project “The Socialist Dictatorship as a *Sinnwelt*,” which was organised between 2007 and 2010 by the Institute of Contemporary History in Prague and the Centre for Contemporary History in Potsdam.

As the result of the project, the book *Making Sense of Dictatorship: Domination and Everyday Life in East Central Europe after 1945* contains thirteen studies reflecting the evolving relationship between citizens and the state. The authors examine various aspects of daily life across nations and subsequently create fresh analytical frameworks for studying dictatorships. Their primary focus is on how individual experiences and actions are interconnected within the broader social context. To understand this, the authors draw inspiration from the German *Alltagsgeschichte*, which originated in 1980. In particular, they are influenced by Alf Lüdtke and the concept of *Eigen-Sinn* that he developed.<sup>2</sup> In post-WWII Germany, research on everyday life reflected on the relationship between power and the German people under Nazi dictatorship. They raised several uncomfortable questions in that they exposed the masses of active and passive supporters of the dictatorship, without whom the system could not have survived. The concept of *Eigen-Sinn* seemed a suitable way to describe those who passively helped to build the Nazi regime without explicitly supporting its ideology. This approach also applied to research on East Germany after 1989, as it was based on the relationship between rulers and ruled, rather than on power as an external force acting independently on society. Historians did not use it to challenge the unequal distribution of power in the socialist dictatorship, but rather to challenge the notion that the citizens were utterly powerless against the state. They emphasised that communist dictatorships survived for decades by evolving in parallel with society.

Hence, the concept of *Sinnwelt* is consistently presented throughout the book and analysed in detail in Martin Sabrow’s study, which shows the various worlds of the meaning of different social actors. Sabrow argues that *Sinnwelt* is an approach to analysing and understanding the rise and fall of communist power in East Germany. The accessibility of secret police files after 1989 has opened new perspectives for historians, challenging the traditional interpretation of the GDR as a totalitarian regime supported by the military and the Berlin Wall. The survival of the GDR in the long term was not solely based on violence, but was also due to the social acceptance that it enjoyed. The German Socialist Unity Party (SED) had

<sup>2</sup> = Alf Lüdtke, *Eigen-Sinn: Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik von Kaiserreich bis in den Faschismus* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 1993).

two million supporters in 1948; by 1989, one out of every seven citizens was a party member. Membership held an appeal that was not limited to politics alone but also encompassed cultural aspects. Sabrow highlights that in the GDR, the roles of perpetrator and victim were frequently exchanged, and the population was by no means powerless. The socialist state was established in 1949 and legitimised itself through socialism, anti-fascism, and its commitment to peace, progress, and prosperity. Between 1950 and 1980, it is unclear how society received these efforts, but the majority did not seem to oppose them. Despite the Berlin Wall being erected in 1961, citizens of the GDR took the power structure for granted and pursued personal gain instead of confrontation. It was only revealed after 1989 that the party had been artificially propped up.

The experiences and behaviour of ordinary people are analysed by Thomas Lindenberger, who demonstrates the interaction between the socialist and societal *Sinnwelt*. Lindenberger explains that during the period of stability, the development of authoritarianism and communism was unquestioned. In contrast, unrest brought the violent side of the *Sinnwelt* to the surface. Citizens sought to live in harmony with the realm of power to exploit material and symbolic resources. They were able to exert their influence without challenging the socialist worldview. In connection with Lüdtke's concept of *Eigen-Sinn*, Lindenberger clarifies that *Eigen-Sinn* is not synonymous with resistance to *Sinnwelt* but rather with a series of private decisions that may even push the *Sinnwelt* to its limits. This definition of *Eigen-Sinn* is employed throughout the volume, starting with two introductory essays before grouping case studies into three larger units.

In the second section, three studies focus on authorities and domination. Ciprian Cîrnială examines the life of one policeman, Nicolae, during Romania's state socialism era (1960–89). This one case study presents three themes: the relationship between public security and state socialism, its importance, and its role in propaganda. Additionally, it also provides information on the daily work of police officers during the socialist period and illustrates the complex relationship between individuals and political power. Narrative interviews with policeman Nicolae indicate that the socialist police not only legitimised but also delegitimised the regime. Policeman Nicolae's faith in the regime was uncertain; indeed, at one point he even wrote a letter to the Foreign Minister suggesting that Ceaușescu should be replaced. Although Nicolae escaped punishment for his risky move, his wavering support for the regime was revealed. Cîrnială analyses Nicolae in detail and interviews him, emphasising the diversity of settings and timelines in the narrator's life. The critical reading of this subjective but illuminating narrative is highlighted throughout.

Hedwig Richter introduces the network of informants in the GDR. She points out that the bureaucratic machinery outside the Stasi network operated thanks to the commitment of individuals and a population increasingly accustomed to dicta-

torial rule. Many citizens believed that bureaucratic control was legitimate, a belief that may explain why former Stasi informers were widely criticised after the Peaceful Revolution. In contrast, informers who operated through bureaucratic channels, such as universities and cultural institutions, were rarely condemned. Surveillance reports demonstrate how the dictatorship silenced critical voices.

In his study, Michal Pullmann sheds light on the crisis faced by the ruling elite in Czechoslovakia during the years leading up to the regime's fall. Between 1986 and 1989, the Czechoslovak party leadership realised they could not implement Gorbachev's reforms locally due to their limitations. It is essential to understand that the perestroika launched in the Soviet Union in 1985 was not just another ideological campaign but an economic reform that was challenging to adapt to Czechoslovak conditions. The basic yet unrealistic assumptions that had dominated until then had become uncertain, and the population was increasingly interested in opposition groups. State leadership attempted to maintain the illusion that the socialism reformed by perestroika was still in place. Nevertheless, the elite disintegration that led to the collapse of the dictatorship in 1989 was already underway.

The third main section consists of papers that examine the relationship between everyday social practices and *Sinnwelt*. In her research on the Slovenian city of Velenje, Ana Kladnik delves into the conditions of urban construction in former Yugoslavia. She reveals that after Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform, the new country's leaders sought to build a unique identity based on the decentralisation of the state, empowering worker administration of the enterprises, and introducing socialised ownership. This resulted in the first Law on Self-Management in 1950, followed by the communal system in 1955, which led to decentralisation and financial independence. Kladnik investigates how the Yugoslav collaborative system facilitated the rapid growth of Velenje, which, thanks to lignite mining, transformed itself into a major industrial centre and modern town after World War II. The town's population, which increased owing to the development of the Velenje Coalmine Company and Gorenje Company, played a significant role in the town's progress through voluntary work. However, in the late 1980s, a new paradigm of individualisation emerged, bringing the country and its companies into crisis. Internal cohesion declined, and socialised work was reduced as a result.

In her analysis of the washing machine campaign in Hungary during the Kádár-era, Annina Gagyiova showcases the changes in political strategy after the 1956 Revolution. The revolution caused many people to question the legitimacy of the socialist government, leading the Kádár leadership to believe that increased living standards should accompany the construction of socialism and that private consumption should be allowed. Gagyiova demonstrates that the washing machine campaign was closely associated with modernisation and women's employment and emancipation. As washing was perceived as women's work, this propaganda to



purchase washing machines was mainly aimed at them. Despite efforts to meet the demand, there was a shortfall in supply due to production loss. To compensate, the state imported machines from the Netherlands. However, many people could still not buy washing machines due to financial constraints or the lack of supply. Consequently, many rented the machines or sold vouchers on the black market. The situation changed in the 1960s, however, with the introduction of a new economic mechanism in 1968. This mechanism synchronised supply and demand and ushered in a new era of socialist consumer culture, bringing about a change in socialist economic policies.

Barbara Klich-Kluczevska analyses the problematic situation faced by unmarried Polish mothers who raised their children alone in the 1970s and 1980s. These women found themselves in a much more complicated situation than divorced women and widows, as many of them not only had low levels of education and low-paying jobs, but also had to deal with social exclusion. Upon reaching the end of their maternity leave, they were often at risk of homelessness, as workhouses did not accept mothers with young children, and finding a room to rent became practically impossible. Those who could not manage independently moved back in with their parents, who often treated them with the same contempt as the rest of society. Their children suffered the same fate. They could hardly rely on state support and instead had to rely on the Catholic Church. For these women, the image of the Polish woman and mother, as portrayed by socialism, who could reconcile her duties as a worker and housewife under all circumstances, was impossible. These women ultimately belonged to an invisible group in socialist society.

Celia Donert presents a positive example of community responsibility for children through the Kinderladen case. The name Kinderladen was derived from parent-led childcare initiatives that emerged after the West German New Left student movements in 1968. The Kinderladen in Prenzlauer Berg, which was at one time the most exclusive district of East Berlin, was established between 1980–83 in the vacant ground-floor flat of a nineteenth-century tenement building by a group of people who still lived there, led by Ulrike Pop and Bärbel Bohley. The founders of Kinderladen were members of Women for Peace, and they protested the militarisation of East German society, which had become part of everyday life in kindergartens and schools. The Kinderladen project was established as an alternative to existing socialism, and it was a critique of the state-run childcare institutions (*Kinderkrippe*) in East Germany. Its establishment was closely linked to the peace movement in the West and resistance to the arms race. The Kinderladen was more than a short-lived institution, however; as Donert points out, “the Kinderladen was an example of the conflicts over definitions of key terms in the political culture of the GDR, such as peace, equality, and human rights.”

The volume’s last major section focuses on intellectual and expert worlds and on the legitimation or delegitimation of specific actions. Matěj Spurný’s paper

analyses the case of Most, a town in North Bohemia, Czechoslovakia, the history of which illustrates the changes in the mindset of both the local people and experts in urban development. Coal mining started in the mines surrounding the medieval town of Most in the nineteenth century. After World War II, the Czechoslovak government decided to extract coal from the mines beneath the town, so in 1964, they chose to demolish the historic part of the town and construct a new one. The authorities justified this action by maintaining that the people currently living there could live elsewhere in better conditions. The construction of the new town was criticized by preservationists, intellectuals, and locals for its destruction of the natural environment and material history. The Gothic Church of the Assumption is the only remaining structure from the old town, having been moved to its new site in 1975. The new town was initially well-received, but in the 1970s, with the rise of the green movement, concern for national and cultural heritage, and the stagnation of economic and technological development, changes in local sentiments (*Sinnwelt*) became inevitable.

Péter Apor's fascinating research delves into Hungarian critiques of the concepts of individuality, the individual, and community. Apor highlights that the analysis of lifestyle and consumption under capitalism and socialism was a recurring theme among intellectuals. With the socialist governments' shift towards technological modernisation and the politics of living standards, theories of the convergence of the two global systems emerged that also emphasised the role of the market in socialism. This resulted in an ambiguous definition of the socialist way of life, which sociological research has shown had remained traditional, especially in the villages which had changed little despite earlier modernisation programs. The discussion surrounding this lifestyle theme emphasised that the development of a socialist society was only possible through the transformation of everyday life. Apor also points out that the fall of socialism, which was supposed to eliminate individual alienation and bring about authentic communities, led to another equally alienating world, and that the history of post-socialism cannot be separated from the late years of socialism itself.

Jonathan Larson's study explores the political role of *samizdat* during the period of socialism. He examines the role of two Czechoslovak archives, the Czechoslovak Documentation Center (CSDS) and Libri Prohibiti (LP), in preserving samizdat and how the genre became part of everyday communication during a period of limited expression. He presents an ethnography of the archives, highlighting the genre, content, and philosophy behind the creation of samizdat archives. Larson's study also nuances existing narratives about samizdat as a form of cultural resistance.

The volume's final chapter features a study by Michal Kopeček about the emergence of human rights, socialist legality, and the birth of legal resistance in Czechoslovakia and Poland during the 1970s. Kopeček emphasises that socialist

legitimacy and legal resistance differ from *Sinnwelt*'s research paradigms because "the story of dissidence in the post-dissident liberal narrative is, by definition, an anti-totalitarian story par excellence." Through case studies from both countries, Kopeček examines the challenges faced by human rights advocates, the systematic negation of these rights, and the violation of rule of law principles. In response to these challenges, dissident organisations and committees were established to support those arrested and their families. Although the state made numerous attempts to dismantle these groups, they persisted. The communist authorities were also constrained by international human rights conventions, which limited their power. Finally, Kopeček notes the emergence of a group of reformist intellectuals who, while still adhering to socialist principles, began to advocate for a liberal rule of law.

The essays in this volume cover various topics related to the socialist experience in the Soviet bloc countries, spanning multiple periods and locations. The authors have researched the history of everyday life and provided their perspectives on it. Readers can gain further knowledge on the subject through both the literature cited in the essays and the selected bibliography at the end of each article. The index of subjects, places, and names at the end of the volume is also an excellent tool for navigating the text and finding commonalities and local perspectives across the studies. I believe that this volume, in terms of the diverse research topics of the studies and its approach to everyday history, is both new and valuable for those working in history and the social sciences.

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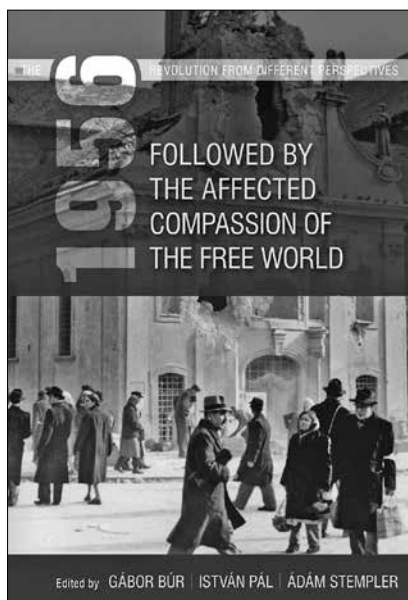
*Everyday life, Socialism, East Central Europe, Eigen-Sinn, Sinnwelt*

/// Lukács Krajsír

## === ***A Nation's Revolution in New Perspectives***

**Gábor Búr, István Pál, and Ádám Stempler (eds.).**  
***Followed by the Affected Compassion of the Free World.***  
***The 1956 Revolution from Different Perspectives.***

Budapest: Eötvös Loránd University Press, 2023. Pp 200.



Since the early 1990s, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 has remained a very popular and sometimes controversial research topic that has always brought novelty to Hungarian historiography. Even though many bookshop and library shelves are dedicated to the subject, gaps in knowledge still very much exist. This is especially true when it comes to the Revolution's international/global dimension. At first, this contention may appear strange. Indeed, many articles, studies, monographs, and books exist that are based on declassified archival sources on the international level. But these writings mostly focus on the great powers (the United States and the Soviet Union) or on Hungary's neighbouring countries. For years, scholars have attempted to answer

many questions, such as: Why did the Soviet military intervention take place? What stood behind Washington's decision not to provide military support to the Hungarian insurgents? Did the leaders of Great Britain, France, and Israel deliberately time their attack on Egypt to coincide with events in Hungary, or was this mere coincidence? How did Austria handle more than 200,000 refugees? What was the reaction of the neighbouring states, where hundreds of thousands of Hun-

garians lived as a minority population, to the events – and did they try to prevent possible spillover effects of the uprising? In contrast, a significant lack of attention becomes clear when it comes to the other countries and regions. Specifically, almost no separate monographs or dedicated volumes have yet been written on the impact of the Hungarian Revolution on the Third World.<sup>1</sup>

Now this gap is filled at least in part, thanks to the essays collected in the volume *Followed by the Affected Compassion of the Free World: The 1956 Revolution from Different Perspectives*. In 2021, one of the volume's three editors, István Pál (the other two are Gábor Búr and Ádám Stempler) organised a conference on the subject. The symposium at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) generated considerable public interest and debates among historians, which unsurprisingly led to the birth of a printed version. As mentioned in the book's foreword, the editors chose the essays based on their "geographic and geopolitical distances."<sup>2</sup> This also explains why the first paper is related to Poland; the two countries are not only geographically close but also share many historical experiences and perceptions. Miklós Mitrovits, whose study summarises the events in Hungary and in Poland alike, takes care to point out both their differences and similarities simultaneously. The editors have chosen wisely in beginning the volume with Mitrovits' study, as it is his essay that provides the most detailed overview of the Hungarian Revolution. When it comes to the turbulent days of October and November, the historian presents lesser-known aspects of Polish solidarity. For example, he cites the Polish medical support (including blood, medicine, etc.) that reached a value of \$2 million USD, twice the amount of aid Hungary received from all other donor countries combined.<sup>3</sup> However, while primary sources have been integrated, they are limited to those from Hungarian archives. As a result, without Polish primary materials the reader may feel slightly unsatisfied after reading this account.

At first glance, the second essay by Gábor Andreides on Italian diplomacy could be seen as the "odd man out," as its topic differs rather significantly from those of the other contributions. After reading, however, it becomes clear why the study has a place in the volume. Italy monitored the events in Hungary very closely, and this activity persisted even once Prime Minister Imre Nagy and his associates were executed. Moreover, Rome's position differed from that of the United States, and

1 == One major exception: Magdolna Tóth, ed., *India és a magyar forradalom, 1956 – Dokumentumok az Indiai Köztársaság Külügyminisztériumának archívumából* (India and the Hungarian Revolution, 1956 – Documents from the Archives of the Ministry of External Affairs of the Republic of India) (Budapest: Argumentum, 2006), 1–223.

2 == Gábor Búr, István Pál, and Ádám Stempler, *Followed by the Affected Compassion of the Free World: The 1956 Revolution from Different Perspectives* (Budapest: Eötvös Loránd University Press, 2023), 9.

3 == Búr, Pál, and Stempler, *Followed by the Affected Compassion*, 26–27.

Italian diplomacy did everything to keep the Hungarian case on the table.<sup>4</sup> Andreides uses a considerable number of primary sources from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which help the reader to understand why the Hungarian-Italian bilateral relations hit rock bottom after the Revolution and what Italian diplomacy did in Budapest during the heavy fighting. What the reviewer appreciates most is when Andreides writes about Austrian-Italian cooperation on behalf of Hungary, despite the otherwise cold bilateral relations between Rome and Vienna.

The pair of authors Abdallah Al-Naggar and Zoltán Prantner focus on the Arab world. Before reading their essay, many readers may think that the Arabs had their own problems in 1956 and thus neither followed nor took interest in the events in Hungary. Indeed, in October and November not just the Suez Crisis, but also lesser-known conflicts outside the region – such as the Algerian War of Independence, the Israeli-Jordan border fighting, and the Syrian coup attempts – attracted special attention from Arab nations. However, historians have now supplied convincing evidence to prove that these assumptions are incorrect and misleading. Many Arab journalists and intelligence operatives followed the Hungarian events and condemned the Soviet military action. In parallel, Al-Naggar and Prantner also have taken care to examine newspapers, which to a greater or lesser extent agreed with the Soviet invasion or yelled “double standards” on the West and the United Nations.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, after years and even decades, the Arab media has continued to offer dozens of retrospective analyses of the Hungarian Revolution. This is what makes this paper unique; the researchers do not conclude in the 1950s but rather examine Arabian articles and newspapers (mostly from Egypt and the Gulf region) up to the present day, even putting them in contrast to or in parallel with the so-called “Arab Spring” in 2011. Also, it must be noted that this essay significantly helps to expand the reader’s knowledge of Middle East/Cold War history; every major newspaper, journalist, politician, leader, or event is explained in a separate footnote.

In his work, Gábor Búr puts Africa in the centre. Unlike the previous scholars, Búr confronted a more difficult position; as he writes: “Africa was still predominantly a continent of colonies” and “the echo of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was perhaps the smallest on the African continent.”<sup>6</sup> Firstly, he notes that local newspapers dedicated only a few articles on the back pages to the Revolution, and when Soviet troops began to crush the Revolution, the response of the African press was largely confused. Only South Africa acted quickly and widely: by donating money to the UN crisis programmes and taking in 1,500 Hungarian refugees. Secondly, as Búr mentions, there was no Hungarian foreign representation in the key countries of the continent; besides Ethiopia, up until the mid-1960s they

4 = = Búr, Pál, and Stempler, *Followed by the Affected Compassion*, 48.

5 = = Búr, Pál, and Stempler, *Followed by the Affected Compassion*, 59.

6 = = Búr, Pál, and Stempler, *Followed by the Affected Compassion*, 80.

focused mainly on the North African Arab countries. However, while the author may have done well in collecting a considerable amount of secondary literature, the primary sources are still largely absent. It is understandable that it is not easy to obtain permission to access the archives of African countries or of their former colonial rulers, but the researcher could have had luck with the National Archives of Hungary – for example, under the Foreign Ministry fonds. It is true that in the 1950s Hungary has very limited direct contact to the Southern parts of the continent. However, there can still be found some relevant Africa-related information from ambassadors and *chargés d'affaires* who served in Brussels, Cairo, London, or Paris.

Ágnes Judit Szilágyi's paper presents Brazilian reactions to the Revolution. She is largely focused on summarizing two major articles, both of which are fully translated in the appendix. The author clearly explains why she chose those newspapers and introduces the journalists behind them, while also warning the readers to keep in mind that due to many reasons (lack of Hungarian knowledge, proximity of the events, etc.) these articles do contain inaccuracies.<sup>7</sup> The historian, however, does not correct the journalists' mistakes – at most in a footnote – on topics such as Anastas Mikoyan's true personality, Georgy Zhukov's possible visit, or the events in the United Nations. Here too, upon reading the paper the reviewer feels a sense of incompleteness. How did the Brazilian government see the Hungarian Revolution? What did Brazilian diplomacy do in the United Nations? As detailed in some of the newspaper articles, was it true that serious conflicts arose between the Brazilian population or authorities and Hungarian refugees?<sup>8</sup> It would have been preferable if the paper had answered questions like these, so that it could become more useful to additional research on the topic that may further expand current knowledge about Latin-American history.

Gusztáv D. Kecskés' paper, titled "The Public Information Activities of the United Nations Family of Organizations Concerning the Hungarian Refugee Crisis of 1956," anticipates the depth and breadth of the subject. Thanks to a wealth of official UN documents from sources like the Archives of the United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG) and the United Nations Archives and Records Management Section (UNARMS), the author fulfils his undertaking perfectly. This historian's work reveals how difficult it was to convince both the leadership and the public opinion of those countries which admitted a few thousand Hungarian refugees. The complex media campaign needed significant funds, resources, and time to make an impact, but in the end they succeeded. What the reviewer found most

7 = = Búr, Pál, and Stempler, *Followed by the Affected Compassion*, 91.

8 = = This type of conflict has been mentioned elsewhere; for example, see János Dömény, "1956 és a hispán világ" ("1956 and the Hispanic World"), *Eszmélet* 72 (Spring 2006), accessed August 21, 2023, [https://www.eszmelet.hu/domeny\\_janos-1956-es-a-hispan-vilag/](https://www.eszmelet.hu/domeny_janos-1956-es-a-hispan-vilag/).



fascinating was the rivalry not just between the UN and outside actors (for example, the DPI or Austria), but also among UN organisations themselves.

Lastly, the volume ends with a paper by another pair of authors, Pál István and Gyula Hegedüs. They have researched an intriguing topic: how the Hungarian State Security tried to recruit as many collaborators as possible from the ranks of the refugees.<sup>9</sup> The nicely detailed story of agent “Műszerész” (i.e., “Technician”) – which is full of twists and turns – illustrates the fierce clashes between the Eastern Bloc and the Western secret services. Given the topic, it was essential that the authors conduct extensive research in the Historical Archive of the Hungarian State Security. The 100+ types of archival references prove that the authors have done a remarkable job in reconstructing the entire case. Moreover, Hegedüs and Pál have also used British archival materials as opportunity allowed; thanks to this fact, the reader additionally gains insights into how the famous British secret services worked. That said, the reviewer maintains that this contribution’s greatest strength is also its greatest weakness; it can be challenging for a reader to follow a more than sixty-page-long work properly, and this length also slightly upsets the overall balance of the volume. The reader must sometimes turn back pages to refresh and reorganize the events in their head, while without explanatory footnotes it becomes more difficult to understand the era or to clarify the internal contradictions in archival sources. With even the authors admitting that the issue needs further research, this reviewer concludes that the story of “Műszerész” rather deserves to receive an independent monograph than a paper.

In review, a degree of deficiency in the volume’s editing should be noted as well. The reviewer realizes that it can be challenging to combine so many divergent studies into one book. The editors have generally done a commendable job and there are no outlier pieces in the volume. However, some inconsistencies can be detected, especially when it comes to the references. Only a few authors (Szilágyi, al-Naggar–Prantner) have included papers in English and English titles for non-English books; the others have simply referenced works using the original language, which may be a disadvantage for non-Hungarian readers who are interested in the subject. When something is referenced a second time, there is no common marking; some authors use the form “Ibidem” while others write “Idem.” Also, as mentioned before, the lack of explanatory footnotes makes some papers hard to follow or understand.

On the whole, however, all these pieces of constructive criticism do not devalue the importance of *Followed by the Affected Compassion of the Free World*. Quite the contrary: they rather encourage the continuation of this type of research. This reviewer hopes that it will encourage Hungarian historians to write not just

9 = = Búr, Pál, and Stempler, *Followed by the Affected Compassion of the Free World*, 129.

papers but come forth with monographs on the topic in the future. It is a welcome development for Hungarian historiography to show a growing interest in and focus on the so-called “Global South.” With this volume, Búr, Pál, Stempler, and the other contributors have taken the initial steps down this road.

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**Keywords**

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*Hungarian Revolution of 1956, United Nations,  
Hungarian Refugee Crisis, Hungarian State Security*



Üllői Street, Budapest, Hungary, 1956.

Fortepan / Konrád Matthaidesz

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