



Vladas Sirutavičius

National Bolshevism or National Communism: Features of Sovietization in Lithuania in the Summer of 1945 (The First Congress of the Intelligentsia)

In this article I discuss the problem of the sovietization of Lithuania in 1944–1945 from the perspective of the goals pursued by the Communist Lithuanian government in convening the First Congress of Lithuanian intelligentsia and the demands made by some of the congress delegates on the government. The research is based on the idea that the incorporation of elements of nationalism into the Soviet system was regarded as a means of making the regime more acceptable to the titular nationality and was also intended to facilitate the sovietization of societies. Some representatives of the leadership of the Lithuanian SSR thought that it would be possible to strike a deal with the Lithuanian cultural elite: the Soviet government would satisfy the most important (national) expectations of the intelligentsia, while the intelligentsia would support the government's policies. However, no such policy was ever adopted. Instead, Moscow simply began to force Lithuania's sovietization.

Keywords: National Communism, Intelligentsia, Lithuanian Communist Party, Sovietization

Introduction

Historians who have analyzed the evolution and features of sovietization in Central Europe in 1944–1947 note that during this period Moscow maintained a fairly moderate political course. In some cases, the local Communists were warned to refrain from taking more radical political steps. Thus, the conclusion is reached that the leadership of the Soviet Union, at least temporarily, for tactical reasons did not undertake forced *revolutionary* sovietization of the countries in the region.¹ Such a cautious political course, which took into account the specific aspects of the local societies, was based on several assumptions. First,

1 Silvio Pons, "Stalin and the European Communists after World War Two (1943–1948)," in *Post-war Reconstruction in Europe. International Perspectives, 1945–1949*, ed. M. Mazover et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 124–29; Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin's Wars. From World War to Cold War, 1939–1953* (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2008), 236–37; Eduard Mark, "Revolution by Degrees. Stalin's National Front Strategy for Europe 1941–1947," in *Cold War International History Project. Working Paper no. 31*, (Washington: Wilson Center, 2001), 6–7, 17–20.

the purpose of this policy was to expand Moscow's influence in the region while also preserving the relationship of cooperation with the Western allies. Second, the main political ally of the USSR in the region, the Communist Parties, were few and unpopular. The greater part of society considered the Communists politically dependent and not representative of national interests. Therefore, the first task with which the leaders of the Communist party were confronted was how to increase their influence and build social support. This goal could be achieved in two ways: by implementing social and economic reforms, which the greater part of the public supported, and by positioning itself as the party that defended "national interests." Thus, the "national factor" became an important instrument in the practical policies of the Communist party, mobilizing society and legitimizing the new soviet social and political order. The question of how this policy was implemented in Central Europe, specifically in Poland and Hungary, was thoroughly studied by two historians, Marcin Zaremba and Martin Mevius.² According to them, nationalism became an important instrument of the legitimization of new communist governments and the sovietization of societies.

Historian David Brandenberger has observed that even in the 1930s the leadership of the Soviet Union, seeking to strengthen the legitimacy of the regime, more actively pursued cultural policies that "cloaked a Marxist–Leninism worldview within russocentric, etatist rhetoric."³ According to him, in the Soviet Union this meant "a peculiar form of Marxist–Leninist etatism that fused the pursuit of communist ideals with more statist ambitions reminiscent of czarist 'Great Power' (*velikoderzhavnoe*) traditions."⁴ Historians refer to this political course as national bolshevism (some call it national Stalinism).⁵ With certain exceptions and specificities (depending on local conditions), this course was supported by Moscow in Central Europe as well. The incorporation of nationalism into the Soviet system was intended to make the regime more acceptable to the titular nationality and also to facilitate the sovietization of societies. Of course, historians have noted that in the policies of the Communist

2 Marcin Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymacja, nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce* (Warsaw: Trio, 2001), 135–73; Martin Mevius, *Agents of Moscow. The Hungarian Communist Party and the Origin of Socialist Patriotism 1941–1953* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 87–110.

3 David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism. Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931–1956* (Cambridge–London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 6.

4 *Ibid.*, 6.

5 For more about the National Bolshevik conception see: Erik van Ree, "The Concept of 'National Bolshevism': An Interpretative Essay," *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 6 (2001): 289–307.

parties in Central Europe, one must distinguish between national bolshevism and national communism.⁶ Without dwelling too much on this question, I argue that the major difference between these ideologies and political practices was that national communism meant a certain political and cultural autonomy and sovereignty with regard to Moscow. In his discussion of the Polish version of national communism, American historian Martin Malia identified home rule as one of its most important features.⁷ It seems that the leadership of the Soviet Union tolerated certain manifestations of autonomy in Central Europe until at least 1947.

It is worth mentioning, as a side note, that according to some historians the process of the sovietization of the Baltic States in 1944–1947, while it had its own distinguishing features, nonetheless essentially was similar to the sovietization of the countries of Central Europe. According to the Russian historian Elena Zubkova, Moscow’s policy in regard to the Baltic republics in the initial period of sovietization (up to 1947) depended on the social and political situation of the republics, the situation in the Soviet Union, and the relations between the Western allies and Moscow.⁸ Therefore, the policies of sovietization were moderate: Moscow did not force Vilnius to implement collectivization, and Russia showed respect for national symbols, the Lithuanian language, and the national intelligentsia. Repressive measures were focused on members of the armed underground. Thus, in the process of sovietization attention was paid to the national specifics of Lithuania and the other Baltic societies.⁹ Of course, for the most part, the assessments that were penned by Lithuanian historians differ

6 However, even authors who emphasize the differences between the two “policies and ideologies” also note that the relationship between them was sufficiently “dialectic,” i.e. one could easily “switch” to the other. See, for example, Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism na každá okazje. Politická historia rumuňského komunizmu* (Cracow: Universitas, 2010), 37–40.

7 Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy. A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991* (New York–Oxford: The Free Press, 1994), 322.

8 Elena Zubkova, *Pribaltika i Kreml 1940–1953* (Moscow: Rossijskaja političeskaja enciklopedija ROSSPEN, 2008), 128.

9 Recent Lithuanian historiography analyzes different manifestations of the autonomy, i.e. national communism, of the soviet Lithuanian nomenclature. However, this research covers the period from the 1960s to the end of the 1980s, and it is focused on the “local,” “indigenous” aspects of policy (economic and cultural). See Saulius Grybkauskas, *Sovietinė nomenklatūra ir pramonė Lietuvoje 1965–1985 metais* (Vilnius: LII, 2011), 111–38; Vilius Ivanauskas, *Lietuviškoji nomenklatūra biurokratinėje sistemoje. Tarp stagnacijos ir dinamikos (1968–1988)* (Vilnius: LII, 2011), 497–570. About the concepts of national communism, see: Vladas Sirutavičius, “Tautinis komunizmas ir jo raiška. Istoriografiniai problemos aspektai,” *Istorija*, 3 (2013): 48–58. The research was funded by a grant (No. VAT – 02/2010) from the Research Council of Lithuania.

significantly. According to Lithuanian historians, as early as 1944 and 1945, the USSR leadership in Lithuania was already implementing a process of sovietization based on “general principles,” without taking into account the national specifics of the republic.¹⁰ This was also due, at least according to this assessment, to the fact that among Lithuanian Communists a “nihilistic approach to their nation” and subservience to the Russians prevailed.¹¹

In fact, with certain exceptions, the Soviet leadership’s political course of sovietization described by E. Zubkova could have been characteristic of the period until the fall of 1944 (or the beginning of 1945 at the latest). On the other hand, the Lithuanian historians who are critical of Zubkova overlooked certain nuances of the sovietization policies. Česlovas Laurinavičius noted that in the policies of the Soviet Union (from the middle of 1943 until the beginning of 1945) one can see clear efforts to “raise” the Soviet Republic of Lithuania in international politics, while at the same time efforts were made to “push the Republic of Lithuania out of the international arena.”¹² Also at roughly the same time, in the policies of the Lithuanian SSR leadership, “national aspects” began to be expressed more actively. In the Lithuanian programs on Moscow radio, the interwar anthem of Lithuania, which had been banned in 1940,¹³ began to be broadcast. Measures were taken to release from imprisonment some of the politicians and public figures of the Republic of Lithuania and use them in a propaganda campaign against the Germans and to proclaim the establishment of the Lithuanian SSR among the Lithuanian diaspora in the USA.¹⁴ Efforts were also made to assure the use of the Lithuanian language in the administrative and bureaucratic apparatus.¹⁵

10 Arvydas Anušauskas et. al., *Lietuva 1940–1990 m. Okupuotos Lietuvos istorija* (Vilnius: Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos centras, 2005), 270–82; Mindaugas Pocius, *Kita mėnulio pusė. Lietuvos partizanų kova su kolaboravimu 1944–1953 metais* (Vilnius: LII, 2009), 54.

11 Vytautas Tininis, *Sniečkus. 33 metai valdžioje. Antano Sniečkaus biografine apybraiža* (Vilnius: n.p., 2000), 66–68.

12 Česlovas Laurinavičius, “Vvodnaya statya,” in *SSSR i Litva v gody vtoroj mirovoj voiny*. Sbornik dokumentov, ed. A. Kasparavičius, Č. Laurinavičius, and N. Lebedeva, vol. 2 (Vilnius: LII, 2012), 42–43.

13 The hymn of the Republic of Lithuania – “The National Song” of Vincas Kudirka – was the hymn of the Lithuanian SSR from 1944 until 1950.

14 Lithuanian Communist Party daily *Tiesa (Truth)* in April 1944, no. 14 published a proclamation signed by the head of National Union of Lithuania Domas Cesevičius, which was named “A word to Lithuanians.” In the proclamation, the author called for the urgent “restoration of the free and soviet Lithuania” in which “all Lithuanians could live freely and beautifully.” Cesevičius was arrested in 1940 and released in 1944.

15 In April 1944, LSSR Council of People’s Commissars decided to “obligate the persons working in the Lithuanian SSR Soviet industrial and other offices to learn the Lithuanian language [...] To obligate the Education commissar to organize courses, provide them with programs and instructors. [...] To let

In general, Moscow at the beginning of 1944 began the course of “strengthening” the so-called Soviet statehood of Soviet republics. The reorganization of the people’s commissariats of defense and foreign affairs into a system of Union–republic subordination was begun¹⁶ and suggestions were made regarding the restoration of the republics’ diplomatic services. In the fall of 1944, Soviet Lithuania, along with the Ukraine and Belarus, were proposed for acceptance into the UN.¹⁷ Around that time, the leaders of Soviet Lithuania began to think about the possibility of expanding the republic’s “Soviet sovereignty.” Metaphorically speaking, in the activities of Lithuania’s Communists one can notice the tendency to move towards national communism.

I will present an example. In the spring of 1944, as the Red Army was approaching Lithuania, the leaders of the LSSR began to consider the possibility of returning to the country and restoring the Soviet social and political order, in all likelihood at the initiative of Moscow. In March 1944, Mečislovas Gedvilas, Chairman of the Council of the People’s Commissars (CPC) of the Lithuanian SSR, appealed for assistance to Lithuanian Communist Party (LCP) Secretary Antanas Sniečkus, suggesting that the Central Committee bureau discuss “the principles of the restoration of the Soviet system in Lithuania.”¹⁸ Unfortunately, we know little about how the debate actually occurred. However, we do have the decision of a joint project of the Lithuanian SSR CPC and the LCP Central Committee, by the same name, which was addressed to the USSR government and the Central Committee of Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU). In it, the leaders of the Lithuanian SSR “asked” the USSR leadership to determine the principles of the restoration of the Soviet system. According to the third point, the Lithuanian SSR would not adopt “automatically” the ordinances pertaining to the republics of the Union, but rather, having taken into account the general situation of the restoration of the Soviet system, it would accept the ordinances “by the resolutions and decrees of the organs of the republic.”¹⁹ We know nothing about the Kremlin’s reaction to the initiatives of Lithuania’s

employees attend the courses twice a week in the evening” “Resolution No.49,” Moscow, 28 04 1944, Lietuvos Ypatyngasis archyvas (LYA) [Lithuanian Special Archive], f.1771 [Central Committee of Lithuanian Communist Party], ap.7, b.28, 17.

16 “V. Molotovo pranešimas TSRS Aukščiausioje taryboje,” *Tarybų Lietuva*, February 6, 1944, no. 6.

17 Laurinavičius, “Vvodnaya statya,” 43.

18 “Gedvilas letter to Sniečkui,” March 1, 1944, LYA, f.1771, ap.7, b.82, 5.

19 The original version of this decision: “Общесоюзные указы, постановления, распоряжения, приказы в Литовской ССР не вводятся автоматически. Они вводятся в соответствии с общим ходом советского строительства указами, постановлениями, распоряжениями и приказами центральных

Communists, nor do we know in general whether *such a* project was sent to the USSR leaders. The point cited here remained only on paper, and there was no further mention of it anywhere, although, of course, it testified to certain “sovereignty” ambitions of the leadership of Soviet Lithuania.²⁰

The leaders of the Lithuanian SSR returned to Lithuania in July 1944. In the fall of that year, Moscow sharply criticized the LCP leadership for a variety of “errors and failures” in their work that testify to their inability to control the public and the political situation in the republic. “Organizational conclusions” were drawn: in November, the CPSU established the Lithuanian bureau. Michail Suslov was appointed chairman of the bureau.²¹ The bureau became the most important political institution of the Lithuanian SSR, almost all of the important decisions of the LCP, the Council of People’s Commissars and the Supreme Council presidium were adopted only with its consent.²² The establishment of such an institution not only in each of the Baltic republics, but also in the Moldavian SSR clearly testified to the strengthening of the centralistic and unification trends in the western borderlands of Soviet Union. From Moscow’s point of view, the Communist parties in the region were weak and the Soviet government did not have significant support among the local populations. It was therefore necessary to consolidate Communist Parties. The situation in Lithuania was more complicated: the mobilization of Lithuanians into the Red Army (which began at the end of July and the beginning of August 1944) collapsed,²³ and armed resistance grew stronger. On the other hand, after the defeat of the

государственных органов республики.” “СНК Литовской ССР и ЦК КП (б) Литвы. Постановление. Проект” [Lithuanian SSR Council of People’s Commissars and Central Committee of LCP. Resolution. Project], [1944] LYA, f.1771, ap.7, b.80, 80.

20 The representative of the USSR NKVD-NKGB in Lithuania, Ivan Tkachenko, on the basis of intelligence reports, wrote to his boss Lavrentij Beria in Moscow in July 1945 about the views of Justas Paleckis, Chairman of the Presidium of the Lithuanian SSR Supreme Soviet. In a private conversation Paleckis explained: “our Lithuanian Communist roads are different. God only knows what ugly directives Moscow sends, and we are obliged to fulfill them. We know perfectly well what our country and nation want, but we are helpless. The dark forces of the Kremlin that can lead and bring the Lithuanian people to degeneration and extinction operate everywhere.” “Lubianka. Stalin i NKVD-NKGB-GUKR ‘Smersh.’ 1939–mart 1946,” in *Arhiv Stalina. Dokumenty vysslych organov partijnoj i gosudarstvennoj vlasti*, ed. V.N. Chaustov, V.P. Naumov, and N.S. Plotnikova (Moscow: Materik, 2006), 531.

21 Zubkovaam, *Pribaltika i Kreml*, 139–42.

22 Henrikas Šadžius, “VKP (b) CK Lietuvos biuro veikla organizuojant tautinio pasipriešinimo slopinimą,” *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis 1997* (Vilnius: Žara, 1998), 241–42.

23 LCP CC secretary Vldas Niunka in a letter to Georgy Malenkov on 4 August 1944 explained that the mobilization was not suitably prepared: the mobilization was carried out “without publicly proclaiming” it and summons were not distributed to the people. For this reason, and due to the “German propaganda,”

Warsaw Uprising, Moscow began increasingly to abandon the idea of “raising” the international “prestige” of the Baltic republics, first and foremost because the West perceived this policy as an attempt to obtain the recognition of the incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union.²⁴ Thus on the basis of various considerations, these kinds of proposals were usually rejected. (Finally, Moscow abandoned the idea of inviting the Lithuanian SSR to the UN at the Yalta conference.)

The fight with the increasingly stronger partisan movement and various manifestations of “bourgeois nationalism” became one of the most important tasks of the Lithuanian bureau. On May 24, 1945, at a meeting of Lithuania’s bureau, it was decided to extend the fight against the armed and unarmed underground. In the summer, a major military operation against the guerrilla movement was planned and carried out.²⁵ In the middle of July, the mass deportations of the families of partisans began.²⁶ The Russification campaign of Lithuania’s Communist Party gained ever more momentum.²⁷ Under these circumstances, the bureau of Lithuania and the Lithuanian government decided to organize the first congress of the intelligentsia of the Lithuanian SSR.²⁸ The congress began on July 10 and lasted for a total of five days.

In this article, I will discuss the goals that were pursued by the Lithuanian SSR government in convening the congress and the demands that were placed by some of the congress delegates on the Soviet Lithuanian government. During the congress, some of the demands raised by the delegates had a clear national orientation and testified to the importance in the minds of the delegates of

rumors began to be spread that the mobilization was just an excuse to transport Lithuanians to Siberia. LYA, f.1771, ap.7, b.85, 40. Also see Vytautas Tininis, *Prievartinė mobilizacija į raudonąją armiją* (Vilnius: LGGRTC, 2014), 47.

24 Laurinavičius, “Vvodnaya statya,” 43.

25 Šadžius, “VKP (b) CK Lietuvos biuro veikla,” 247–49.

26 From July 17, 1945 until the beginning of September 1945 about 4,500 persons were deported. Arvydas Anušauskas, *Lietuvių tautos sovietinis naikinimas 1940–1958 metais* (Vilnius: Mintis, 1996), 320–21, 328–29.

27 From the summer of 1944 until the spring of 1945 more than 6,000 officials, most of them Russians, were sent to Lithuania, by CPSU. Pocius, *Kita mėnulio pusė*, 54.

28 The course of the congress was well publicized at the time in the official central press in the newspaper *Tiesa* (*Truth*) of the LCP CC, and *Tarybų Lietuva* (*Soviet Lithuania*) of the Lithuanian SSR Supreme Council presidium. Most of the speeches of the delegates and translations of the speeches into Russian are stored in the Vilnius County Archive (VAA). The agency reports of security officials and the accounts of the congress proceedings are stored in Lithuania’s Special Archive (LYA). Some of the material of the congress is stored in the *Rossijskij gosudarstvennyj archiv socialno-politicheskoj istorii* (RGASPI) [Russian State Archive of Socio-political History].

the goal of autonomy, albeit within the framework of the Soviet system. On the other hand, the policies of the government and the Moscow emissaries were increasingly coercive and were increasingly focused on centralization and unification.²⁹

The Organization of the Congress and the Government's Goals

Judging from the letter of bureau head M. Suslov to CPSU CC Secretary G. Malenkov, the idea of convening the congress of the intelligentsia arose in the spring of 1945. According to Suslov, the purpose of the congress was to expand “our” influence on the intelligentsia and to acquaint the intelligentsia with the achievements of the Soviet government.³⁰ In general, formally, the congress of intellectuals was not a special event, and essentially it illustrated clearly the specifics of the Stalinist political system. The government would organize similar events, “congresses,” in the hopes of acquiring the support of various social groups and thus buttressing its legitimacy. In Lithuania in the first half of the same year, congresses of “labor peasants” and trade unions were held.

And yet, this congress was special for two important reasons: first, it was a congress of Lithuanian intelligentsia in Vilnius; second, for the Soviet Lithuanian government, the support of Lithuania’s intellectuals, especially the older generation of the intelligentsia, which had taken formed “in bourgeois Lithuania,” was particularly significant. Given the ever growing partisan movement and the complicated economic and social situation, nothing else could have done more to legitimize the government of Soviet Lithuania than the active “involvement in the construction of socialism” of the intellectuals, especially those who were members of the cultural elite.

The government therefore prepared seriously for the congress. The organization of the congress cost about 200,000 rubles. The participants were well fed. They were given cards with which they were able to purchase 500

29 The congress of intelligentsia was not discussed in Lithuanian historiography. Only Vytautas Tininis mentioned the event. He also published a few archival documents related to the congress. See Vytautas Tininis, *Komunistinio režimo nusikaltimai Lietuvoje 1944–1953/The Crimes of the Communist Regime in Lithuania in 1944–1953* (Vilnius: Generolo Jono Žemaičio Lietuvos karo akademija, 2003), 13–14, 135–45.

30 Suslov also asked that various cultural activists be sent to Lithuania with lectures. “Suslovo’s letter to Malenkov,” May 22, 1945, RGASPI, f.597 [Communist Party of Soviet Union Lithuanian Bureau], op.1, d.16, 50.

rubles-worth of goods.³¹ (However, according to the Lithuanian SSR NKGB Commissar Aleksandras Gudaitis-Guzevičius, the goods were of poor quality and the logistics were poorly organized.)³² After the meetings, a cultural program was organized: there were lectures and performances, including even a ballet from Moscow. A total of about 540 delegates and 250 guests came to the congress. (According to the initial plans, there would have been 600 delegates and 300 guests.) Some guests came from Moscow, including Mikhail Jovchuk, who served as deputy head of the CPSU CC propaganda and agitation department, several employees of the CPSU CC apparatus and several members of the Academy of Sciences.

The government took care of more than just the everyday lives of the delegates. Judging from the reports of Commissar A. Guzevičius, 64 agents “observed” the events of the congress and another 25 NKGB workers were sent as “service agents.”³³ Over the course of the whole congress, security officials “detected” 27 “anti-Soviet elements,” two of whom were arrested. According to Guzevičius, the majority of the delegates (teachers, principals, physicians, agronomists, surveyors, etc.) were from rural areas, and they were “chosen” by the local government and party committees.³⁴ However, the representatives of the cultural elite (writers, directors, actors) and the academic elite (high school principals, professors), who played the most important roles in the congress (they were the main speakers), were invited to the congress. Some of them, for instance Vilnius Academy of Arts professor Justinas Vienožinskis, declined to participate in it.³⁵ There were others who wanted to participate, but for one reason or another could not.³⁶

31 In the official party newspaper *Tiesa*, even a feuilleton was printed about the routine of the delegates. It was also argued that the statements of those arriving from the provinces were boring and that they repeated one another. Liūnė Janušytė, “Ką kalba delegatai,” *Tiesa*, July 12, 1945, no. 161.

32 “Aleksandras Guzevičius report to the USSR NKGB deputy commissar Amajak Kobulov,” July 13, 1945, LYA, f.K41 [State Security Committee of the Lithuanian SSR (NKGB-MGB-KGB), 2 directorate], ap.1, b.163, 197–98.

33 “Guzevičiaus report to Kobulov,” draft, 1945, LYA, f.K41, ap.1, b.163, 152.

34 “Guzevičiaus report to Kobulovui,” draft, 1945, 149.

35 Security officials recorded on such “anti-Soviet” statement by Vienožinskis: “I do not need a ticket to the congress, I’m not an ass, I cannot be bought.” “Report of the head of the second department LSSR NKGB Izotov,” July 10, 1945, LYA, f.K41, ap.1, b.163, 171.

36 Writer Sofija Kymantaitė – Čiurlionienė in a letter to Kostas Korsakas, on 22 July 1945, wrote: “I hear that the Congress was particularly interesting, for myself, as a writer it is especially important to observe such historical moments, but you can see what kind of a pilot I am now.” The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore Manuscript Library (LLITI BR), f.1-4739 [Writers and linguists], no pages.

The question arises whether the government in any way attempted to influence the speakers or the statements they made, i.e. to censor them in advance. I would dare to say that it did not. The content of the speeches the texts of which have survived, the reactions of the participants, and the discussions that were held during the congress testify that the government avoided direct interference or pressure.³⁷ On the other hand, it should also be noted that the information in the press about the congress was presented in “doses”: the full speeches of Lithuanian SSR Supreme Presidium Chairman J. Paleckis and the LCP CC Secretary A. Sniečkus were published. The speeches (there were about 40) of the delegates were summarized or paraphrased, but in general those that were particularly critical with regards to the government were not mentioned. Basing his conclusions on the reports of agents, Guzevičius informed USSR NKGB Deputy Commissar Amajak Kobulov that the participants had the impression that they enjoyed complete freedom of speech. Some of the participants were pleasantly surprised. According to the Lithuanian SSR Security Commissar, there were some participants who thought that they would not be allowed to speak freely. Indeed they feared that they would be arrested and deported to Siberia. Among the arrivals from the rural areas such rumors were especially prevalent.³⁸

I mentioned that the congress can be called a *congress of Lithuanian intelligentsia* in Vilnius. I failed to find data on the national composition of the congress participants. Probably no such data were recorded. The press noted that the intellectuals arrived in Vilnius from “all corners” of Lithuania, however, I would guess that the overwhelming majority of them were Lithuanians, i.e. representatives of the titular nation. So my guess regarding the informal nature of the congress, as it was perceived by most members of the congress, was based on several assumptions: first, almost all the speakers were Lithuanians.³⁹ Prominent representatives of the interwar Lithuanian intelligentsia took part in the congress and delivered speeches.⁴⁰ Only a few of them were members of the Communist Party. The famous Lithuanian opera singer Kipras Petrauskas was “elected to the presidium” of the congress. Second, the report of Paleckis,

37 Suslov, head of Lithuanian bureau, participated in the work of the congress, but he did not speak.

38 “Guzevičius report to Kobulov,” draft, 1945, 151.

39 Only a few non-Lithuanians spoke up at the congress: Jewish writer Jacob Josadė and a visitor from Moscow, the previously mentioned Jovchuk.

40 Theatre director Borisas Dauguvietis, physician and professor Jonas Kairiūkštis, physicist professor Juozas Matulis, Vilnius university rector professor Kazimieras Bieliukas, physician professor Pranas Mažylis, director Aleksandras Kupstas, biologist professor Jonas Dagys, actress M. Mironaitė, painter V. Jurkūnas, Kaunas university vice-rector professor J. Kupčinskas, former diplomat and writer Karolis Vairas-

although formally entitled “The Current Moment and the Challenges for the Intelligentsia of Soviet Lithuania,” also contained a subsection with the revealing title “The Road of the Lithuanian Intelligentsia” (in other words the title emphasized the national belonging of the intelligentsia, an assertion which was at odds with the Marxist principle of internationalism); third, several of the delegates in their statements at the congress compared the gathering with the Great Seimas of Vilnius in 1905, at which “autonomy for ethnographic Lithuania with Vilnius was demanded from the czarist Russian government.”⁴¹ Of course, such associations were not reflected in the official press. Indeed, in his introductory speech Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars Mečislovas Gedvilas even declared that the congress was the first such event in the history of Lithuania.

The objectives of the government were formulated in several editorial articles of *Tiesa* (*Truth*) and *Tarybų Lietuva* (*Soviet Lithuania*) and the statements made by Lithuanian SSR Supreme Council Presidium Chairman Paleckis at the congress. The articles published in the newspapers stressed the progressive role of the intelligentsia in history and also noted that the “most prominent part of the [Lithuanian] intelligentsia remained loyal to the people.” There was also talk about the “mission” of the intelligentsia, which was to educate in the “spirit of Soviet patriotism,” to fight against “bourgeois nationalist ideology,” to promote the achievements of other Soviet republics, and to develop national culture (“national in form, socialist in content”). In order to carry out such a mission, the authors of the editorial articles asserted, it was necessary for the Lithuanian intelligentsia to “arm themselves with the doctrine of Marxism-Leninism,” to engage actively in the fight against bourgeois nationalism and generally to follow the principles of socialism.⁴² Thus, the principles of the cooperation of Soviet Lithuania and the intelligentsia were formulated: the intelligentsia acknowledges and accepts the “principles of socialism” and relies on the Marxist-Leninist worldview, while the Soviet Lithuanian government takes care of national culture, the content of which, of course, had to be socialist.

Račkauskas, rector of the Academy of Agriculture Matas Mickis, writers Julius Būtėnas, Balys Sruoga, Ieva Simonaitytė, Aantanas Vienuolis (Žukauskas), professor Viktoras Ruokis, astronomer professor P. Slavėnas, composer B. Dvarionas, professor J. Vabalas-Gudaitis, professor J. Laužikas.

41 For more see Egidijus Motieka, “Didysis Vilniaus seimas,” in *Lietuvių atgimimo istorijos studijos*, vol. 11 (Vilnius: Saulabrolis, 1996.)

42 “Garbingi mūsų inteligentų uždaviniai,” *Tiesa*, July 10, 1945, no. 159; “Žengti išvien su visa darbo liaudimi,” *Tarybų Lietuva*, July 12, 1945, 153.

A similar ideas was proclaimed by Justas Paleckis on the first day of the congress. Lithuanian historians have noted that among other leaders of the Lithuanian Communist Party Paleckis was distinguished not only for his “liberalism,” but also as someone who “quite often voiced his dissatisfaction with the policy of Russification,” and in general was “a Communist of national consciousness.”⁴³ Paleckis’ turn towards “national communism” is confirmed by “Lietuvos laisvos darbo respublikos kūrimo programa” (A Program for the Creation of Lithuania as a Republic of Free Labor), which he wrote as early as the autumn of 1939. The program encourages the fairly radical transformation of the authoritarian political system, but it does not call for sovietization; on the other hand, it speaks not so much on the behalf of the Lithuanian nation, but rather on behalf of the Lithuanian people. In other words, it is about a community that is defined more by class considerations than national sentiments; from the geopolitical point of view, the future Lithuania as a republic of labor was projected by Paleckis as a protectorate of the USSR.⁴⁴ In fact, this political program matched the attitudes of the People’s Front that were promoted and actively supported by Moscow and the Comintern.

In the first half of 1940s, Paleckis was balancing between attitudes characteristic of Central European national communism and national bolshevism. He tried to emphasize the specifics of the historical development of Lithuania and its differences from other Soviet republics, in which the formation of the Soviet regime had begun earlier. According to him, the tradition of statehood made Lithuania a unique republic, and this circumstance should be taken into account in the transformation of Lithuania into a soviet. Paleckis was convinced that in order to make soviet authority more attractive to the Lithuanians, it would be necessary to cooperate with the nation’s cultural elite, in other words

43 Vytautas Tininis, *Sovietinė Lietuva ir jos veikėjai* (Vilnius: Enciklopedija, 1994), 214–15; Liudas Truska, *Lietuva 1938–1953 metais* (Kaunas: Šviesa, 1995), 134–35; Vanda Kašauskienė, *Istorijos spąstuose. Justo Paleckio gyvenimo ir veiklos bruožai 1899–1980* (Vilnius: Gairės, 2014), 497–504. In 1950, leaders of the LCP discussed the question of how to organize education in Polish-populated districts of east Lithuania. In the opinion of Paleckis and Gedvilas, after the repatriation of the Poles, the Poles who remained in the Vilnius region were just Polonized Lithuanians and their further Polonization through the development of education in Polish would not have been purposeful. The party discussions were won by Sniečkus and his supporters, and practical politics was based on the principle of “proletarian internationalism.” See Vitalija Stravinskienė, “Lietuvių ir lenkų santykiai Rytų ir Pietryčių Lietuvoje: 1944 m. antra pusė–1953 m.,” *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis, 2007 metai*, 2 (2008): 95–96; Arūnas Streikus, “Sovietinio režimo pastangos pakeisti Lietuvos gyventojų tautinį identitetą,” *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 1 (2007): 22–23; Jonas Rudokas, “Tarybinė Vilnius polonizacija 1950–1956 metais,” *Gairės*, 7 (2011): 17–18;

44 Justas Paleckis, *Ieškojome tikerų kelių* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1987), 134–36.

the interwar Lithuanian intelligentsia, and to promote the use of Lithuanian in public life. Also, Paleckis stressed the importance of “national revival,” and the most famous representatives of this revival, Jonas Basanavičius and Vincas Kudirka, for Soviet Lithuanian culture. Of course according to him, the “real liberation” of the Lithuanian nation from national oppression was crowned with the establishment of the Soviet government in Lithuania. Finally, Paleckis tried to incorporate national elements into the system of symbols of Soviet Lithuania. He actively supported the idea of making the hymn of the Lithuanian Republic, Kudirkas’ “National song,” the hymn of Soviet Lithuania. The Lithuanization of the symbols of Soviet power, must have hoped, would strengthen the legitimacy of the Communist government.⁴⁵

So in his speech, Paleckis discussed the challenges that faced the Soviet Lithuanian intelligentsia. Essentially, he repeated what had already been written in the press, though he discussed the challenges that faced each group of intellectuals in greater detail. He mentioned the necessity, for the intelligentsia, of studying Marxism (he contended that the Lithuanian intellectual would find all the answers to his doubts in “the writings of the great sages of socialism from Marx to Stalin”). He drew particular emphasis to the importance of the historical relationship with Russia, stressing the positive impact of Russia’s civilization on Lithuania (communist Russia had liberated Lithuania from the yoke of czarism, returned Vilnius, and so on). He also explained the necessity of fighting against “bourgeois nationalists,” “Hitler’s laborers,” He ended the speech with the cry “Long live the great leader and teacher, comrade Stalin!” According to what was written in the press, the hall was filled with “thunderous applause.” So for the time, it was a fairly ordinary, orthodox speech.

However, in the report there was a part entitled “The Road of the Lithuanian Intelligentsia,” and this section could hardly be called orthodox.⁴⁶ It was an obvious reference to the national aspirations of Lithuanian intellectuals. In a speech by a spokesman for Marxism–Leninism, this, of course, was peculiar. In this part of the speech, Paleckis tried to combine two traditions that were, in his view, characteristic of the Lithuanian national movement: the struggle for social

45 Idem, *Pergalės salūntas* (Vilnius: Mintis, 1985), 105. In summer 1944, the CC of LCP decided “to turn the national song [the hymn of Lithuanian Republic] into an instrument which could strengthen the soviet government.” Проект постановления к вопросу о гимне. Постановление ЦК КП (б) Литвы [Central Committee of LCP: the question of anthem, project and resolution], 1944 06 21, LYA, f.1771, ap.7, b.267, 41. The National song was formally the hymn of Soviet Lithuania till 1950.

46 *Tiesa*, July 18, 1945, no. 166.

liberation and the struggle for national liberation. He asserted that the struggle for Lithuanian “national liberation” “coincided” with the solution to the social question, i.e. the struggle of the peasant against the landlord. In that struggle “from the depths of the common people” there arose the “new Lithuanian intelligentsia,” who carried out “the work of awakening Lithuanian nation.” According to Paleckis two most prominent activists represented the “new Lithuanian intelligentsia”: Vincas Kudirka (the founder of illegal Lithuanian paper *Aušra* (*The Dawn*) and composer of anthem of Lithuanian Republic) and Vincas Mickevičius-Kapsukas (the founder of Lithuanian Communist Party.) So they both began the fight “for real Lithuanian folk matters, liberation from the yoke of czarism, as well as rights and land,” Paleckis explained.

In the end, according to Paleckis, the Soviet government completed the “liberation of the Lithuanian nation.” The interwar “bourgeois Lithuania” did not meet the “progressive ideals of the national movement,” and in an attempt to emphasize the idea to the people assembled, he cited a stanza by famous Lithuanian poet and priest Maironis: “Lithuania land of heroes / We have sung from long ago; But from that greatness only / the devils reap their benefits.” This organic interpretation of the nation’s history, according to which national liberation was naturally combined with the “people’s” struggle for social rights, is characteristic, according to some researchers, of national communism.⁴⁷ This was an effort to demonstrate that the Soviet system was “compatible” with national ideals.

Of course, in Paleckis’ speech there were still a few important aspects. One of the parts of the speech was entitled “Bourgeois nationalists—Hitler’s laborers.” In this section, Paleckis argued that the armed underground had been engendered by the Nazi occupation and ultimately had the same goals, namely to destroy the Lithuanian nation. In his assessment, it was therefore, necessary to fight against it, and it was important for the intelligentsia to enter into this fight. And there was another important idea in the speech that is very often found in the official discourse, namely the necessity of strengthening ties and friendship with the Russian people. According to Paleckis, the Russian people and their Red Army had rescued the Lithuanian nation from Nazi extermination. Furthermore, the Lithuanian and Russian nations were bound by old “historical ties.” Both nations had long fought against the Germans invaders. According to Paleckis,

47 Yannis Sygkelos, “The National Discourse of the Bulgarian Communist Party on National Anniversaries and Commemorations (1944–1948),” *Nationalities Papers* 37, no. 4 (2009): 426.

“Mindaugas signed a treaty with Aleksandr Nevsky against the Teutonic knights, and together they crushed them.” The same event occurred “at Žalgiris,” where the Lithuanians defeated the Teutonic knights with the help of the Russians. The fight of the Russian populists against czarism had a significant impact on the Lithuanian national movement. Their influence had also been important in the “progressive *Varpas* movement” begun by V. Kudirka. Finally, the struggle of the Russian proletariat had “awoken” Lithuania’s workers and peasants. So, Paleckis tried in every way to emphasize the progressive civilizing influence of the Russian nation: it was thanks to the Russian people that the Lithuanians freed themselves from the clutches of czarism and Vilnius was returned to the Lithuanians, etc. Russian culture was characterized as “humane,” a refreshing source that “also refreshes the culture of our nation,” as the presidium chairman explained to those assembled.

Moscow began to promote very actively the idea of the common battle of the Slavic nations against German expansion to the east during the war. This pan-Slavic doctrine and pan-Slavic policies had some foundation. The victims of German aggression were largely Slavic states and nations. On the other hand, the idea of Slavic unity did not rule out the special role of the Russian nation (the Soviet Union) in the Slavic world.⁴⁸ Of course, it should be noted that in the 1930s some political groups in Lithuania, such as the Young Peasant Populists, whose leader at that time was Paleckis, regarded the Soviet Union and the Russian people as the main ally of the Lithuanian nation in the fight against the “aggressiveness of the Germans.”⁴⁹

48 Roberts, *Stalin's Wars*, 210; Geoffrey Hosking, *Rulers and Victims. The Russians in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge–London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 207–09.

49 The Young Peasant Populists maintained close ties with the LCP, and some were members of the Communist party. Some of the Young Peasant Populists, such as Paleckis, Gedvilas, Vaišnoras, Gregorauskas, Kežinaitis, Drobnys and others, pursued careers in Soviet Lithuania. Of course, most of them were gradually pushed out from active political life and a few faced measures of active repression. Juozas Vaišnoras, “Memories about People’s Front” (manuscript), 1966, LYA, f. 3377 [CC LCP Institute of Marxism–Leninism] ap.46, b.964, 1320. Mindaugas Tamošaitis, “Justas Paleckis ir jaunieji valstiečiai liaudininkai,” *Vilniaus istorijos metraštis* (Vilnius: VPI, 2007), 137–60.

Standpoints of the Congress Delegates

Paleckis' programmatic speech became a subject of debate among the delegates. Virtually all of the speakers responded to it directly or indirectly.⁵⁰ How did members of the congress, the delegates (the Lithuanian intelligentsia), respond to the speech, and, more generally, to what extent did they fulfill the government's wishes? Judging from the available archival data, one can assert, of course, somewhat schematically, that among the intellectuals two main provisions dominated. Some of the delegates, characterizing socialism as a "global development trend" that guaranteed social progress and enabled the development of the national aspirations of the Lithuanians, endorsed and supported the "path of the development" of socialist Lithuania. Of course, they also saw the system's imperfections and threats to national sovereignty, and they spoke about this publicly. After World War II, there were likeminded intellectuals in other countries, apart from Lithuania. Second, some of the intellectuals present at the congress were skeptical with regards to Soviet Lithuania or even rejected Soviet Lithuania in principle. They identified the Soviet government with Russification, and thought that Russification was inevitable and the sovereignty of the Lithuanian SSR was an illusion. Of course, they could not express themselves publicly, but security officials made notes regarding such non-public comments in the corridors of the congress.

What were these comments? Some members of the congress were concerned less with Paleckis's speech and more with the question of whether an independent Lithuania would be "restored." For some, it seemed that the "question of Lithuania" should finally be resolved at the "conference of the heads of three countries." The director of the Raseiniai high school Karumas, who was already being observed by security forces "as a nationalist," thought this way. In the opinion of agronomist Baltušnikas, "the word (of Paleckis) will not help anything, the English and American tanks will decide."⁵¹ Another participant doubted whether Paleckis would be able "to resist Moscow's will." Someone called the speech by Paleckis a sermon that had little to do with reality.⁵² During the congress, professor and composer Balys Dvarionas, who

50 The security officials in their reports very carefully recorded the non-public negative and positive comments about the Paleckis' speech and came to the conclusion that the majority of the delegates reacted to the speech positively. Some even praised it. "Guzevičius report to Kobulov," a draft, 1945, 157.

51 "Guzevičius report to Kobulov," a draft, 1945, 152–53.

52 "Guzevičius report to Justui Paleckiuui," July 12, 1945 LYA, f.K41, ap.1, b.163, 176–77.

in 1949 was awarded the Stalin Prize of the first degree and in 1950 wrote music for the Lithuanian SSR anthem, tried to comfort himself: “I want to flee from Lithuania, now it is not Lithuania here, but Russia,” and the University of Vilnius professor Gudaitis resented that those who had fought against the Fascists were being taken to Siberia.⁵³ Writer A. Žukauskas mentioned the difficult plight of the peasants, who were oppressed both by the “bandits and the NKVD punishments.”⁵⁴ Delegates from Telšiai and Kaunas recounted the rumors according to which at the end of the congress the government would force the participants to sign an appeal and then would deport them to Siberia. Overall, the delegates from the provinces feared what would happen to them when they returned home. Apparently, they feared reprisals from the partisans.

And how were the sentiments of support for the Lithuanian nation Lithuanian national autonomy expressed at the congress? One of the first speakers, professor Jonas Kairiūkštis (a physician, then non-party), approved of Paleckis’ views and invited the congress participants to “adopt and understand” the socialist system: “one can move forward only when you are convinced that the government will be on duty guarding national interests, only then are you calm for the happy future of the nation.” He continued: “We intellectuals ... patriots of our country, we love the antiquity of our land, the language, we love our nation’s traditions and culture.” (Incidentally, in the LCP official newspaper *Tiesa*, where the speech of Kairiūkštis was published, the passages cited here were omitted.) The professor concluded his speech by saying that “in socialism the loss of national identity does not threaten the Lithuanians.”⁵⁵ I think that the principle of mutual cooperation between the intelligentsia and the Soviet government was formed as early as the very beginning of the congress: a government that would take care of the development of national Lithuanian culture was considered worthy of support. Similar thoughts and ideas were expressed by other delegates. Some drew more emphasis to the advantages of socialism and the prospects it would create (such as deputy rector of Vilnius University, professor of physics and chemistry Juozas Matulis, who became an LCP member in 1950). This motif was repeated in the reports of many speakers. Others stressed concern about the necessity of the culture of the Lithuanian nation, such as Borisas Dauguvietis (LSSR senior director of the theater, non-

53 “Guzevičius report to Kobulov,” a draft, 1945, 152–53. “Guzevičius report to Kobulov,” July 14 193–94.

54 “Report of the head of second department LSSR NKGB Izotov,” 170.

55 “Kairiūkštis speech,” VAA, f.761 [The Executive Committee of Vilnius city], ap.9, b.35, 15.

party). Recently returned from a Nazi concentration camp, writer Balys Sruoga addressed those assembled: “with the deepest respect and love I welcome every creative effort, every labor, great or small, that refreshes our land.”⁵⁶ The writer thanked the party and the government for having rescued him, which is entirely understandable.⁵⁷

However, the speeches of several people at the congress stood out specifically because of their national overtones and their critical attitudes towards the authorities. The speech of botanist and Vilnius University professor Jonas Dagys was remarkable in this regard (in *Tiesa* and *Tarybų Lietuva* there was only brief mention of his speech.) First, Dagys talked about the need to bring members of the Lithuanian intelligentsia who “had been shipped from Lithuania to various corners of the USSR, Siberia and Kazakhstan in 1941” back to Lithuania.⁵⁸ Although according to the professor, that had been merely a precautionary measure, “it was carried out in haste and therefore many mistakes were made.” It was necessary to rectify these errors, he declared. Therefore, the speaker appealed to the leaders of the Lithuanian SSR to “undertake measures and create conditions for the Lithuanian intellectuals to return to their homeland.” (In the archival transcript of the speech, after this passage one finds the words “fierce applause.”⁵⁹) He also criticized NKVD Commissar Juozas Bartašiūnas for his article in *Tiesa*.⁶⁰ According to Dagys, in the article commissar used “many kinds of threats and harsh words.” Such words only dissuaded those who wanted to get out of the forest, and after all, one found not only criminals in the woods, but also people who wanted to avoid mobilization. In conclusion, Dagys noted that one should go to socialism not only armored

56 “Sruoga speech,” typewriting, LLTI BR, f.1-5741 [Writers and linguists], 1–2.

57 However, in 1946 the writers congress Sruoga was harshly criticized by the LCP bureau member Kazys Preikšas. Preikšas accused the writer of continuing to be under the influence of “bourgeois culture” and representing a mentality that was “alien to the Soviet way of life.” The novel *Forest of Gods*, in which Sruoga portrayed the lives of inmates in the Nazi concentration camps, was banned from publication. *Už tarybinę lietuvių literatūrą. Lietuvos TSR tarybinių rašytojų susirinkimo, įvykusio 1946 m., medžiaga* (Vilnius: Grožinės literatūros leidykla, 1947), 22–23.

58 “Dagys speech,” VAA, f.761, ap.9, b.35, 61.

59 Ibid., 62.

60 The article by Bartašiūnas entitled “We will pull out at the roots the most wicked enemies of the Lithuanian nation—the Lithuanian German nationalists.” In the article, the commissar reminded his readers that the government amnesty for “members of gangs” was still valid: those who surrendered “will be allowed to atone for their serious crimes.” Those who did not surrender, according to the commissar, could expect “fierce punishment.” Also, anyone who helped the “bandits” would be punished “with all the severity of Soviet laws.” *Tiesa*, May 25, 1945, no. 120.

in the science of Marxism, but also “with love and nurture.” It is clear the speech raised uncomfortable questions for the government. According to the accounts of the security officials, the speech was actively discussed behind the scenes of the congress. There were some who thought that the author would be punished one way or another. At the same time, the security officials noted that the professor’s ideas had far more supporters, and “only a very small percentage disagreed.”⁶¹ At the convention, only People’s Commissar of Education Juozas Žiugžda responded publicly to Dagys’ speech. (Understandably, in the pages of the newspapers, this criticism of the speech also was not published, although the greater part of the Commissar’s speech was printed.) Žiugžda attacked Dagys, accusing him of not knowing the theory and practice of Marxism, Leninism, and Stalinism and contending that it was inappropriate for the professor to talk from “the venerable rostrum about what he himself does not understand.”⁶²

The national aspirations were highlighted even more strongly in the speech by Agriculture Academy Rector Matas Mickis (in 1940–1941, he served as minister of agriculture in the so-called People’s government, and he joined the party in 1949). I will offer more extensive citations from his speech because it was not published in the press. According to the rector, Lithuanians were a small nation. “Various invaders lay claim to its sovereignty”: Polish landlords, Germans, czarist Russia, which not only sought to enslave, but also took away the press.⁶³ However, the “small nation” also wanted to be free. It wanted to preserve its culture and language. On the other hand, Mickis pointed out, Lithuanians had a “great history.” And this showed that Lithuanians were a “mature nation,” with their own national character and customs, which they valued, and they were no less proud of these customs than large nations were of theirs.⁶⁴

Like the Russians, Mickis continued, the Lithuanian nation had many heroes, who nurtured its statehood. They know what Vytautas the Great, a hero of our nation, had given them. No one can deny the significance of his feats. He had been victorious at Žalgiris, and he had stopped the German onslaught from the West. He made a contribution to the history of mankind. V. Kudirka also gave a lot to the nation. (According to Mickis, Stalin was enthralled by the national anthem of Kudirka, by its dignity and beauty.)

61 “Guzevičiaus report to Kobulov,” July 14, 1945, 80.

62 Guzevičius called the statement of Žiugžda memorable.

63 “Mickis speech,” VAA, f.761, ap.9, b.35, 72.

64 *Ibid.*, 73.

He also emphasized in his speech that for a small nation the “true road” is the socialist path: “we Lithuanians do not want anything more than to be equal, not to be thrown in the shade, and only the socialist system provides such conditions.” The Soviet system, the professor said, also can solve the national question: “The essence of socialism is that it allows all nations to live their cultural lives freely.”⁶⁵

However, according to Mickis the practices of socialism do not always conform to the ideas proclaimed. In rural areas, “there was a lot of tactlessness and arbitrariness” from the Soviet administration. Arrivals from other republics, not knowing the Lithuanian language, insulted it. There were numerous institutions in which representatives and functionaries could not understand Lithuanian. All this was vexing to Lithuanians, Mickis explained. As a result, in his opinion, the fear of Russification arose. As an example, Mickis pointed out the Utena district policeman, who mocked the Lithuanian language. Below I will quote an extract from the archival copy of the speech: “He [the policeman] is the same kind of *black hundred* of whom there were many in the times of the czar. (*applause*) The government will throw such refuse out of our republic. (*applause*) They are not only enemies of our nation, but also enemies of socialism. (*applause*) The militiaman visits a peasant and tells him to open his suitcases... [he is robbing – *author’s comment*] (*applause*)”⁶⁶ If you want socialism, Mickis ended his speech, you yourself must set an example.⁶⁷

The national sentiments of the intelligentsia found expression in other forms in the congress. Even though at the very beginning of the congress Gedvilas had stated that it was the first congress of its kind, in their speeches several delegates publicly recalled the Vilnius Seimas, in which Lithuanians raised the political demand for the first time: “autonomy for ethnographic Lithuania, with the capital Vilnius.”⁶⁸ Thus, the speakers emphasized the historic link between the Lithuanian SSR congress of the intelligentsia and the Great Seimas of Vilnius.

65 Ibid., 73.

66 Ibid., 76–77.

67 Neither Dagys nor Mickis was persecuted because of the speeches they held at the congress. (At the time, Dagys was under observation as “a nationalist” by the intelligence forces. See Tininis, *Komunistinio režimo nusikaltimai Lietuvoje 1944–1953/The Crimes of the Communist Regime in Lithuania*, 14.) However, later both of them experienced some pressure. In 1948, Dagys was severely criticized as the author of the handbook and was removed from his position as head of the Department of Plant Anatomy and Physiology at Vilnius University. In 1953, he was again appointed to this position, which he held until 1977. A. Merkys, “On the 100th anniversary of Professor Jonas Dagys.” *Biologija*, 53, no. 2 (2007): 3.

68 Motieka, “Didysis Vilniaus seimas,” 297.

(It is understandable that neither in *Tiesa* nor in *Tarybų Lietuva* were there any references to the Great Seimas of Vilnius.) Professor Pranas Mažylis (a member of the interwar Social Democratic Party and member of the Academy as of 1946) recalled that in the same hall in 1905 there had been “a large meeting of Lithuania’s peasants, workers and intellectuals, usually called the Great Seimas of Vilnius.”⁶⁹ He himself had participated in it, and the Seimas had had a “significant impact on the revolution.” Writer Karolis Račkauskas-Vairas also remembered the Seimas. According to him, it had been a congress of “Lithuanian peasants,” which had “pushed our people,” shaken the nation out of apathy, and shown it a new path.⁷⁰

A few more meaningful facts merit mention that testify to the national ambitions of a sufficiently large number of the participants in the congress. These facts again exemplify how on some issues the approaches of the LSSR government and the intelligentsia, which promoted the “socialist road” but also emphasized the importance of the national factor, were different. Overall, it could be argued that part of the Lithuanian intelligentsia certainly supported the model of national communism. On the last day of the convention, after a sufficiently orthodox speech by A. Sniečkus, the text of an appeal to Lithuania’s intelligentsia was discussed.⁷¹ The literary critic Kostas Korsakas presented it to the congress. In the hall discussions arose on the text of the appeal and various additions were suggested.⁷² Academician Matulis, discussing the tasks of the intelligentsia, suggested adding “the Lithuanianization of Vilnius” to the appeal. According to him, the citizens of Poland were departing and Vilnius remained “half-empty.”⁷³ He stressed the important of pursuing the Lithuanianization of Vilnius. This was met with “long applause.” (According to Matulis, “Lithuanianization” was equally important in the case of Klaipėda, the major port city of Lithuania.) There were other proposals, including one regarding the return from the USSR to Lithuania of all Lithuanian intellectuals so that they could carry out restoration work in the homeland (this was also followed by thunderous applause). It is likely that the government did not

69 “Mažylis speech,” VAA, f.761, ap.9, b.35, 54.

70 “Račkauskas speech,” VAA, f.761, ap.9, b.35, 124.

71 “Pirmojo tarybų Lietuvos inteligentijos suvažiavimo Kreipimasis į visus tarybų Lietuvos inteligentus,” *Tiesa*, July 26, 1945, no. 172.

72 “The discussion of the appeal,” VAA, f.761, ap.9, b.35, 176–77.

73 On 22 September 1944, the LSSR government and representatives of Poland’s national liberation committee signed an agreement on the repatriation of people. For more information, see Vitalija Stravinskienė, *Tarų gimtinės ir tėvynės. Lietuvos SSR gyventojų repatriacija į Lenkiją* (Vilnius: LII, 2011), 95–100.

expect such a proposal to be made. Council of People's Commissars Chairman M. Gedvilas, who was chairing the meeting, agreed to include the provision concerning the Lithuanianization of Vilnius in the appeal. Regarding the second proposal, he contended that it would be meaningless, since the government was already "making every effort to return them [the intellectuals]." In the end, the delegates scrapped this point.

The printed message in the official press on the work of the last day and the text of the appeal⁷⁴ differed from the text agreed on by the Congress delegates and approved by the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars. In the official accounts in the press, there was no mention of making Vilnius more "Lithuanian," a goal that was dear to the Lithuanian intellectuals who were willing to cooperate with the Soviet government. Rather, there were only references to the importance of the "reconstruction and accommodation" of Vilnius.

Conclusions

First, the government of Soviet Lithuania, by organizing the congress, sought to draw the intellectuals into the "construction" of the socialist system and the "fight against bourgeois nationalists." The express approval of the intelligentsia for Soviet policies would have served the legitimization of the government. This was especially important, as the partisan movement was growing stronger. One should note that there were signs of such approval: the appeal to the intelligentsia of Soviet Lithuania was adopted, with greetings sent to Stalin. Second, the participants in the congress, the Lithuanian intelligentsia, the creative elite, in general agreed to support the "construction" of socialism under the condition that Lithuanian culture would be nurtured and favored. Not coincidentally, the congress proclaimed the necessity of making Vilnius, the old, traditional capital of Lithuania, "Lithuanian." This goal was shared by various groups of intellectuals. Third, one can assume that some of the members of the leadership of the Lithuanian SSR thought that it would be possible to strike a deal with the "old" Lithuanian intelligentsia, which had taken form "in bourgeois Lithuania." The government would satisfy the most important (national) expectations of the intelligentsia, while the intelligentsia would offer support for the government's policies. Unfortunately, while Lithuania's Communists may have entertained such visions, they were never realized in practice. Moscow began to force Lithuania's

74 *Tiesa*, July 15, 1945, no. 164.

Sovietization. Not coincidentally, visitors from Moscow who observed the congress offered critical assessments of its results.⁷⁵ Finally, if during the summer of 1945 the policies of the Soviet Lithuanian government were dominated by the spirit of national bolshevism, for some of Lithuania's intellectuals, this was understood as national communism. This vision of a form of communism that would be at least in part a realization of national autonomy was to prove fleeting.

Archival Sources

Archives

- Lietuvos Ypatingasis archyvas [Lithuanian Special Archive]. f.1771 [Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party].
- Lietuvos Ypatingasis archyvas [Lithuanian Special Archive]. f. 3377 [Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party Institute of Marxism–Leninism].
- Lietuvos Ypatingasis archyvas [Lithuanian Special Archive]. f.K41 [State Security Committee of the Lithuanian SSR (NKGB-MGB-KGB)].
- Vilniaus apskrities archyvas [Vilnius County Archive]. f.761 [The Executive Committee of Vilnius City].
- Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos instituto bibliotekos rankraštynas [The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore Manuscript Library]. f.1 [Writers and linguists].
- Rossiiskij gosudarstvennyj archiv socialno-politicheskij istorii [Russian state archive of socio-political history]. f.597 [Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Lithuanian Bureau].

Published Documents

- Už tarybinę lietuvių literatūrą. Lietuvos TSR tarybinių rašytojų susirinkimo, įvykusio 1946 m., medžiaga [For Soviet Lithuanian Literature. Materials of Meeting of

75 In the report that was submitted to G. Malenkov, the controllers from the CPSU apparatus noted that the Congress of the intelligentsia was held late, that the LCP leaders could not get a handle on the moods of the intellectuals, and finally that during the Congress hostile statements were made. *SSSR i Litva v gody vtoroj mirovoj voiny, Sbornik dokumentov*, ed. A. Kasparavičius, Č. Laurinavičius, and N. Lebedeva, vol. 2 (Vilnius: LII, 2012), 891. In August, just after the Congress, Gudaitis-Guzevičius was removed from his office. According to the confidential report, he was dismissed because of his “incompetence” and “ineffectiveness” in the fight against the “Lithuanian national underground.” (See Vytautas Tininis, *Sovietinė Lietuva ir jos veikėjai* (Vilnius: Enciklopedija, 1994), 183–84.) He was appointed the head of the Committee of Culture and Education in 1945. He later served as the head of the State Publishing House, and from 1953 until 1957 he was the Minister of Culture.

Soviet Lithuanian Writers, held in 1946]. Vilnius: Grožinės literatūros leidykla, 1947.

SSSR i Litva v gody vtoroj mirovoj voiny. Sbornik dokumentov [Soviet Union and Lithuania during World War II. Documents]. Edited by A. Kasparavičius, Č. Laurinavičius, and N. Lebedeva, vol. 2, Vilnius: LII, 2012.

Archiv Stalina. Dokumenty vysshych organov partijnoj i gosudarstvennoj vlasti [Stalin's Archive. Documents of Supreme Party and State Institutions]. Edited by V.N. Chaustov, V.P. Naumov, and N.S. Plotnikova. Moscow: Materik, 2006.

Newspapers

“Garbingi mūsų inteligentų uždaviniai” [The honorable Tasks of Our Intelligentsia]. *Tiesa*, July 10, 1945, 159.

Janušytė, Liūnė. “Ką kalba delegatai” [What Delegates Say]. *Tiesa*, July 12, 1945, 161.

“V. Molotovo pranešimas TSRS Aukščiausioje taryboje” [V. Molotov's Report in the Session of Soviet Supreme Council]. *Tarybų Lietuva*, February 6, 1944, 6.

“Pirmojo tarybų Lietuvos inteligentijos suvažiavimo Kreipimasis į visus tarybų Lietuvos inteligentus” [Address of the First Congress of the Intelligentsia of Soviet Lithuania]. *Tiesa*, July 26, 1945, 172.

“Žengti išvien su visa darbo liaudimi” [Together with Working People]. *Tarybų Lietuva* [Soviet Lithuania], July 12, 1945, 153.

Bibliography

Anušauskas, Arvydas. *Lietuvių tautos sovietinis naikinimas 1940–1958 metais* [The Annihilation of the Lithuanian Nation by the Soviets, 1940–1958]. Vilnius: Mintis, 1996.

Anušauskas, Arvydas, et. al. *Lietuva 1940–1990 m. Okupuotos Lietuvos istorija* [Lithuania 1940–1990. The History of Occupied Lithuania]. Vilnius: Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos centras, 2005.

Brandenberger, David. *National Bolshevism. Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931–1956*. Cambridge–London: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Grybkauskas, Saulius. *Sovietinė nomenklatūra ir pramonė Lietuvoje 1965–1985 metais* [The Soviet Nomenclature and Industry in Lithuania in 1965–1985]. Vilnius: LII, 2011.

Hosking, Geoffrey. *Rulers and Victims. The Russians in the Soviet Union*. Cambridge–London: Harvard University Press, 2006.

- Ivanauskas, Vilius. *Lietuviškoji nomenklatūra biurokratinėje sistemoje. Tarp stagnacijos ir dinamikos (1968–1988)* [Lithuanian Soviet Nomenclature within the Bureaucratic System: Between Stagnation and Dynamics (1968–1988)]. Vilnius: LII, 2011.
- Kašauskienė, Vanda. *Istorijos spąstuose. Justo Paleckio gyvenimo ir veiklos bruožai 1899–1980* [In the Pitfall of History. The Life and Activity of Justas Paleckis 1899–1980]. Vilnius: Gairės, 2014.
- Laurinavičius, Česlovas. “Vvodnaya statya” [Introduction] *SSSR i Litva v gody vtoroj mirovoj voiny*. Sbornik dokumentov [The Soviet Union and Lithuania during World War II. Documents], edited by A. Kasparavičius, Č. Laurinavičius, and N. Lebedeva, vol. 2, 31–44. Vilnius: LII, 2012.
- Malia, Martin. *The Soviet Tragedy. A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991*. New York–Oxford: The Free Press, 1994.
- Mark, Eduard. “Revolution by Degrees. Stalin’s National Front Strategy for Europe 1941–1947” *Cold War International History Project. Working Paper no. 31*. Washington: Wilson Center, 2001.
- Mevius, Martin. *Agents of Moscon. The Hungarian Communist Party and the Origin of Socialist Patriotism 1941–1953*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004.
- Motieka, Egidijus. “Didysis Vilniaus seimas” [The Great Assembly of Vilnius]. *Lietuvių atgimimo istorijos studijos*. Vol. 11. Vilnius: Saulabrolis, 1996.
- Paleckis, Justas. *Pergalės salutas* [Victory Salute]. Vilnius: Mintis, 1985.
- Paleckis, Justas. *Ieškojome tikrų kelių* [We Were Looking for Real Roads]. Vilnius: Vaga, 1987.
- Pocius, Mindaugas. *Kita mėnulio pusė. Lietuvos partizanų kova su kolaboravimu 1944–1953 metais* [Far Side of the Moon. The Struggle of Partisans Against Collaboration in Lithuania, 1944–1953]. Vilnius: LII, 2009.
- Pons, Silvio. “Stalin and the European Communists after World War Two (1943–1948),” In *Post-war Reconstruction in Europe. International Perspectives, 1945–1949*, ed. M. Mazower et al. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. 121–38.
- van Ree, Erik. “The Concept of ‘National Bolshevism’: An Interpretative Essay,” *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 6 (2001): 289–307.
- Roberts, Geoffrey. *Stalin’s Wars. From World War to Cold War, 1939–1953*. New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Rudokas, Jonas. “Tarybinė Vilnijos polonizacija 1950–1956 metais” [The Polonization of Eastern Lithuania in 1950–1956]. *Gairės*, 7 (2011): 16–20.
- Sirutavičius, Vladas. “Tautinis komunizmas ir jo raiška. Istoriografiniai problemos aspektai.” [National Communism and its Expression. Historiographical Aspects of the Problem]. *Istorija*, 3 (2013): 48–58.

- Sygkelos, Yannis. “The National Discourse of the Bulgarian Communist Party on National Anniversaries and Commemorations (1944–1948).” *Nationalities Papers* 37, no. 4 (2009): 425–42.
- Stravinskienė, Vitalija. “Lietuvių ir lenkų santykiai Rytų ir Pietryčių Lietuvoje: 1944 m. antra pusė–1953 m” [Inter-Ethnic Relations in East and Southeast Lithuania: late 1944–1953], *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis* [Lithuanian Historical Yearbook]. 2007, no. 2 (2008): 101–20.
- Stravinskienė, Vitalija. *Tarp gimtinės ir tėvynės: Lietuvos SSR gyventojų repatriacija į Lenkiją*. [Between Mother-country and Homeland: The Repatriation of Citizens of Lithuanian SSR to Poland]. Vilnius: LII, 2011.
- Streikus, Arūnas. “Sovietinio režimo pastangos pakeisti Lietuvos gyventojų tautinį identitetą” [Attempts by the Soviet Regime to Change the National Identity of the Lithuanians]. *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 1 (2007): 7–30.
- Šadžius, Henrikas. “VKP (b) CK Lietuvos biuro veikla organizuojant tautinio pasipriešinimo slopinimą” [Activities of the Lithuanian Bureau of CC of the CPSU in Organizing the Suppression of National Resistance]. *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis 1997*. Vilnius: Žara, 1998. 240–70.
- Mindaugas Tamošaitis, “Justas Paleckis ir jaunieji valstiečiai liaudininkai” [Justas Paleckis and Young Populist]. *Vilniaus istorijos metraštis* (2007): 137–60.
- Tininis, Vytautas. *Sovietinė Lietuva ir jos veikėjai* [Soviet Lithuania and Its Agents]. Vilnius: Enciklopedija, 1994.
- Tininis, Vytautas. *Sniečkus. 33 metai valdžioje. Antano Sniečkaus biografinė apybraiža* [Sniečkus. 33 Years in Power. The Political Biography of Antanas Sniečkus]. Vilnius, 2000.
- Tininis, Vytautas. *Komunistinio režimo nusikaltimai Lietuvoje 1944 – 1953/The Crimes of the Communist Regime in Lithuania in 1944–1953*. Vilnius: Generolo Jono Žemaičio Lietuvos karo akademija, 2003.
- Tininis, Vytautas. *Prievartinė mobilizacija į raudonąją armiją* [Forced Conscription into the Red Army]. Vilnius: LGGRTC, 2014.
- Tismăneanu, Vladimir. *Stalinizmas na každą okazje. Polityczna historia rumuńskiego komunizmu* [Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism]. Krakow: Universitas, 2010.
- Truska, Liudas. *Lietuva 1938–1953 metais* [Lithuania 1938–1953]. Kaunas: Šviesa, 1995.
- Zaremba, Marcin. *Komunizm, legitymacja, nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce* [Communism, Legitimation, Nationalism. The Nationalistic Legitimation of the Communist Government in Poland]. Warsaw: Trio, 2001.
- Zubkova, Elena. *Pribaltika i Kreml. 1940–1953* [Baltic Countries and the Kremlin, 1940–1953]. Moscow: Rossijskaja političeskaja enciklopedija, 2008.



Nikola Baković

“No One Here is Afraid of Blisters or Work!”

Social Integration, Mobilization and Cooperation in Yugoslav Youth Brigades. The Example of Čačak Region Brigades (1946–1952)

In this article I analyze the organizational mechanism of youth labor projects and the place of ideology and agitation-propaganda in the everyday lives of young laborers. I adopt a local micro-historical perspective in my analysis of the organization, documented activities and everyday functioning of youth brigades from the Čačak region of Serbia that participated in the earliest labor projects in Yugoslavia (1946–1952). The documentation on the brigades reveals omnipresent Party surveillance of brigadiers (with the ultimate aim of selecting the most “appropriate” elements for Party membership), but it also offers a glimpse into the ambivalent attitudes of youths (ranging from passive resistance to conformist participation and cooperation). The daily routine of brigade life helps further reflection on emancipatory and modernizing effects that transformed local society and proved notably more far-reaching and long-lasting than the superficial effects of agitprop efforts.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, labor actions, Čačak, youth, agitprop, shock workers

Voluntary youth labor actions organized by Yugoslav socialist authorities stemmed from the twofold set of influences, global and local. The most important external role model on which the Yugoslav projects were based was the Soviet *Stakhanovite* movement, together with the system of “shock-work,” public works and competitions, common to all socialist countries and the interwar corporatist societies.¹ The local roots were sought in the pre-modern tradition of communal labor during harvests (*moba*) and the antifascist resistance in the Užice region (Serbia) and Sanička dolina (Bosnia), where locals helped the partisan army by harvesting crops within the range of German artillery in 1941/42.² Upon liberation, a wave of initiatives aimed at providing winter fuel and clearing the war debris was instigated by the United Alliance of Antifascist

1 See Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR 1935–1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

2 Predrag M. Anastasijević, *Voluntary Labour Actions of the Yugoslav Youth* (New Delhi: Tanjug, 1952), 6; Srećko Mihailović and Grujica Spasović, *Tito, radne akcije. Stvaraoci neodoljivog poleta* (Belgrade: Istraživačko-izdavački centar Saveza socijalističke omladine Srbije, 1979), 11–13.

Youth of Yugoslavia³ during the winter 1944/45.⁴ The network of similar local initiatives quickly spread among youths in liberated parts of Yugoslavia. This was just a prelude to grand infrastructural projects for which the voluntary youth labor was used as an asset of reconstruction and industrialization processes.

The first federally supported project was the “Youth Railway” Brčko–Banovići, which connected the fertile wheat fields of Vojvodina and Slavonia with coal mines in central Bosnia. From May until November 1946, over 62,000 members of the People’s Youth of Yugoslavia, with very little in the way of proper machinery, completed the railway 22 days before the deadline. The following year saw an even greater endeavor, the construction of the Šamac–Sarajevo railway, which was built by over 210,000 Yugoslav and 5,000 foreign youths.⁵ However, the most ambitious projects on the federal level were the construction of the Zagreb–Belgrade stretch of the Brotherhood and Unity Highway and the building of the city of New Belgrade.⁶ Together with numerous labor projects on the federal and local level, over one-million Yugoslav youths participated in the country’s reconstruction and fulfillment of the First Five Year Plan,⁷ with an astounding rate of 80 percent of eligible youngsters applying to work as part of the labor brigades.⁸

Already in 1950, some Yugoslav politicians and economists criticized this system for its alleged financial inefficiency, as well as for its potentially anti-industrial over-emphasis on manual labor. Consequently, there was a halt in federally backed projects beginning in 1952 and lasting until 1958, when the initiatives were reinvigorated with the construction of a new stretch of the Brotherhood and Unity Highway. The financial burden and the organizational complexity of federal actions were always weighed against their benefits for the Yugoslav regime. Although the maintenance of youth camps and the organization of brigadiers’ extra-labor activities cost far more than the hiring and lodging of qualified workers, Tito never underestimated the value of such endeavors for

3 This mass organization was renamed the People’s Youth (*Narodna omladina*) in May 1946.

4 *Beograd – Grad akcijaša* (Belgrade: Gradska konferencija Saveza socijalističke omladine Beograda, 1985), 18.

5 Mihailović and Srećković, *Stvaraoci neodoljivog poleta*, 23–27, 29–31, 114.

6 Slobodan Selinić, “Omladina gradi Jugoslaviju (Savezne omladinske radne akcije u Jugoslaviji 1946–1963),” *Arhin, Časopis Arbina Srbije i Crne Gore* 1–2 (2005): 88–89.

7 Slobodan Selinić, “Počeci Novog Beograda – prva faza izgradnje Novog Beograda 1947–1950,” *Tokovi istorije* 4 (2007): 75.

8 Srećko Mihailović, *Omladinske radne akcije. Rezultati socioloških istraživanja* (Belgrade: Istraživačko-izdavački centar Saveza socijalističke omladine Srbije, 1985), 9–10.

the ideological indoctrination of young Yugoslavs, whose loyalty was won by offering them professional, social and intellectual resources otherwise unavailable in their native environment. He believed that these expensive and demanding activities had to be provided to the brigades, should a sufficient recruitment rate be achieved, because “if youngsters are given only shovels and cramps, no one will go.” A strikingly militarized atmosphere in the camps was not a coincidence for Tito, since “people forged through work can hold on through every struggle, be it in work or in war.” Labor projects were an intrinsic part of the socialist project of creating a new man, a place “where the new people are forged, with a new understanding of work.”⁹

In this article, I analyze the “first wave” of youth labor projects as one of the tools of power in the creation of a sense of belonging to a cohesive multinational community of Yugoslavs during the immediate postwar period. Voluntary youth work was not only a convenient means to secure free labor for ambitious infrastructural projects, but also a “social adhesive,” aimed at bringing together youths from the most distant parts of the country in order to disseminate the ideological tenet of “brotherhood and unity” between various representatives of the Yugoslav nationalities. The primary role of members of the younger generations in this process was that of a far-sighted, “tempered” (but in the long run also “tempering”) political and social consolidator of the new system, which ultimately was supposed to solidify the newly re-conceptualized social relations and power structures, simultaneously internalizing the omnipresent revolutionary ideological narrative. Youth projects also served to enable the authorities to select a reliable future party cadre, ultimately expanding the Communist Party’s support basis. On the other hand, brigadiers used the projects as opportunities to gain otherwise unavailable material, social and educational resources and improve their chances for upward social mobility. The very act of volunteering for socialist reconstruction projects (although the truly voluntary nature of brigadiers’ recruitment in this period was always in question) entailed the youths’ implicit cooperation with the regime, the ideological “pills” of which were (willingly) swallowed, along with far more significant and longer-lasting benefits of emancipation and education.

I will examine the role of these projects by embedding a local micro-perspective of brigades sent from the region of Čačak (Serbia) during the reconstruction and First Five Year Plan actions (1946–1952) within the broader

9 Mihailović and Spasović, *Stvaraoći neodoljivog poleta*, 21–31.

postwar historical context in Yugoslavia, as well as within the already existing body of scholarly work. The article's shifting analytical focus, swinging between the official "top-down" and the local experience helps shed new light on the ambivalent relationship between the power-holding center and the potency of the agency of individual subjects in the circumstances of an overarching socio-political transformation. Thus, I explore the non-dichotomous character of the interaction between the "regulating" state and the "regulated" society, which was highly ambivalent and often a contingent process. The brigades under discussion came from the central Serbian municipalities (*srez*) of Ljubić-Trnava, Dragačevo and Rudnik, as well as from the towns of Kraljevo and Čačak. The following federal actions were included in the analysis: the Brčko–Banovići railway (1946), the Šamac–Sarajevo railway (1947), the construction of New Belgrade (1948–1950), the Brotherhood and Unity Highway (1948–1950), the Doboj–Banja Luka railway (1951) and the Konjic–Jablanica railway (1952). I analyze various features of organizational mechanisms and everyday modes of social integration, including recruitment process, motivational concepts of "shock status," the screening of brigadiers for prospective Party membership, the involving of brigadiers in an array of physical, educational and cultural activities with a strong modernizing pretext, and the creation of trans-ethnic and trans-national social networks through contacts with peers from other republics and countries.

Until the first decade of this century, historical works dealing with Yugoslav youth labor projects were surprisingly sparse, probably because of the general post-socialist disinterest in the history of labor movements, a topic too closely entwined with the perceived communist utilization of science. Special monographs dedicated to individual actions, albeit devoid of much analytical value, remain an important source of information on the organizational setup of brigades, as well as sources of statistical data. They were usually published to honor anniversaries of certain projects, as well as to promote the ideologies on which these projects were based.¹⁰ Sociologists Rudi Supek and Srećko Mihailović did significant research concerning youth's perceptions and motivational factors. However, their research mostly referred to the later phase of labor projects

10 Anastasijević, *Voluntary Labour Actions; Beograd – Grad akcijaša*; Mihailović and Spasović, *Stvaraoši neodoljivog poleta*; *Radne akcije Narodne omladine Hrvatske* (Zagreb: Centralni komitet Narodne omladine Hrvatske, 1949); *Udarnici prve smene graditelja omladinske pruge* (Belgrade: Novo pokolenje, 1946). In this respect, a recently published monograph containing basic information on all labor actions in socialist Yugoslavia should be mentioned for its anthological comprehensiveness, despite its analytical dearth: Slobodan V. Ristanović, *To su naših ruku dela. Herojska i slavna epopeja omladinskih radnih akcija 1941–1990* (Belgrade: Kosmos, 2014).

and is of little relevance to the period discussed here.¹¹ Very important recent contributions to the historiography on labor actions, both because of the wealth of data they include and because of their analytical value, are found in Slobodan Selinić's articles and Saša Vejzagić's MA thesis.¹² The importance of this secondary literature notwithstanding, however, the main sources for this article were youth labor brigades' records kept at the Regional Historical Archives of Čačak, as well as the personal collection of lawyer Velimir Cvetić, a communist activist from Čačak and the commander of a 1946 brigade. I also used the relevant press coverage from the heavily ideologized local weekly *Slobodni glas*, which was published by the local Popular Front branch.

Organizational and Recruitment Mechanisms

Brigades from Čačak region, apart from their municipal designation (i.e. *ljubičko-trnavska*), were usually named after distinguished local communists or war heroes. Thus, the first brigades sent in 1946 were named after Ratko Mitrović and Bata Janković. On the other hand, high school brigades from the town of Čačak got their name in honor of Rade Azanjac, a 20-year-old political commissar shot in late 1941. Brigades were serially numbered, promoting the idea of a continuous and seemingly constant outflow of youth workforce to dispersed construction sites across the country. This way, the new regime tried to enforce its own traditions, drawn from the historical legacy of the persecution of communists in the interwar period and their subsequent fight against the occupiers and quislings, thereby passing these traditions on to generations that had been too young to have had personal experience of these events.¹³

The “Ratko Mitrović” and “Bata Janković” brigades, which are best documented in the available sources, attracted predominantly (although not exclusively) agricultural youth from villages around Čačak, most of whom had already completed their education and thus were not tied to the school year

11 Mihailović, *Omladinske radne akcije*; Rudi Supek, *Omladina na putu do bratstva. Psihosociologija radne akcije* (Belgrade: Mladost, 1963).

12 Slobodan Selinić, “Život na omladinskim radnim akcijama u Jugoslaviji 1946–1963,” *Arhiv, Časopis Arhiva Srbije i Crne Gore* 1–2 (2007): 119–37; Slobodan Selinić, “Omladina gradi Jugoslaviju”; Saša Vejzagić, “The Importance of Youth Labor Actions in Socialist Yugoslavia: A Case Study of the Motorway ‘Brotherhood and Unity,’” (MA thesis, Central European University, 2013).

13 “Ratko Mitrović” brigades even had a slogan: “We bear his [Ratko Mitrović's] name, the whole brigade is proud of him!” (“Ratka Mitrovića mi nosimo ime, cela brigada ponosi se njime!”), *Slobodni glas*, August 3, 1946, 2.

schedule. They usually left for campsites in spring and late autumn, when the agricultural season allowed. The “Rade Azanjac” brigades mostly consisted of teenagers with urban and non-agricultural backgrounds who studied and lived in Čačak. They would be dispatched in July and August, when schools were not in session.¹⁴ It was not uncommon, especially in 1946/47, for the returning brigades to be greeted with lush public celebrations and agitprop slogans in the town center.



Figure 1. Citizens of Čačak await the return of the local brigade from Bosnia, November 1946
(Source: Regional Historical Archives of Čačak)

Youngsters from the neighboring town of Kraljevo were also part of Čačak brigades until 1949, when they started to form their own brigades.¹⁵ As far as the practical meaning of the term “youth” is concerned, the documents show that most brigadiers were between 16 and 25 years of age, although there were some exceptional cases of brigade members being in their late 20s and even early 40s.¹⁶

14 D.Z., “Treća ORB ‘Ratko Mitrović’ otišla na izgradnju Omladinske pruge,” *Slobodni glas*, September 7, 1946, 6.

15 Dušan V. Janičijević, *Dobrovoljni rad omladine Kraljeva* (Kraljevo: JP PTT Srbija, 1999), 61.

16 In brigades from other parts of Yugoslavia there were documented cases of brigadiers who were younger than fifteen (even twelve years old), probably due to the desperate insistence of the local organization on fulfilling the prescribed quotas (Selinić, “Omladina gradi Jugoslaviju,” 91; Selinić, “Počeci Novog Beograda,” 93).

Mobilizing youth for labor actions was a complex task for mass organizations since it had to be (or at least seem to have been) performed strictly on a non-coercive basis. Yet, the Party's youth organization, the Union of the Communist Youth of Yugoslavia (*Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije*, hereafter: SKOJ),¹⁷ and other organizers set ambitious plans with territorial recruitment quotas. These quotas depended on various specificities of the respective areas (for example, in regions with numerous ethnic minorities, organizers were not expected to draw in big numbers because the loyalties of the local populations were sometimes in question).¹⁸ Due to the centralized nature of establishing quotas, local SKOJ branches were often in a tricky situation. On the one hand, they needed to attract the required number of brigadiers, but on the other hand, it was an imperative that these youths apply voluntarily. There were many (albeit not numerous) cases of coercive collective recruitment, especially in regions notorious for their anti-Party stance.¹⁹ Moreover, certain categories of prisoners were also taken to construction sites as a part of their sentences, and some youths, such as 36 men from Kraljevo, fulfilled their military service obligations by participating in the construction of the Šabac–Zvornik railway.²⁰

Although blatant force was not permitted (at least nominally), it can be assumed that multifaceted informal means of persuasion were used to increase the number of brigadiers. In the countryside, agitprop units developed extensive propaganda aimed at presenting labor actions as a catalyst for social mobility and a life-enriching experience, which would in no way handicap the families of the youths during periods of seasonal work (they were promised help with house chores while children would be away).²¹ Schoolchildren were recruited through a web of students who were either SKOJ members or had already

17 In 1948, SKOJ and the People's Youth merged into one youth supra-organization, keeping the latter's name.

18 Selinić, “Omladina gradi Jugoslaviju,” 91–92, 95.

19 Vežzagić, “Motorway ‘Brotherhood and Unity,’” 53–55. Selinić emphasizes the almost military nature of the recruitment process (not the least because in the sources themselves recruitment is often referred to as “mobilization”) (Selinić, “Počeci Novog Beograda,” 81).

20 Jančićjević, *Rad omladine Kraljeva*, 95.

21 In the villages of Atenica, Katrga and Rošci, the local commanders' forceful method of agitation was stigmatized as “unpolitical” and “hostile,” but it was also pointed out that “we still need a sufficient number of youths” (“Budući zadaci osnovnih organizacija ljubičko-trnavskog sreza po pitanju formiranja frontovskih radnih brigada,” *Slobodni glas*, June 10, 1949, 2). However, a quote from the local newspaper vividly depicts the indirect and informal methods of pressure that were employed to entice youths: “There should be no youngster who would not apply for the Youth Railway construction!” (B. Kostić, “Do 16. aprila treba izvršiti izbor omladinaca,” *Slobodni glas*, April 12, 1946, 6).

participated in such projects, as well as teachers who organized special lectures on the importance of the initiatives. Students who were doing poorly in their studies were attracted by prospects of special assistance in preparing for their make-up exams while the projects were underway.²²

At first, collective agitation was the most widespread recruitment method, entailing group lectures and promotion. However, the Party realized that this approach did not bear satisfactory results, so SKOJ members were urged to undertake more personalized, individual agitation, designing specific means of persuasion and motivational factors for each potential brigadier. This was especially important for schoolchildren, who often failed to apply because of their parents' reluctance (to the great dismay of local commissars).²³ Still, the Čačak branch of SKOJ had no major problems fulfilling their quotas. The first brigade sent to the Youth Railway in 1946 (initially supposed to gather 200 brigadiers) had 275 members selected from a pool of 350 applicants, including one who had been rejected but who then had to be accepted after he refused to get off the train to Brčko.²⁴ Brigades were divided into troops (*čete*), usually hosting around 50 brigadiers each. The surprisingly high number of 1,331 brigadiers in 1946 increased SKOJ's ambitions, and the planned 1947 quota was raised to 3,000 youths. This target proved easy to reach as well, since in early March the quota for Čačak was surpassed by 40 applicants.²⁵ Village brigades usually had more members than the high school ones (counting up to 400 youths) due to their demographic prevalence.

Although the enthusiastic reports by SKOJ officials have to be taken with a grain of salt, it is obvious that it was a matter of prestige for local leaders not merely to fulfill their quotas, but also to have as great a percentage as possible of the youths of their settlements apply. According to these reports, in some villages, such as Mršinci, every eligible youngster applied for local or federal actions, and in

22 Vežagić, "Motorway 'Brotherhood and Unity,'" 51. In Čačak, the possibility of being accepted to labor projects was used as a motivational factor for bad students to improve their school marks (D. Grbić, "U našem odeljenju prijavilo se 29 učenika," *Slobodni glas*, March 15, 1947, 2).

23 S.A., "Školska omladina Čačka učestvovala na izgradnji auto-puta Bratstvo-Jedinstvo," *Slobodni glas*, May 9, 1948, 4. Every attempt on the part of parents to prevent their children from participating in labor actions (or mass organizations in general) was strongly condemned (I. Pešić, "O pogrešnom odnosu roditelja prema svojoj deci i omladinskim organizacijama," *Slobodni glas*, October 1, 1948, 3).

24 B. Kostić, "Do 16. aprila treba izvršiti izbor omladinaca za sastav radne brigade koja će uzeti učešća na u radovima na izgradnji omladinske pruge," *Slobodni glas*, April 12, 1946, 6; P.Đ., "275 omladinaca našeg okruga gradi omladinsku prugu," *Slobodni glas*, May 8, 1946, 6.

25 Milisav Đurić, "Izgradnja nove omladinske pruge Šamac–Sarajevo najveći zadatak omladine u 1947. godini," *Slobodni glas*, January 16, 1947, 2; "Omladina okruga čačanskog sprema se za omladinsku prugu Šamac–Sarajevo," *Slobodni glas*, March 8, 1947, 3.

Opaljenica the application rate was 96 percent.²⁶ Despite the possibility of these numbers being inflated, internal brigade records show no hints of understaffing problems. Moreover, the fact that many 15-year-old applicants had to be rejected from drafts clearly shows that the youth of the Čačak region saw labor projects as a unique opportunity to improve their social, political and material standing under the new system (as well as to widen their career prospects), despite all probable forms of formal and informal pressure to volunteer. Despite the Party’s nominal dissatisfaction with agitation results, the prescribed quotas were always surpassed, significant differences between the republics notwithstanding.²⁷ Yet, the success of the recruitment efforts should be credited not only to the enthusiasm or pragmatism of the youth, but also to SKOJ branches intentionally setting low quotas for fear of failing to meet them. The organizers were always pleased to accept more brigadiers than originally sought, although this simultaneously burdened them with additional board and lodging costs (which could have contributed to the temporary halt in the organization of federal projects from 1952 until 1958).

Becoming a Shock-Worker

Immediately after the revolution, the Yugoslav authorities introduced the system of competitions and shock-worker awards (*udarništvo*) to develop a culture of adulation of work, as well as to promote agency channels through which the working class could prove their devotion to the new order and be motivated to contribute to its solidification. This system, although it took its name from the Russian term for strike work (*udarniki*), was a virtual copy of the *Stakhanovite* movement developed in the Soviet Union in the second half of the 1930s.²⁸ Just as the Soviet precursor was named after the most prolific miner, Alexei Stakhanov, the Yugoslav version came to be best known by the name of the Bosnian Roma miner Alija Sirotanović, who allegedly broke the coal mining world record in 1949. Since the *udarništvo* movement and system of competitions was introduced

26 “Na smotri u Čačku uzelo je učešća preko 4000 omladinaca iz sreza i grada,” *Slobodni glas*, April 2, 1948, 3; M.D. Rajčević, “Omladina moravičkog sreza u ovoj godini već je dala oko 7000 radnih dana na raznim lokalnim radovima,” *Slobodni glas*, April 2, 1948, 3.

27 For instance, the 1949 quota was surpassed by 27 percent in Bosnia and Herzegovina and only by 3.7 percent in Slovenia (Vežagić, “Motorway ‘Brotherhood and Unity,’” 52–53).

28 The term *udarniki* was widely used in the Soviet Union to designate shock brigades and workers prior to the institutionalization of the Stakhanovite system in 1935. Since the culture of productivity was introduced in Yugoslavia only after World War II, different systems of shock-work were not distinguished in Serbo-Croatian, but were jointly grouped under the label *udarništvo*.

in all production activities in the country, it was also an inseparable feature of youth actions. Work tasks in camps were usually set according to “decimal plans” (*dekadni planovi*, lasting 10 days), at the end of which the most industrious brigade (*udarna brigada*), as well as individual workers (*udarnici*), would be proclaimed.

In order to become a so-called shock-worker, one had to surpass the work norm by 20 percent continuously. If case there were no specified norm, one had to surpass the common work result of the brigade by 30 percent. Brigadiers could also gain the status of shock-worker by applying measures through which 10 percent of the raw materials, fuel or work hours could be saved, or by introducing innovative techniques and methods that improved overall efficiency. The shock-worker status lasted for three months. During that time, in addition to enjoying prestige and respect, the individuals who had been given the award also got convenient material benefits, including better meals, shopping coupons, discounts for various goods, etc.²⁹ These benefits explain the often fierce competition among brigadiers at a worksite, as well as the obsessions of commanders with their brigade attaining the shock status. Although allegedly even Tito expressed concern that this insistence on surpassing norms would harm the health of the youths,³⁰ the brigade documents show that competition and the striving for more were the order of the day in literally every brigade. Typical is the quote of one brigadier at the Youth Railway: “Look, I have 34 blisters. I have never had them before. Tell the others not to be afraid of blisters. No one here is afraid of blisters or work!”³¹ Although the percentage of shock-workers varied according to the respective brigade’s work efficiency, available shock-workers’ lists show that seven to twelve percent of the Čačak brigades were declared shock-workers at some point.³²

Still, the workers had to participate in the competition in a comradesly spirit, lest the rivalries lead to internal hostilities or intrigues among brigadiers. Overemphasizing one’s own work contributions and effort was strongly looked down upon, if not outright condemned by commanders. Such was the case of a

29 Međupostinski istorijski arhiv u Čačku (hereafter: MIAČ), fond Omladinske radne brigade (hereafter: ORB), kutija 2, fascikla 3, *Udarnička legitimacija Nikolić Nikole iz Donje Trepče, December 5, 1948*.

30 Mihailović and Spasović, *Stvaraoci neodoljivog poleta*, 34. One of the reasons for such excessive toiling was also the authorities’ pragmatic insistence during the period of reconstruction that the work effect of unpaid workers should be five times greater than that of paid workers, see Momčilo Mitrović, *Izgnubljene iluzije. Prilozi za društvenu istoriju Srbije 1944–1952* (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 1997), 19.

31 B.M., “Orlova Stena, radni logor čačanske brigade,” *Slobodni glas*, August 30, 1946, 3.

32 MIAČ, ORB, k-3, f-4, *Opšta arhiva 1. čačanske srednjoškolske ORB “Rade Azanjac,” Ruma, July–August 1948*. This is a somewhat lower percentage compared to the overall average for the whole New Belgrade project, during which every seventh brigadier became a shock-worker (Selinić, “Počeci Novog Beograda,” 86).

24-year-old brigadier who (apparently trying to make up for being put in a high-school brigade at such a late age) “had an tendency to show off blisters on his hands and dirt on his suit, overall one sick ambition for a shock-worker’s badge.”³³ On another note, 20-year-old Pantelija Glišović, despite having surpassed norms by 70 percent, was criticized in personal evaluations for “not being an agitator.”³⁴ The order of Main Headquarters of youth brigades on the construction of the Konjic–Jablanica railway in 1952 indicates that the overt enthusiasm (or the unconcealed ambition of their commanders) of some brigades to gain shock-worker status could eventually prove detrimental to the overall work dynamic. The youths were forbidden to work longer than the usual seven hours without the Headquarters’ prior approval, due to bad effect this would have on the overall performance.³⁵ This case represents an interesting official condemnation of an exaggerated work ethic, quite unlike the usual public shaming of lazy brigadiers or those who invested less in their work than they were supposedly capable of.

Selecting the New Cadre

Brigade commanders, by unwritten rule Party members, wrote personal evaluations for each brigadier in order to support or hinder his or her nomination for SKOJ membership. These evaluations had a template-like character, with an established pattern for data input: year/place of birth, nationality, social background, family standing during the war, (non)participation in the Liberation Struggle. Furthermore, the categories for personal impressions consisted of: attitude towards authority, physical effort at work, treatment of state property, conduct with other brigadiers, activity in classes, proneness to (self)criticism and notes on private life. Evaluations concluded with the commander’s opinion on whether the respective comrade was eligible to become a SKOJ member.³⁶

33 MIAČ, ORB, k-3, f-4, *Karakteristike brigadira 1. čačanske srednjoškolske brigade “Rade Azanjac” (1948).*

34 MIAČ, ORB, k-2, f-3, *Kratke biografije predložjenih.*

35 MIAČ, ORB, k-1, f-4, *Odluka o zabrani prekovremenog rada, July 23, 1952.*

36 MIAČ, ORB, k-2, f-1, *Karakteristike brigadira, f-2, Proživnik 2. ljubičko-trnavske brigade; k-3, f-2, Knjiga karakteristika brigadira 2. ljubičko-trnavske brigade (1948); f-3, Karakteristike brigadira 1. srednjoškolske ORB Rade Azanjac (1948); MIAČ, Lični fond Velimira Cvetića (hereafter: VC), *Karakteristike par članova.* Particularly interesting is the fact that brigade commanders put a high value on the contribution of brigadiers (or the lack thereof) to overall socialization within the barracks. Thus, the strongest remarks in some evaluations would be: “in crowds, he was closed off and introverted,” “he is many comrades’ favorite character,” “not serious in conversations with other brigadiers,” “he was always moody when among others,” “she was popular for her jolliness and her decent, comradely life and behavior”. MIAČ, ORB, k-2, f-1, *Karakteristike brigadira 11. srpske brigade, Železnik (1947).**

These documents represent a particularly valuable source, helping historians reconstruct different demographic structures of labor volunteers and testifying to the Party's ever-watchful eye. In compiling their evaluations, commanders paid due attention to the conduct of members of the brigadiers' families during the war, as well as to their current standing towards the Communist Party and "the state of today." One of the more revealing cases was that of a 17-year-old Mileta Čvrkić, nephew of the interwar minister of posts Vojko Čvrkić (known to have supported a rival *četnik* movement³⁷ during the war). Although Mileta's characteristics were judged in a positive light, "special wariness" had to be paid to his education, because he "was surrounded by people with a negative attitude, who could tarnish his righteous development."³⁸ In several other evaluations, the family's attachment to *četnik* movement, which was equated with having "rebel bandits" for relatives or clinging to "reactionary attitudes," was mentioned as a potentially disruptive factor in the rearing of a youth. There was even a case of a former policeman who was fired and expelled from the Party after having beaten up one "reactionary" woman. This policeman went to the Brčko–Banovići action to atone for and recover from his past mistakes.³⁹ However, there were relatively few cases of brigadiers being explicitly considered unreliable on the basis of their family's political affiliations. A probable reason was that individuals coming from extremely hostile families would not volunteer for labor projects anyway and even if they did, their applications most probably would not have been accepted. Still, members of more "benignly hostile" families were accepted to brigades. This can be interpreted as an attempt on the part of the Party to "inject" itself into these families through their offspring or, conversely, as an attempt on the part of the "problematic" families to "whitewash" their past by encouraging participation in the new regime's legitimization.

Available internal documentation of brigade party cells suggest that the cases of resistance and conflict within the brigades most often had a markedly non-political character. The usual incidents occurring at the worksites were mostly

37 *Četnici* is the colloquial term for the monarchist Yugoslav Army in the Homeland (*Jugoslovenska vojska u otadžbini*) that undertook a rebellion against German occupation as early as May 1941, fighting together with partisans until their ideological split in November 1941. They were focused on sparing ethnic Serbs from open confrontations with Nazis, as well as preventing communists from inciting a socialist revolution. Consequently, many *četnik* units entered into tacit collaboration with the Nazi regime, and some commanders ordered severe reprisals against Muslim civilians in Bosnia and Sandžak.

38 MIAČ, ORB, k-3, f-4, *Karakteristike članova 1. srednjoškolske brigade "Rade Azanjac" (1948)*.

39 To make this case even more bizarre, his brigade commander suspected him of having belonged to *četnici* during the war (MIAČ, VC, *Pismo sreskog komiteta SKOJ Okružnom komitetu u Gornjem Milanovcu, April 29, 1946*).

connected to bad maintenance of tools and the scarcity of machines, as well as violations of conduct, such as walking barefoot or wearing dirty uniforms,⁴⁰ or simply sitting idly and failing to comply with the commander’s orders. At campsites, complaints mostly referred to bad hygiene habits, not making one’s bed, and being late for or avoiding morning gymnastics. Female brigadiers were frequently criticized for using their menstrual cycles as an excuse to stay in the camp for an entire day. One girl was reprimanded for taking leave on the pretext of visiting her ill father at home, but actually in order to celebrate Easter.⁴¹ In the course of the Brčko–Banovići project, a bizarre ideologically grounded “hygienic measure” caused a scandal among the brigade party leaders. A female brigadier, apparently from a better-off family, was the only one in her troop to own a toothbrush. The troop leader “expropriated” the toothbrush from its owner and declared it “common property” to be used by all brigadiers, in line with the collectivist spirit. This order was met with the superiors’ condemnation, both for breaching hygienic norms and for misrepresenting the “socialist lifestyle.” Yet there was no recorded disciplinary proceeding against the overtly diligent commander, nor is there evidence that this “expropriation” was corrected.⁴² However, it showed the extent to which the commanders’ lack of education, coupled with a relentless obedience to authority, could often lead to comical interpretations of the official party doctrines.

On the interpersonal level, conflicts usually derived from teenager pranks (such as smearing toothpaste on a comrade in his or her sleep at night), alcohol consumption (despite a strict ban, brigadiers frequently used their leaves to go to nearby villages and get drunk), or “inappropriate” interaction between male and female comrades. One of the commanders’ frequent concerns was

40 The insufficient number of work uniforms, as well as of basic clothing (trousers, shirts and underwear), caused many problems during the 1946 project, but it seems that in later projects these procurements were much better planned, becoming yet another asset with which to attract poor youths to actions. Several brigadiers were strongly criticized for walking to and from the construction site in old and ragged uniforms, although they had received new ones. The commanders reminded them that they would not be allowed to take the new uniforms home, no matter how well they preserved them, whereas walking through the streets of Belgrade in ragged clothes put the brigade in a bad light and only provided malicious reactionaries with additional arguments. MIAČ, ORB, k-2, f-5, *Knjiga dnevne zapovesti 1. čačanske srednjoškolske ORB “Rade Azanjac” od 9.6. do 8.7.1949. i 2. čačanske srednjoškolske ORB “Rade Azanjac” od 8.7. do 5.8.1949.* In the Highway construction camp, there were cases of brigadiers abandoning the brigade without returning their clothes. SKOJ officials back home were instructed to regulate this issue. MIAČ, ORB, k-3, f-1, *Spiskovi brigadiru 1. Ljubičko-trnavske brigade (po četama).*

41 MIAČ, VC, *Pribeležke za sastanke (1947).*

42 MIAČ, VC, *Poledina spiska članova SKOJ (1946).*

keeping peace between their campmates and the locals, since cases of theft, drunken brawls or stealing fruit were quite commonplace.⁴³ Cases of workers who were too rowdy with commanders or engaged in (arguably, a rather superficial sort of) dissent and confrontation were very rare and were connected to pragmatic material problems (i.e., brigadiers who were unsatisfied with their accommodation would sarcastically invite Tito to their luxury resort).⁴⁴ One of the rare instances of open vandalism among Čačak brigadiers occurred in 1948, when some youths who had not been provided new footwear tore down the performance graphs as a sign of protest.⁴⁵

One can offer several hypotheses regarding the reasons for this cooperative attitude. Firstly, brigadiers were mostly too young and immature to be actively politically engaged and form their own independent stance towards the communist regime. Secondly, the voluntary nature of the projects (casual, yet non-negligible aberrations of forced recruitment notwithstanding) made the “infiltration of reactionary elements” rather unlikely. Hence, this potential source of dissent and disobedience was apparently missing. Moreover, a great majority of brigadiers came from rather poor and backward areas, ravaged by the war and postwar poverty. Not only did labor projects present an opportunity for them to gain skills, knowledge, and personal contacts that could potentially improve their social status, but for many they were a rare place where they could secure their mere sustenance. Bearing this in mind, it is understandable that the few instances of resistance and conflict with party members and commanders usually derived from trivial reasons pertaining to personal character or simple material needs, rather than from any profound ideological stance or conflict. For most youths, eager participation in state’s reconstruction projects (coupled with occasional, rather unobtrusive resistance) offered much greater benefits and social capital than any sort of open opposition could ever have provided under the circumstances.

43 MIAČ, ORB, k-1, f-4, *Zapažanja dežurnog brigadira (1952)*; MIAČ, ORB, k-3, f-4, *Opšta arbiva 1. čačanske srednjoškolske ORB “Rade Ažanjac” (July–August, 1948)*.

44 MIAČ, ORB, k-3, f-3, *Zapisnici sa sastanka štaba i partijske ćelije (1949)*.

45 Some youths also threatened not to prolong their stay in the camp if there would not be more straw for beds and meat for lunch. The Party cell dismissed such complaints, claiming that there were “opportunists” who were taking two meal portions, thus leaving other comrades without any food. MIAČ, ORB, k-3, f-3, *Zapisnici sa sastanka štaba i partijske ćelije 5. Ljubičko-trnavske brigade (1948)*.

Youth Education and Politicization

The activities that the Party planned for brigadiers did not come to an end after the seven-hour shifts at the construction sites. The rest of the day was filled with different kinds of additional tasks and programs, which can roughly be grouped into two categories. The first included physical activities aimed at keeping brigadiers fit and increasing their stamina. These activities included regular morning gymnastics, pre-military training, driving lessons, sport matches and athletic competitions. The second group of activities nurtured intellectual and political growth, with a clear intention to educate the youth in various spheres of life and equip them with new skills, yet always within the ideological and theoretical confines of communist dogma. By attempting to engage every single brigadier in as many of these activities as possible, the authorities hoped to disseminate their ideological tenets into all pores of youth life, as well as to erase the old era's accumulated social obstacles to the development of every individual's creative potential.

Pre-military training was supposed to acquaint boys and girls with the basics of combat skills and firearms usage in order to improve their efficiency in case of a foreign invasion. This fear became all too realistic after the 1948 break with Stalin, making pre-military training compulsory for all youths older than 17. Each brigade was supposed to have at least one specially educated military instructor, often a distinguished Liberation Struggle soldier, who would teach these classes every other day.⁴⁶ Lessons covered the skills necessary for the general functioning of camps (making beds, cleaning barracks, keeping guard), but also more strictly military topics (loading a rifle, shooting practice from various positions, bullet trajectory, marching steps, etc).⁴⁷ Providing youngsters with an education in military conduct was seen as a peacetime perpetuation of the People's Liberation Struggle, and indeed many instructors insisted that the wartime revolutionary combatant zeal must not falter in absence of actual battles. Yet many brigadiers avoided attending these programs, as can be seen from attendance sheets. Thus, except for the first two days of the shift, the 246-people-strong *ljubičko-trnavska* brigade working on the construction of New Belgrade in 1949 never had more than 190 brigadiers present at pre-military training (the overall participation at the Highway

46 Vežzagić, “Motorway ‘Brotherhood and Unity,’” 66. Military instructors also used their veteran status to transmit their personal experiences of the Liberation Struggle to younger brigadiers (MIAČ, VC, *Posetili su nas delegati našeg okruga*).

47 MIAČ, ORB, k-2, f-2, *Dnevnik zanimanja*, June 30, 1949.

site that year was approximately 95 percent).⁴⁸ Youths used various excuses, such as sickness or cleaning and cooking duties, but commanders also noted accusingly at Party cell meetings that even SKOJ members abused their political agitation duties as an excuse to skip gymnastics or military training. Another way to improve brigadiers' fitness was to engage them in team sports. It was especially important for camp commanders to organize matches (sometimes in league form) between brigades from different parts of the country in order to strengthen interethnic ties and showcase the volunteer movement's regional diversity. Athletic competitions were usually organized on state holidays (Tito's birthday on May 25, Labor Day on May 1, Day of Republic on November 29), prior to which the athletically talented brigadiers underwent preparations that lasted for weeks, as these events were often attended by important Party officials, and the individual competitor's success would increase the overall reputation of his or her brigade, eventually raising the brigade's chances of gaining shock status.⁴⁹

Political-ideological education was one of the most crucial non-labor programs organized for brigadiers, as it represented the most explicit means of influencing youth by exposing them to and indoctrinating them in the official ideology, as well as recruiting new members to the Party's youth organization. The curriculum consisted of essential socialist literature (works by Marx, Lenin and Gorki), but also of works of the domestic Yugoslav canon (ideological literature by Tito and Edvard Kardelj). Classes on theory were followed by textual analysis and often fierce debates, in which individuals interested in Party membership had to excel should they wish to gain admission rapidly. These meetings were also used officially to denounce derogatory texts about Yugoslavia, which were being published in organs of the East European press after 1948, which often spread rumors (not always without any basis in reality) about abuses of child labor and deaths in campsites.⁵⁰ This was supposed to prevent potential outbursts of political

48 Ibid., Vejzagić, "Motorway 'Brotherhood and Unity,'" 68.

49 MIAČ, ORB, k-2, f-5, *Knjiga dnevne zapovesti 1. u 2. učanske srednjoškolske ORB "Rade Azunjac" od 9.6. do 8.7.1949. i od 8.7. do 5.8.1949*; MIAČ, ORB, k-2, f-1, *Evidencija dnevne zapovesti 1. Ljubičko-trnavske brigade, 20.4.-16.6.1950.*

50 Mihailović and Spasović, *Stvaraoći neodoljivog poleta*, 29. According to Selinić, at least 185 cases of death can be documentarily proven for the period 1946–1963, most of which occurred at the New Belgrade and Highway projects (Selinić, "Život na radnim akcijama," 123–124). The only documented case of death in Čačak brigades in this period was that of Radiša Stefanović, who was mortally injured by a truck at the New Belgrade worksite on August 1, 1950. This death was laconically mentioned in the brigade's official diary, without any further notice or comment (MIAČ, ORB, k-2, f-3, *Dnevnik života i rada 3. Ljubičko-trnavske brigade na Novom Beogradu od 1.7. do 28.8.1950*).

dissent during that critical period. It was not a coincidence that Tito himself visited the Highway construction site only 15 days after the 1948 Cominform resolution.⁵¹

Party members had additional ideological classes, which provided forums for discussion of more advanced theoretical questions, but also for agitation planning and evaluations of the behavior of non-members. A new set of lectures for members and non-members alike was introduced in 1948. They consisted of sessions dedicated to the analysis of Yugoslavia’s fall from Stalin’s grace. Naturally, the purpose of these “analyses” was to defend Tito’s position, proving that even Lenin himself established that every country had its own way to communism, regardless of the Soviet policies. The minutes from brigadiers’ discussions reveal the depth of this diplomatic twist, since the meetings in 1948 were often dedicated to badmouthing Bulgarian pretensions to Macedonia, whereas previously there had not been any negative remarks about any other socialist country whatsoever. Other topics discussed at these meetings included rumors about Yugoslavia being involved in the failed assassination of Palmiro Togliatti in July 1948, justification of Yugoslav cooperation with USA concerning the restitution of Kingdom of Yugoslavia’s gold reserves, the recommendation that Yugoslavia take part in the Danube conference, etc.⁵² Party cells also made decisions on future work norms, the organization of events, and disciplinary measures, regardless of the wishes of other brigadiers.⁵³ In the meeting transcripts, one can discern the timidly expressed antagonism of non-members towards the Party members, who wished to exercise unquestioned authority over the rest of the brigade, as well as to enjoy small benefits, such as being spared more tedious or tiring duties. Thus the nominally democratic decision-making in brigades usually came down to party members presenting their decisions (or preferred choices) to the rest of brigade (which was supposed to accept them), whereas the egalitarian discourse was often twisted in order to provide small everyday “privileges” for individuals who were more politically engaged.

The “War” on Illiteracy

One of the main emancipatory and educational efforts (and arguably the greatest success) of the People’s Youth was the eradication of illiteracy among young people. This problem, which had already been a concern in previous decades,

51 Vežzagić, “Motorway ‘Brotherhood and Unity,’” 79.

52 MIAČ, ORB, k-3, f-3, *Zapisnici sa sastanka štaba i partijske ćelije (1948)*.

53 MIAČ, ORB, k-3, f-3, *Zapisnici sa sastanka štaba i partijske ćelije 5. ljubičko-trnavske brigade (1949)*.

was especially acute in the immediate aftermath of World War II, when schools in many areas were destroyed or difficult to reach for many school-age children. It was one of the new regime's priorities to advance the position of the working class (youth included) by ensuring that everyone was taught to read and write. Each youth brigade was thus supposed to have at least one instructor who specialized in such courses, and all illiterate volunteers were obliged to attend. The classes were organized in improvised classrooms or, weather permitting, in outdoor settings.



Figure 2. Literacy course of the 3rd Čačak brigade, 1946 (Source: Regional Historical Archives of Čačak)

Curiously enough, in addition to illiterate brigadiers (usually around a dozen per brigade), Čačak brigades had a much greater number (up to one third of all brigadiers) of “semi-literates,” proficient in only one script (in their case, Cyrillic). Commanders were adamant that both Latin and Cyrillic script be mastered, as this was considered one of the basic prerequisites for disseminating the ideology of brotherhood and unity of the Yugoslav nations.⁵⁴ The brigadiers seemed to have diligently attended the courses. The internal diaries imply that most of them did master the basics of reading and writing both scripts, with only one

54 Žika Marjanović, “Dopis sa omladinske pruge,” *Slobodni glas*, May 1, 1947, 3.

mention of a former policeman who declined to learn the Latin script, claiming he did not need it.⁵⁵ Such enthusiasm was understandable, as it would have been hard for anyone to fail to see the advantages of literacy. Moreover, these classes were one of the rare activities the practical purpose of which was not subjected to blatant ideologization (although the increase in literacy rates was certainly cited in state propaganda as an example of the successful emancipation of the working class). And a vast success it was, as it is estimated that more than 70,000 people learned how to read and write during the first wave of labor actions (1946–1952), although one could definitely call into question the effectiveness of such quick learning while pupils were also involved in hard manual labor.⁵⁶

In addition to offering the workers a chance (or rather obliging them) to master the basics of reading and writing, labor camps and individual brigades also had their own modest libraries, and youths were constantly motivated to use them through involvement in literary circles. The book list of the library of the Camp “Jože Vlahovič” on the New Belgrade site indicates the openly politicized nature of these libraries. Of the 215 titles, only around 30 did not explicitly pertain to communist theory and revolutionary history. Yet, a glance at the 56-item loan list from the second *ljubičko-trnavska* brigade shows that brigadiers overwhelmingly preferred the non-political literature, with the exception of the novels of Maxim Gorki. On the other hand, this same brigade had its own small library with 75 books that for the most part dealt with communist themes, but it also had works by Shakespeare, Jack London and Jules Verne.⁵⁷ These details and other documented statistics indicate that one loaned book amounted to hardly two brigadiers from Čačak, which is even worse than the admittedly low ratio of just over one book per brigadier for the whole New Belgrade worksite.⁵⁸

Yet this low ratio for the Čačak brigades should not be interpreted as a sign of the irrelevance of these libraries for the few youths who did use them, since for many it was their first contact with books. The collectivist nature of all daily activities in isolated camp communities and external peer pressure obviously enticed many otherwise disinterested youths to start reading, as can be seen from one brigadier’s quote: “Here we have better conditions for reading and studying than in the countryside, because here we are all together.”⁵⁹ In addition to visiting

55 MIAČ, ORB, k-1, f-1, *Izveštaji 2. čačanske ORB “Ratko Mitrovič” (Bukinje – Orlova stena, August, 1946).*

56 Selinić, “Život na omladinskim radnim akcijama,” 126.

57 MIAČ, ORB, k-2, f-3, *Biblioteka logora ‘Jože Vlahovič’ and Inventar knjiga 2. Ljubičko-trnavske brigade.*

58 Selinić, “Život na omladinskim radnim akcijama,” 125.

59 MIAČ, ORB, k-2, f-3, *Zapisnik kulturno-prosvetnog odbora 3. Ljubičko-trnavske brigade, July 9, 1950.*

camp libraries, brigadiers could improve their writing skills by compiling articles for wall newspapers, as well as writing letters about their camp experiences, which were sent to newspapers and various economic and political enterprises back in Čačak.

Quite contrary to some authors' characterization of labor projects as "attempts to kill the youth's creative cultural instincts through exhausting physical toil,"⁶⁰ the documents of the Čačak brigades indicate that life in the camps was rich with lively amateur cultural and artistic activities. Choirs, theatre and recitation troupes were founded for individuals who prepared performances for their campmates. The surviving documents show that their repertoire consisted almost exclusively of material devoted to themes of communism and the Liberation Struggle. It included odes to Stalin (naturally, only up until 1948), plays and excerpts by Soviet authors (especially popular was Nikolai Ostrovsky's *How the Steel Was Tempered*, as well as Chekhov's *Diplomat*) and works by Yugoslav writers which could be interpreted in terms of social justice and class struggle (i.e. works by Branislav Nušić, but also Desanka Maksimović and Mira Alečković).⁶¹ Film screenings were also organized, either within the camp or by taking brigadiers to town cinemas, and for many it was the first time they had watched a motion picture. The choice of screenings was carefully premeditated, with a particular favorite being the first Yugoslav partisan film *Slavica* (1949), due to the "volatile reactions" of the viewers whenever they saw German soldiers on screen.⁶²

Cementing Brotherhood and Unity

Alongside their apparent economic importance as a source of free workforce, the youth labor projects came to be seen by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia as one of the most effective ways of cementing the ideological concept of "brotherhood and unity" among the Yugoslav nationalities. This aim was particularly important because there had been numerous interethnic massacres

60 Janičijević, *Rad omladine Kraljeva*, VI–VIII.

61 MIAČ, ORB, k-2, f-3, *Zapisi knjižnice kulturno-prosvetnog odbora 3. Ljubičko-trnavske brigade, July 9–August 22, 1950.*

62 MIAČ, ORB, k-3, f-3, *Dnevnik 5. Ljubičko-trnavske brigade od 7.9. do 29.11.1949.* In this regard, it should be mentioned that the official discourse frequently accented cinema visits as an advent of modernization. All the more peculiar was the consternation of the 3rd *Ljubičko-trnavska* brigade commander (working at New Belgrade in 1950) at the fact that during film screenings, apart from being very noisy and littering, some male comrades did not even realize that they were not permitted to urinate inside the cinema hall (MIAČ, ORB, k-2, f-3, *Knjiga zapovesti 3. Ljubičko-trnavske brigade, 4.7.–29.8.1950.*)

during World War II, and chauvinistic movements had sown hatred among the nationalities. Under these circumstances, the victorious Communist movement inserted itself with its federal vision of Yugoslavia as a reconciliatory force, securing equal rights for all of the country's ethnicities, some of which (Montenegrins and Macedonians) came to be recognized for the first time only after the communists' accession to power. The most farsighted way of disseminating the “brotherhood and unity” ideology was to internalize it among members of the younger generations, whose worldview had not yet hardened and many of whom had been too young to remember the ethnically motivated atrocities that had taken place during the war. Federally organized actions proved an invaluable tool in this endeavor, as they attracted brigades from all of the republics. Tito himself emphasized their importance, deeming them even more important than local projects, the “localist tendencies of which might eventually gain a chauvinistic character.”⁶³

Camps of federal labor actions provided the preconditions for the propagation of such ideas. They were mostly set in isolated areas, bringing together youngsters from the most diverse parts of the country to live together in conditions that resembled those in which the army functioned in a secluded environment where they had to interact with one another on a daily basis. This way, young people from ethnically homogenous areas (such as the Čačak region) had the opportunity to spend time and build friendships with members of other nationalities for the first time. The brigadiers' reports and articles sent to *Slobodni glas* suggest that this experience left a most positive mark on them. Situations of cultural shock were all but rare, such as the bewilderment of Čačak men who for the first time saw Muslim women in their oriental clothes at the Brčko railway station,⁶⁴ while the typically exalted reports described scenes from bonfire parties, where youths from regions as diverse as Dragačevo, Šid, Orašac and Mitrovica joined together in the partisan *kožaračko* dance.⁶⁵ Some wartime mental wounds were healed, as indicated by a commander's evaluation of one young man whose father had been killed by Croatian fascists, but whose interaction with fellow Croatian campmates helped him overcome his hatred.⁶⁶ In order to ensure as much interethnic mingling as possible, commanders placed brigades from the

63 Mihailović and Spasović, *Stvaraoći neodoljivog poleta*, 78.

64 MIAČ, VC, *Dopis Gvozdena Jovanica o pristizanju u Brčko* (1946).

65 Ljubiša Lazarević, “Druga dragačevska brigada na autoputu proglašena za dvaput udarnu,” *Slobodni glas*, July 23, 1948, 3.

66 MIAČ, VC, *Karakteristike članova ORB “Ratko Mitrović”* (1946).

most distant regions of the country in neighboring barracks and also organized sports matches between them.⁶⁷

From the outset, the People's Youth of Yugoslavia invited foreigners to participate in labor projects. Thus, as early as 1946 over 1,800 foreign youths from both capitalist and socialist countries took part in the Brčko–Banovići project,⁶⁸ and in 1947 this number rose to 5,800 people from 42 countries. Several youths from Switzerland worked at the Brčko–Banovići action together with the Čačak brigade “Ratko Mitrović,” and despite the language barrier they developed strong friendships, as indicated by warmhearted farewell diary entries. Naturally, Swiss brigadiers had been professing a leftist political standing, as could be seen in their plans to “undertake an even stronger and more decisive fight against capitalism in Switzerland.” Such enthusiasm for spreading revolutionary zeal could not be tarnished by one incident, when a Serbian girl was accused of stealing a pair of trousers from a Swiss brigadier.⁶⁹ That same year, Greek brigadiers were added to Čačak brigades, which fell in line with the Yugoslav interventionism concerning the civil war in Greece.⁷⁰ This transnational exchange of voluntary youth labor was mutual. Already in 1946, a Yugoslav brigade went to Poland to help in the reconstruction of Warsaw, and another such brigade was sent to Czechoslovakia in 1947. Both brigades had members from Čačak and Kraljevo.⁷¹

The primary aim of hosting foreign brigades was not to increase their work capacity, but to propagate communist ideas among youths from the West, as well as to strengthen ties with “friendly” countries (until 1948 socialist, after that Western and non-aligned ones). The authorities often noted the practical uselessness of foreign brigadiers, who usually regarded their stay in Yugoslavia merely as a vacation. However, the propaganda value of having foreigners among the volunteers compensated for their inefficiency as workers. Much as isolated camps offered a perfect setting for creating social networks between members of different Yugoslav nationalities, they also served as an ideal site to establish personal connections between Yugoslavs and their peers from both ideological blocs in order to help address the political isolation of Yugoslavia after 1948.

67 Ljubiša Lazarević, “Druga dragačevska brigada na autoputu proglašena za dvaput udarnu,” *Slobodni glas*, July 23, 1948, 3; Radisav Pajić, “Čačanska omladinska brigada vratila se triput udarna,” *Slobodni glas*, July 16, 1949, 4.

68 Mihailović and Spasović, *Stvaraoći neodoljivog poleta*, 29, 114.

69 Marija Krnjajić, ed. “Spomenar komandanta čačanske brigade ‘Ratko Mitrović’ Miodraga Obrenovića sa omladinske pruge Brčko–Banovići,” *Izbornik, grada Meduopštinskog istorijskog arbiva Čačak* 28 (2013): 211.

70 MIAČ, ORB, k-1, f-1, *Fotografije sa Omladinske pruge Brčko–Banovići (1946)*.

71 Janičićević, *Rad omladine Kraljeva*, 313; *Udarnici prve smene*, 23, 72.

Conclusions: Youth Projects – From Social Glue to Nostalgic Memento

In the immediate postwar years, the authority of the Communist Party was still not completely solidified, since many strata of the population opposed (mostly in a silent and passive manner) the new system for various reasons. The younger generations, however, especially those living in regions most stricken by the disastrous civil war and occupation, represented a *tabula rasa* on which the regime could “inscribe” its program for the future, to a greater or lesser extent, according to its own needs and ideological tenets. The local perspective of the Čačak brigades that were sent to participate in federal labor projects offers illuminating insights into political and social mechanisms of this early socialist social engineering project, often not perceptible in the “grand” perspective of the state-level narratives. The predominantly voluntary nature of the recruitment process (with sparse, yet notable exceptions of formally and informally coerced mobilization) ensured that the most “hostile” segments of the youth would be excluded. This prevented them from potentially disseminating politically inappropriate ideas among other youths. Thus, labor camps represented isolated “islands” where youths could be exposed to a diverse set of politicized influences and agitation by Party members. Spatial consciousness represented a very important feature of the ideological construct of the projects. Not only was the geographical seclusion of the camps essential for effective indoctrination, but at the very core of these projects was the idea of conquering and taming a previously uncontrollable space, be it static spatial entities (such as marshes on the left bank of the Sava river) or a dynamic reconceptualization of distance and movement (such as in connecting remote and inaccessible parts of the country with highways and railways).

Simultaneously, the performance of the brigadiers (be it at work, in extra-labor activities or interpersonal communication) was carefully scrutinized and evaluated in order to enable the authorities to select the most reliable and promising party cadre for the future. Thus, the social, regional and generational base of party membership and support was expanded and further diversified. The “bond by blood,” which had developed among partisan soldiers during the war, slowly evolved during the early peacetime years into the “bond by labor” among brigadiers who for the most part had been too young to have partaken in the Liberation Struggle. After leaving these “social laboratories,” former brigadiers were supposed to spread the newly acquired skills, knowledge and especially the freshly internalized political and social ideas. The youth also proved

a reliable communicator of the “correct” interpretation of Tito’s 1948 conflict with Stalin to other segments of population. Through Tito’s personal visitations and an elaborate ideological homogenization within the camps’ classrooms, the brigades’ Party cells apparently succeeded in alleviating more harmful forms of ideological misgivings among the youth.

The generations involved in the first phase of youth labor actions grew up under wartime conditions, surrounded by destruction and devastating poverty. Most of these youths, even had they been spared a direct contact with the ravages of war, were nevertheless deprived of a proper education, and their economic situation was bleak, with very slow signs of improvement in the immediate postwar years. Labor projects, with their wide variety of extra-labor activities and educational and professional programs, offered a unique opportunity for young people to compensate potentially for these disadvantages and obtain skills that would improve their prospects for social mobility. For the state, these programs also meant improving the educational profile of its citizens. These efforts, which ranged from decreasing rates of illiteracy and “semi-literacy,” creating various literary circles and cultural troupes, and directly preparing rural youth for jobs in industry, were intended to improve the educational structure and diversify the vocational profile of the younger generations in order to overcome the general backwardness of the Yugoslav society. However, the effect of these short-term educational programs should not be overemphasized, since they often produced a workforce that was insufficiently qualified, far too swollen for the needs and capacities of the early period of industrialization, and ultimately unable to fulfill the authorities’ ambitious modernizing agenda, in the long run even burdening economic development itself.

Another important aspect of Yugoslav youth labor projects that was always stressed by the Party was their pan-Yugoslav character. For many youths, especially those living in the mono-ethnic regions (such as Čačak), participation in the projects was the first chance to meet and interact personally with peers from different ethnic, religious and cultural milieus. This element was especially valuable in light of horrifying memories of ethnic cleansing and mass exoduses from just a few years earlier. Thus, the Communist Party’s axiom of “brotherhood and unity” between the Yugoslav peoples could be developed in practice. Moreover, involving foreign youth brigades (or simply inserting foreigners into the domestic ones) helped promote Yugoslav efforts to build a unique type of society, especially in the critical period after the split with the Soviet Union in 1948. Mingling with foreign peers from both the eastern and western side of the

Iron Curtain enhanced the desired perception that Yugoslav citizens belonged to a united global working class, despite the country’s diplomatic isolation at a time when conflict with USSR was in full swing but the support of the West had not yet been won.

With their far-sighted emancipatory measures in mind, all reservations of some Party officials concerning the financial viability of organizing and sustaining “mammoth” federally supported youth projects were eventually cast aside, as the projects came to represent the social glue for the up-and-coming generations, deemed able to build an intrinsically socialist and multicultural society (supposedly) from scratch. This was the reason behind the decision to renew grand federal volunteer-based projects in 1958, sustaining this system (with significant modifications during the 1970s) almost until the end of the federation itself.⁷² Labor actions subsequently moved into the sphere of national mythology, becoming one of the defining symbols of the socialist era, as well as one of the most widespread uncritically cherished nostalgic memories for many former brigadiers in the post-socialist times. On the other end of the political spectrum, they were also used as a notorious example of the communists’ supposedly totalitarian tendencies. Eventually, the projects’ primary political aim of blatant and omnipresent indoctrination of young people with communist ideology proved far more superficial and shorter-lived than their secondary effects, mirrored in a far-reaching (albeit in many aspects incomplete) reconfiguration of the postwar social habitus in Yugoslavia.

Archival Sources

Međuopštinski istorijski arhiv u Čačku [Regional Historical Archives of Čačak], fond Omladinske radne brigade [Youth Labor Brigades Collection] and Lični fond Velimira Cvetića [Personal Collection of Velimir Cvetić].

Bibliography

Published Documents

Krnjajić, Marija, ed. “Spomenar komandanta Čačanske brigade ‘Ratko Mitrović’ Miodraga Obrenovića sa Omladinske pruge Brčko–Banovići” [Diary of the Commander of the Čačak Brigade ‘Ratko Mitrović’ Miodrag Obrenovic from the

72 Janičijević, *Rad omladine Kraljeva*, 369.

Youth Railway Brčko–Banovići]. *Izvornik, Grada Meduopštinskog istorijskog arhiva* 28 (2013): 203–30.

Press

Slobodni glas (Čačak) [Free Voice].

Secondary Sources

Anastasijević, Predrag M. *Voluntary Labour Actions of the Yugoslav Youth*. New Delhi: Tanjug, 1952.

Beograd – Grad akcijaša [Belgrade – City of Actions]. Belgrade: Gradska konferencija Saveza socijalističke omladine Beograda, 1985.

Janićijević, Dušan V. *Dobrovoljni rad omladine Kraljeva* [Voluntary Work of Kraljevo Youth]. Kraljevo: JP PTT Srbija, 1999.

Mihailović, Srećko. *Omladinske radne akcije. Rezultati socioloških istraživanja* [Youth Labor Actions. Results of Sociological Surveys]. Belgrade: Istraživačko-izdavački centar Saveza socijalističke omladine Srbije, 1985.

Mihailović, Srećko, and Grujica Spasović. *Tito, radne akcije. Stvaraoci neodoljivog poleta* [Tito, Labor Actions. Creators of Irresistible Vigour]. Belgrade: Istraživačko-izdavački centar Saveza socijalističke omladine Srbije, 1979.

Mitrović, Momčilo. *Izgubljene iluzije. Prilozi za društvenu istoriju Srbije 1944–1952* [Lost Illusions. Contributions to the Social History of Serbia 1944–1952]. Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 1997.

Radne akcije Narodne omladine Hrvatske [Labor Actions of the People's Youth of Croatia]. Zagreb: Centralni komitet Narodne omladine Hrvatske, 1949.

Ristanović, Slobodan V. *To su naših ruku dela. Herojska i slavna epopeja omladinskih radnih akcija 1941–1990* [Heroic and Glorious Epic of Youth Labor Actions 1941–1990]. Belgrade: Kosmos, 2014.

Selinić, Slobodan. “Život na omladinskim radnim akcijama u Jugoslaviji 1946–1963” [Life at Youth Labor Actions in Yugoslavia 1946–1963]. *Arhiv. Časopis Arhiva Srbije i Crne Gore* 1–2 (2007): 119–37.

Selinić, Slobodan. “Omladina gradi Jugoslaviju (Savezne omladinske radne akcije u Jugoslaviji 1946–1963),” [Youth Building Yugoslavia (Federal Youth Labor Actions in Yugoslavia 1946–1963)]. *Arhiv. Časopis Arhiva Srbije i Crne Gore* 1–2 (2005): 87–101.

Selinić, Slobodan. “Počeci Novog Beograda – prva faza izgradnje Novog Beograda 1947–1950.” [Beginnings of New Belgrade. The First Phase of the New Belgrade Construction 1947–1950]. *Tokovi istorije* 4 (2007): 75–96.

Siegelbaum, Lewis H. *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR 1935–1941*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Supek, Rudi. *Omladina na putu do bratstva. Psihosociologija radne akcije* [Youth on the Path to Brotherhood. Psycho-sociology of a Labor Action]. Beograd: Mladost, 1963.

Vežagić, Saša. “The Importance of Youth Labor Actions in Socialist Yugoslavia: A Case Study of the Motorway ‘Brotherhood and Unity’.” MA thesis, Central European University, 2013.

Udarnici prve smene graditelja omladinske pruge [Shock-Workers of the Youth Railway’s First Shift]. Belgrade: Novo pokolenje, 1946.

Sándor Horváth

Life of an Agent: Re-Energizing Stalinism and Learning the Language of Collaboration after 1956 in Hungary

In order for a secret police report to be taken seriously, it had to be lodged in the proper form, according to the discursive styles of the state bureaucracy, and in particular the secret police. Thus, the authors of the reports adopted numerous elements of style and rhetoric in order to ensure that their goals would be achieved. How was this bureaucratic style adopted in Hungary, and how did ordinary citizens decide to accommodate to or cooperate with the authorities under the communist regime after the 1956 Revolution? I argue that the creators and editors of the secret police reports (the “unofficial informants” and their case officers) were “sculpting” the official language as an artefact and mapping their social network in accordance with idealized images of the politico-social body. The first step in the implementation of massive, forceful coercion was to change the narratives and the social categories that were used to depict the social status of a “good citizen” and the local communities. In the early phases of their work, during which they learned what was expected of them and how to meet these expectations, the informants mastered the language of the secret police in order to ensure, in the meantime, that they were able to realize their own personal goals in their local communities by taking advantage of their access to the state security network. Thus the function of the reports on the one hand was rhetorical: they were made in order to feed the bureaucracy. On the other, they served as a means with which their authors won approval among other members of the network of their personal, everyday goals. The authoring of reports, which can be understood as a kind of period of training, thus was not simply a matter of exercising social control, but quite the reverse, it also served as a means of appropriating power by members of society in the interests of specific personal goals that had little or nothing to do directly with the agendas of the regime.

Keywords: communist regime, Kádár regime, bureaucratic language, secret police, cooperation, political participation, Eastern Europe, Hungary

Introduction

Throughout the entire Kádár regime (the period between 1957 and 1989 in Hungary),¹ a man referred to in the records as Gy. wrote reports from a mining

1 More on the Kádár regime see János M. Rainer, *Bevezetés a kádárizmusba* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet–L’Harmattan Kiadó, 2011); György Majtényi, “What Made the Kádár Era?,” *The Hungarian Historical Review*

village in Nógrád county, which is dotted with small villages nestled in valleys.² Like a king in disguise, with his reports he dispensed justice in the everyday affairs of the village. Gradually, he mastered the language of the bureaucracy. As the president of the division of the local football team, which played in the second tier of the national championship teams when it was at its best, he traveled through the mining region. He was given his first task because of the figures who prompted a massacre by the Communist police in the city of Salgótarján on December 8, 1956³ (a large part of the victims were from the village in which he lived) and because of his father-in-law, a Social Democrat who hailed from a mining family that had emigrated to Hungary from northern Italy. He was given his last task because of the reburial of Imre Nagy, the Prime Minister of the revolutionary government in 1956 who was executed in 1958. The reburial, which took place in 1989, was an event of great symbolic significance.⁴ Gy. himself was injured at the time of the 1956 massacre (according to his relatives, not in the actual violence of the massacre, but rather in an accident that took place elsewhere), but presumably the police did not use this in order to pressure him to write reports, but rather the fact that in 1948 he had been sentenced to ten years in prison as a war criminal (he had been released after having served 18 months). His refusal to cooperate with the state security forces, his alleged or presumed participation in the events of 1956 (Gy. had been a member of a workers' council in 1956), and his conviction as a war criminal provided the police with ample material with which to blackmail and recruit him.

National politics repeatedly crisscrossed the life history of the informant referred to in the official documents simply by the letters Gy., in spite of the fact that, having gotten average grades in school, he spent the better part of his life working as a physical laborer or in a low-level office position in the railway service and later the mine. Using his life history, I attempt to make a local interpretation (in other words the “view from the bottom”) of the major events that shaped

2, no. 3 (2013): 667–75; and Majtényi's seminal book regarding the social functions of the Kádár cult. György Majtényi, *Vezérsel. Kádár János mindennapjai* (Budapest: Libri Kiadó, 2012).

2 Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára [Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security Services, hereafter: ÁSzITL]. M-42230/1-3.

3 More on the local history of 1956: 1956 *Nógrád megyei kronológiája és személyi adattára: a forradalom eseményei és aktív szereplői a megyében*, ed. László Á. Varga (Salgótarján: Nógrád Megyei Levéltár, 1996).

4 Karl P. Benziger, “The Funeral of Imre Nagy: Contested History and the Power of Memory Culture,” *History and Memory* 12, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2000): 142–64; Gábor Ittész, “Ritual and National Self-Interpretation: The Nagy Imre Funeral,” *Religion and Society in Central and Eastern Europe*, 1 (November 2005), accessed February 3, 2015, <http://www.rascee.net/index.php/rascee/article/view/26/7>.

the twentieth century more understandable.⁵ In this article, I address, within this larger framework, how Gy. became part of the secret police network and how he mastered the official language with which he was able, on the one hand, to write reports that were considered acceptable by the authorities and, on the other, to achieve his own personal goals, using the network as a means.

According to Michael Shafir, when an official view of history, such as the Marxist–Leninist one, is abolished, memory and historical scholarship become competitors. Shafir makes this observation in connection with the report of the Tismăneanu Committee as the presentation of a kind of conclusive and absolute historical narrative.⁶ A similar process was underway following the events of 1989 which shaped the “agent-hunting” narrative mode based on the impassioned call to make the files of the secret police and the lists of operatives and agents accessible to the public.

After all, if society consisted exclusively of victims and perpetrators, then not only could the perpetrators be found out, on moral grounds they *must* be found out, as this would contribute to the consolidation of democracy, at least according to prevailing public opinion. According to this narrative, the denunciation of agents and the “cleansing” of public life of the “perpetrators” of the previous system (lustration) were both demands of civil rights activists and political tools.⁷ The demand to make the files accessible to the public was a campaign the emotional point of departure of which was the belief that the success of the committees “in search of the truth” depended on society’s fortitude. Thus, the many volumes that have been written on state security forces notwithstanding, as of yet no empirical studies have been done addressing the question of the extent to which the state securities actually constituted an element that stabilized the system. As by now has come to seem almost self-evident on the basis of source criticism on the documents of the state security forces, for the contents

5 This study is a part of a larger monograph based on the life story of Gy. with the support of program number K-104408 of the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA).

6 Michael Shafir, “Memory and History in Postcommunism: Preliminary Theoretical Remarks,” *Sfera Politicii* 120–121–122 (2006), accessed December 15, 2014, <http://www.sferapoliticii.ro/sfera/120-121-122/art21-shafir.html>.

7 On lustration in Eastern Europe see: Herman Schwartz, “Lustration in Eastern Europe,” *Parker School Journal of East European Law* 1 (1994): 141–71; Lavinia Stan, “The Vanishing Truth? Politics and Memory in Post-Communist Europe,” *East European Quarterly* 40 (2006): 392–410; Maria Lo, “Lustration and Truth Claims: Unfinished Revolutions in Central Europe,” *Law and Social Inquiry* 20 (1995): 117–61; Alexander Mayer-Rieckh and Pablo de Greiff, eds., *Justice as Prevention: Vetting Public Employees in Transitional Societies* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2007); *Encyclopedia of Transitional Justice*, ed. Lavinia Stan and Nadya Nedelsky (Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

of these documents have been understood as reflections not of “reality,” but rather of the expectations of the state security forces and the party, and not only by scholars and researchers, but also by readers at the time.

For these reasons, relatively little attention has been devoted to the fact that the texts that were created and used by the networks were the products of a form of interaction in which the informers became part of the bureaucracy through a distinctive kind of training process. In order to be able to write reports that would meet the needs of the authorities, they had to learn the clichés that they were expected to use. As Katherine Verdery has written in connection with the Securitate on the last period of the era, “the Securitate increasingly became a pedagogical or didactic rather than a punitive institution.”⁸ As I intend to show in this article, however, the relationship between Gy. and his case officer was similar to the relationship between a teacher and a pupil, at least from their perspective, even from the outset, though in the case of Gy. we are speaking of a “pupil” who learned not only what was expected of him, but also how to achieve his own goals indirectly by making use of the reports.

I argue in this article that the function of the secret police reports on the one hand was rhetorical: they were made in order to feed the bureaucracy. On the other hand, however, they served as a means with which their authors won approval among other members of the network of their personal, everyday goals. The authoring of reports, which can be understood as a kind of period of training, thus was not simply a matter of exercising social control, but quite the reverse, it also served as a means of appropriating power by members of society in the interests of specific personal goals that had little or nothing to do directly with the agendas of the regime.

Towards the end of the 1960s, mining in Nógrád was irrelevant on the national level as the working class policy had become less and less important for the Kádár regime.⁹ Gy.’s mine was closed in 1968 because it was no longer regarded as economically viable,¹⁰ though the sedulous sentries of the state security forces continued to insist on the submission of reports by agents who took a fancy to writing them and who, by then, had provided ample proof of their

8 Katherine Verdery, *Secrets and Truths: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania’s Secret Police* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2014), 17.

9 For more on the state policy regarding industrial workers during the 1950s, especially at the beginning of the Kádár era, see: Mark Pittaway, *The Workers’ State: Industrial Labor and the Making of Socialist Hungary, 1944–1958* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012).

10 Ferenc Szvircsek, *Bányászkönyv* (Salgótarján: Nógrád Megyei Múzeum, 2000), 403.

reliability. More and more frequently, Gy. used the reports as tools with which to promote his own interests. He could enforce “justice” for the “little man” (for instance, in the tavern they were watering down the wine, or cars were being repaired on the black market in the neighboring street). The reports contain not calls for collective action, but rather numerous manners of attempting to further personal interests.

In this article, I seek the answer to the question of how Gy., as the author of texts used by the state security, reinterpreted his own identity and how he created a portrayal of himself as a useful member of society. This was the period in his life when, as the head of the division of the local soccer team, he had a large network of relationships, which he used when writing reports. His collaboration with the local authorities (in comparison with the transformation of the inhabitants of the village) was not striking by any means. The financial positions of his neighbors and relatives (which can be clearly traced in the census records) were closely linked to his cooperation with the regime.¹¹

The Preconditions: A Life Story before the Secret Police

Gy. was born in 1923, the son of a mechanic who worked at the Salgótarján Coal Mine Company, which was sinking into financial ruin because of the new borders of the Treaty of Trianon, which severed the mines from many of the communities they have served. His mother used her mother’s Swabian name.¹² Gy.’s mother, like her mother before her, gave birth to her first child at the age of sixteen as an unwed girl. Fortunately for her, one fine day towards the end of World War I she was introduced to a man six years her senior, a locksmith named Aladár whose family was part of the petty nobility and who would later become Gy.’s father. Until the beginning of the Communist era in Hungary, Gy. spelled his family name with the letter “y” on the end, an indication of noble rank, but he then changed it to “i,” which helped spare him the wrath of the authorities. Aladár’s father was a magistrate of an administrative district in Zagyvapálfalva, a village that later was inundated with miners, but according to the recollections of family members, after

11 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára [Hungarian National Archives, hereafter: MNL]. XXXII-23-a 1970. évi népszámlálás [National Census Records, 1970]. Nógrád, Kisterenye, 1970. évi. 019 számlálókörzet anyagai.

12 MNL Nógrád Megyei Levéltár [Nógrád County Archive], hereafter: NML. XXXIII. Anyakönyvi kivonatok másodpéldányai. Születési anyakönyvek. [Duplicates of Registration Certificates. Birth Certificates]. Zagyvapálfalva. 1915–1924.

the war, having been caught embezzling money from the widows' war relief fund, he shot himself in the head, either out of guilt or shame.¹³ Aladár had only one flaw: he limped, because during the war he had been shot in the heel while serving on the front by Isonzo. So he was slightly less popular among the women. This may explain why he was willing to marry a woman who had already given birth to an illegitimate child. She would give birth to six more children. The birth registries of her many children allow one to track the wanderings of the family in the mining region relatively easily. Gy. had two older sisters, but following the death of his older brother in childhood he was the oldest boy in the family. (His parents went on to have three more children, all girls.)¹⁴

Sociographer Zoltán Szabó characterized Kisterenye, the village in Nógrád county where Gy. was born, in the 1930s as a community in which, in exchange for their submissiveness and compliance, workers could live a bit better: “they had the best opportunities regarding schooling for their children, they read the most bourgeois newspapers, and most of the radios were playing in their apartments.”¹⁵ The village had a public elementary school paid for by the mine, a tavern, a club for balls, a physician's office and, in the middle of the settlement, a soccer field, which was the center of social life and the marriage market. Girls could gather to socialize near the field without having to fear people gossiping about them. Gy. met his wife by the soccer field, leaning on the fence. In the village, a house with two rooms, like the one in which Gy.'s family lived (with six children), counted as upper middle class in the local community. The careers of Gy.'s surviving brothers are tales of social mobility. One of his younger brothers became a factory director (towards the end of his life he was discharged with a pension after facing accusations of having abused his position as director for personal gain).¹⁶ His other brother became an accountant and was later found guilty of embezzlement.¹⁷

13 Most of these details could be reconstructed from the registers of birth and recollections of family members. Interviews with Mrs. Gy., Veronika G., the widow of Gy., and Mrs. M. Ilonka G., his sister-in-law. Interviews were done by the author in October 2011 in Kisterenye.

14 NML. XXXIII. Duplicates of registration certificates. Registers of births. Zagyvapálfalva, Kisterenye.

15 Zoltán Szabó, *Cifra nyomorúság* [“Poverty in Fine Dress”] (Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1938), 88–89.

16 As the general manager of the Mátraaljai Coal Mines, he was awarded numerous state distinctions. In 1988, many complaints were lodged against him, and indeed this was even mentioned at sittings of the party committee. MNL. Heves Megyei Levéltár. XXXV. 22/2. Sittings of the Heves County Party Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. 14. box 187. custody section: Minutes of the Sitting of the Party Committee, March 31, 1988. 129.

17 NML. Balassagyarmati Büntető Törvényszék. XXV. 4 c. B 273/1954.

For Gy.'s family, schooling meant an opportunity to rise in the social hierarchy, and they strove to take advantage of this opportunity. In autumn 1929, Gy. began to attend school, and in the first class of elementary school he was already among the best students in the class. He was given the highest possible marks in every subject with the exception of reading.¹⁸ He may have been one of the favorite students of instructor Emil Sümeg. "Old man Emil," as he was called, was the one-man organizer of the school in the village, and he was passionate about the task. He was regarded as the "voice of the people" in the village. He wrote petitions, as did Gy.'s social democratic father-in-law. For instance, after the occupation of the country by Germany in March 1944, old man Emil denounced the German soldiers in the village to the management of the mine because they had insulted three women and "did not respect the fence, [...] in many places simply trampling them down."¹⁹ Later his name was listed in the records of the secret service recruits, but whatever reports he may have made did not survive.²⁰ In the end, Gy. wrote one of his first reports for the communist secret police about Emil.

Because of his excellent grades in school, Gy. was enrolled in the higher elementary school (a kind of middle school, called *polgári*, which means citizen) in the neighboring agricultural town. Because of his acuity, he was allowed to begin in the second form, where he paid discounted tuition. The pupils from the mining towns went in separate train cars to the school, which was intended to fashion citizens out of them who would be loyal to the state and could later fill positions in the local bureaucracy. In the first semester, Gy. got the highest possible mark in only one subject, religious instruction. In the other subjects he usually got the lowest passing grade, though a few times he got a decent mark. His form-master classified his handwriting as passably legible. This improved considerably with time. The handwritten reports that he submitted to the political police as an adult are written with precise, clearly legible letters, and as a young adult he also worked as a clerk at the mine. As the years passed, Gy. became better and better as a student, though he was never an outstanding talent.²¹

18 NML. VIII. 287. g. Documents of the Elementary School of the Mining Company of Kisterenye-Chorin. Attendance books.

19 Emil's Sümegi's letter quoted in András Szomszéd, *Zagyva mentén "egybekelvén"*. Bátönyterenye (Bátönyterenye: Önkormányzat, 2002), 134.

20 M-42230/1. 85–86 and ÁSZTL. 3.1.9. V-150373. Summary report on the armed counter-revolutionary groups and organizations of Nógrád County. March 23, 1959, 81.

21 NML. VIII. 202. A Pásztói Állami Polgári Fiú- és Leányiskola iratai. Anyakönyvek. (=Pásztói Polgári anyakönyvek). 4. d. 1934–1935 második b osztály anyakönyve.

The representatives of the city of Pásztó were hesitant to vote on the establishment of a school because of the costs. The school commissioner convinced them to give their approval by informing them that if they were to resolve to have the school built, they would be eligible to receive support from the state, which could be a good source of income for local builders. If, however, the state were to order the construction of a school because of the size of the population of the city, then they would lose any possibility of funding. The local farmers continued to look with skepticism on the idea of a school.²²

The railway employees, however, saw schooling as an opportunity to rise in the community, as did the miners who in the meantime had immigrated to and colonized the city. Gy.'s class was comprised almost entirely of the children of the local employees and miners.²³ All of his siblings attended the higher elementary school, where they were given a patriotic education. As was noted in the school bulletin, the students began and ended the school day with prayer, as was common at the time. They commemorated the heroes of the battle of Limonowa (in late 1914, the troops of the Austro-Hungarian army defeated the army of the Russian Czar near the city of Limonowa in what today is Poland) and discussed the ties between the Hungarians and the Finno-Ugric peoples in Hungarian class (an idea that by then had gained widespread acceptance). In an attempt to support Hungarian industry, careful attention was paid to ensure that the students only used school supplies and materials for handicrafts that had been made in Hungary.²⁴

When Gy. was in the third grade, the schools found themselves obliged to introduce a uniform text for prayer and exclude all other prayers. Religion functioned as an obligatory state and ideological framework in the process of fashioning the ideal citizenry. Gy., who like his father was a Calvinist, was almost alone in the almost entirely Catholic class. There were two Lutheran boys and also three Jews who, while the other students were reciting the text of the uniform prayer, were allowed not to make the sign of the cross.²⁵

In 1937, following visits to the factory, Gy.'s class went on an excursion to Budapest. In Budapest, which to many of the students must have seemed

22 Nándor Pintér, Ferenc Vincze, and István Csépany, *Pásztó története* (Pásztó: a Pásztói Községi Tanács Végrehajtó Bizottsága, 1970), 37–39.

23 *Pásztói Polgári Értesítője* 1934–1935, 2–3; 34–35.

24 *Ibid.*, 7–8.

25 NML. VIII. 604. A Pásztói Kereskedelmi Szaktanfolyam iratai, benne a polgári iskolákra is vonatkozó körlevelek 1. d. Körlevél az egységes iskolai imádság bevezetése tárgyában, April 20, 1936.

like an enormous metropolis, they watched the military parade that was held in honor of the Italian king and queen on Mussolini Square (as of 1936, this was the name of the square that today is Oktogon). The school yearbook contained the following lines about the event: “They can take everything from us, Trianon can banish planes from the skies, forbid tanks, but there is one thing they cannot take from our souls, cannot kill in our hearts: the Hungarian Soldier.”²⁶ The notion of the Hungarian soldier and the repudiation of the Treaty of Trianon (the post-war treaty according to which Hungary had lost roughly two-thirds of its territory to the surrounding states in the wake of World War I) were two pillars of the cultivation of a patriotic citizenry in the school.

The formal rank of the institution as a grammar school did not guarantee the pupils positions in offices.²⁷ When he left the school, as the oldest male child in the family Gy. pursued the study of a trade in industry at the mine and waited for an opportunity to acquire a position at the railway, where salaries were much higher. In 1942, with his uncle’s help, he was given a position as a trainee at the Hungarian National Railway.²⁸

Because of the program promoting industrialization (the so-called 1938 Győri program), the railway was expanding and needed more and more employees. In 1942, Gy. began to work as an apprentice in the stock room in the train station in Miskolc, a city in northeastern Hungary. However, one evening he was caught rummaging through boxes from the Cikta shoe factory (the Hungarian name for the Bata shoe factory) and also boxes of cigarettes. In the wake of the territorial changes according to which a strip of territory in southern Czechoslovakia became part of Hungary, the Czech company, Bata, founded a Hungarian factory. For Gy., the Cikta shoes were sort of like an entrance ticket into the world of the “middle class”. They did not actually find any shoes on him, but they did find two boxes of so-called Dames cigarettes for women. Dames were the favorite cigarettes of Katalin Karády, a popular actress at the time (the Hungarian Marlene Dietrich, as it were), and they were popular in part because of their elegant, decorative packaging. Gy. may have wanted to use them as part of a romantic conquest, because he smoked a different brand. He was given a reprimand and fired.²⁹

26 *Pásztói Polgári Értesítője*, 1936–1937, 5.

27 See Tibor Péter Nagy, *A növekvő állam árnyékában. Oktatás, politika 1867–1945* (Budapest: Gondolat, 2011), 312–13.

28 Recollections of his widow. Interview done by the author in October 2011.

29 MÁV Irattár. 7352/1942. Csontos István főraktárnok jelentése, Miskolc, March 2, 1942.

He was nonetheless able to find a position as a traffic assistant at another railway post in Transdanubia, since the records were not coordinated on the national level. In 1944, the frontline reached his station in Fejér County. He served in Seregélyes, a settlement not far from Székesfehérvár, on the front, the so-called Margit-line, which was one of the best fortified defense lines in Hungary and in the winter of 1944 was becoming rigid. According to the locals, towards the end of the war the village went back and forth between the Soviet and the German forces seven times.³⁰ Gy. escaped conscription, but at the time of the second occupation of the village by the Germans (which witnessed the vengeful acts of Arrow Cross men from the area around Székesfehérvár) he committed the act for which he was later convicted of being a war criminal. Indirectly because of him, a Ruthenian railway employee was executed. The man, who was accused of having helped the Soviet soldiers get women in the village and having robbed the official residence of the station agent, was executed. When the German soldiers recaptured the village (in the course of a maneuver called Konrad III), Gy. reported the Ruthenian man to the gendarmerie in Székesfehérvár, which at the time was working together closely with the Arrow Cross. Not once in the records of the people's tribunal was the man's name spelled correctly, but thanks to the digitalized documents and records of the Archives of the Hungarian National Railway and the assistance of an archivist (and also a bit of good luck), I was able to identify him and find his descendants. The history of the Ruthenian railway employee offers a pithy encapsulation of the experiences of the inhabitants of Sub-Carpathia between 1939 and 1944, as well as their relationship to Hungary. Without ever having changed places of residence, over the course of his life the man worked for the railway service of three different countries (since in the space of a mere two decades the territory was part first of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, then Czechoslovakia, and then Hungary). Then, like most people from Sub-Carpathia, he was labeled a "politically unreliable Ruthenian" and sent to the western Hungarian border and then the stations near the front.³¹ The conflict between him and the station agent arose because the station master failed to pay him three months' salary in

30 For more on the battles near this front line see: Csaba Veress D., "A II. világháború hadműveletei Fejér megyében (1944. december 3 – 1945. március 23.)," in *Harok és bűnök*, ed. József Csurgai Horváth, Tamás Tihanyi, and Csaba Veress D. (Székesfehérvár: Fejér Megyei Önkormányzat, 2002), 115–18.

31 MÁV Irattár. Szmolánka László szolgálati aktája; MÁV Irattár. 290/1940. Bánhegyi István. Áthelyezések Kárpátalja területéről. A Magyar Királyi Államvasutak igazgatóságának bizalmas levele valamennyi üzemvezetőségnek. 1940. július 24.

advance, which all the other employees had received with the approach of the front.³²

After the war, Gy. became one of the targets of the Communist political police, which was beginning to organize in Székesfehérvár.³³ In 1949, the officer responsible for his case, a man named György Székely, emigrated for the West, and the state security forces gathered a significant amount of material on him when he was abroad, because he was accused of collaborating with the English secret service.³⁴ When the case involving Gy. was underway, Székely was not named chief of police in Székesfehérvár, which was a sign of the temporary relegation of the Communist police to the background.³⁵ In 1945, Gy. was acquitted, the confessions that had been extracted from him by the police notwithstanding, as indeed was the overwhelming majority of people facing accusations in front of the people's court in Székesfehérvár. What factors determined whether someone was convicted of war crimes or not?

The marginalization of the Communists in rural areas towards the end of 1945 made it possible for the accused who stood before the tribunal, which was by no means in the hands of the Communists, to withdraw confessions that had been made (often violently coerced) to the police, which was in the hands of the Communists.³⁶ On the basis of the ruling, if someone helped the gendarmerie commit an act that was regarded as “necessary retribution” or that was in compliance with the laws at the time, this did not constitute a war crime. Since the police had acted in compliance with the laws that were in effect in 1944, according to this logic the deportations and the provision of assistance with the deportations were not illegal unless someone had been excessively “diligent.” The tribunal regarded Gy.'s report, which had resulted in a man's execution, as legal, and the members of the tribunal were able to portray the victim, whose

32 Budapest Municipal Archives (=BFL) XXV. 2-b. People's Prosecutor of Budapest. Criminal Cases. Documents of the Criminal Case of Gy. 689/1948. consolidated with 88425/1949. Confession of the Station Master of Mezősi.

33 MNL. Fejér County Archive (=FML) XXIV. 18. Székesfehérvár Városi Rendőrkapitányság Általános Iratok, 1.d.

34 ÁSzTL. 3.2.5. “Colorado” O-8-018/1. 520. Jelentés Székely György százados ügyéről. Sütöry Lajos áv. ny. alhadgy. Székesfehérvár, 1950. július 10.

35 FML. IV. 402. Fejér Vármegye Törvényhatósági Bizottságának iratai. Közgyűlés. 1945. szeptember 26.

36 FML. XXIV. 18. Székesfehérvár Városi Rendőrfőkapitányság. Általános iratok. 1.d; FML. XVII. 401. Fejér Vármegye Központi és Székesfehérvár Járási 3. sz. Igazoló Bizottság. 1. d. 22/1945. Törvényszéki alkalmazottak. Boda József, a Gy. ügyében tanácsvezető bíró életrajza az igazolási eljáráshoz.

name they could not spell and about whom they knew next to nothing, as guilty without any discussion.³⁷

Having been acquitted, Gy. returned to his village. With the help of his family, he found a position at the mine as a clerk. In 1946, he wrote a few lines in *Népsport* (“People’s Sports”) about the local miners’ soccer team, which was doing well at the time. Few people knew anything about his case. He married the daughter, a girl sixteen years of age, of a prominent local Social Democratic miner who, as a something of an active agitator, paid visits to prisons between 1917 and 1957, under several different political systems. His father-in-law, furthermore, was an important figure of the Social Democratic party in Nógrád, which to an extent broke from “mainstream” Peyer Social Democratic ideas.³⁸ He was present at strikes that were held in the village of Etes during World War I and in the crowd that gathered before the massacre in Salgótarján in 1956. His political activism made him a symbolic figure in the area. Gy. argued about politics with him more than with anyone else.

In 1948, before he emigrated, Székely, the police captain who had interrogated and beaten Gy. in 1945, traveled to Budapest, where he met with the National Soviet of the People’s Tribunals. Gy.’s case was reopened and he was sentenced to ten years of forced labor, though the sentence was changed to imprisonment.³⁹ He was put in the prison on Kozma Street in Budapest, which at the time was one of the strictest prisons in Hungary. I was allowed by the director of the prison to examine prison files that have not yet been turned over to the archives.⁴⁰ In 1950, the Hungarian State Security Authorities took over control of the building, and there was greater need for space in the cells, which had once been crowded with the accused who had been convicted by the people’s tribunals.⁴¹ In early 1950, Gy. was granted amnesty in order to help address the lack of space. Initially, he worked as a barrowman in the mine, but as he was not accustomed to difficult physical labor and was able to write well,

37 BFL. XXV. 2-b. Budapesti Népbüzség. Büntetőügyek. 689/1948. On the functions of people’s courts in Hungary and in Eastern Europe see: *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath*, ed. István Deák, Jan T. Gross, and Tony Judt (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000); and recently Ildikó Barna and Andrea Pető, *Political Justice Budapest after World War II* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2014).

38 BFL. XXV. 1.a. Budapesti Népbíróság. 1949 – 1081. G. János ügye.

39 BFL. XXV. 2-b. Budapesti Népbüzség. Büntetőügyek. 689/1948. Nb XII. 802/1948/2. Ítélet. 1948. október 15.

40 Budapesti Fegyház és Börtön Irattára. Fegyencnapló 3296-3599. No. 3299.

41 *Ibid.*, Napi parancsok. 1947–1952.

with the help of sympathetic souls who had gathered around him, he was given a position—of no great prominence—in an office.⁴²

In 1956, Nógrád, which was regarded as a county rife with the spirit of rebellion, played an important role in national politics, since lack of coal due to the miners' strike crippled industrial production.⁴³ This is one of the reasons why the first Kádár government strove to restart production by using workers' councils.⁴⁴ Gy. was elected by his coworkers to serve as a member of the workers' council at his workplace.⁴⁵ Later, the workers' councils were cast as enemies of the people in the official discourses of the Kádár era. By the end of 1957, the local Social Democrats had also come to be seen or at least cast by the regime as enemies of the people. Gy.'s first important task was to keep them under close watch, and his father-in-law, an old Social Democrat, was the first person of interest.

The Proper Report: Pedagogy of the Oppressed?

Reports and the bureaucratic forms of the reports (i.e. the written reports) were important elements of the “institutionalized culture of complaint,” as several historians have referred to it.⁴⁶ It is not irrelevant, however, to consider who obtained the right to lodge complaints and how, and whose complaints were actually taken seriously. Anyone whose complaint was taken seriously unavoidably became part of the state exercise of power, since the complaint functioned as the point of departure for the series of measures that were taken by the state. In order for a complaint to be taken seriously, it had to be lodged in the proper form, according to the discursive styles of the state bureaucracy. Thus the authors of the reports adopted numerous elements of style and rhetoric in order to ensure that their complaints would be heard. I analyze how these reports actually gave

42 The source of his precise position: NML. XXIX. 681. I. A. 16. Nógrádi Szénbányászati Tröszt (NSZB). Újlaki bányauzem. Csigai lejtősakna. Kisterenyé. NSZB. Baleset-jelentőkönyv.

43 László Á. Varga, ed., 1956 *Nógrád megyei kronológiája és személyi adattára: a forr. eseményei és aktív szereplői a megyében* (Salgótarján: Nógrád Megyei Levéltár, 1996).

44 One of the functions of the worker council's from the point of view of the government at the end of 1956 was to start industrial production in the wake of several strikes; however, for the most part they did not fulfill this task. For more on this see: Pittaway, *The Workers' State*, 230–56.

45 ÁSzTL. V-141818. Vizsgálati dosszié Filep Lajos ügyében; ÁSzTL. O-15325. 1a. 487–88.

46 Cf. Joachim Staadt, *Eingaben: Die institutionalisierte Meckerkultur in der DDR* (Berlin: Forschungsverbund SED-Staat, 1996); Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 173.

someone the opportunity “to get as close to a public sphere as one is likely to get” under the Kádár regime.⁴⁷

In this section of my article I argue that the participants in the secret police network, which included the agents (informants), the case officers (who oversaw the work of the agents), and the people who read the reports, sought solutions to the problems of their private lives by presenting them as if they were communal issues. In part as a consequence of this, they blurred the border between the private and public spheres by divulging the details of their private lives, thereby making communal (and therefore state) control seem more acceptable. By revealing details of their private lives, the authors of the reports let the figures of the state bureaucracy into their bedrooms, which they were not actually obliged to do, making their private lives part of the state bureaucracy by seeking solutions, with their reports, to their personal problems. The decision to blabber about one’s private life was for the most part the result of a personal decision on the part of an author seeking to further his or her own personal interests. One of the goals of the network of informants was thus not simply to ensure knowledge of and control over the circles in which the agents moved, but also to transform the informants themselves into bureaucrats on whom the regime could rely. Moreover, the authors of the reports attempted to veil their personal interests by (over)emphasizing their sense of responsibility to the community. In other words, both sides used the secret police network to achieve their goals: the network was used not only by the regime for purposes of surveillance and control, but also the operatives (the case officers and the unofficial informants), who used it in their interests. Indeed, their personal interests were far more important from their perspectives. This raises an important question, namely, who had the right to lodge a personal complaint, and what was the proper manner of doing so.

Gy. was 34 years old when he was recruited as an agent. He had three small children. His older daughter, who had been born while he was in prison, was 9 and was in school. His son, who was 4, had not been accepted to the kindergarten, and his wife took care of their youngest daughter, who was barely more than one year old and who had been born in 1956, during the miners’ strike.⁴⁸ Gy., who was not terribly accustomed to hard labor in an underground mine, first

47 Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Supplicants and Citizens: Public Letter-Writing in Soviet Russia in the 1930s”, *Slavic Review* 55, no. 1 (Spring 1996), 78. Fitzpatrick raises this question regarding the Stalinist period of the 1930s.

48 NML. Kisterenyei születési anyakönyvi kivonatok.

worked in an office. As of the beginning of 1957, he worked underground, and not just on paper, but in reality, as a barrowman, in three shifts. Workers were given bonus pay for working on Sundays, but in his case this bonus was withheld as punishment. His youngest daughter, who had been born in September 1956, was a year and a half old at the beginning of 1958, when the family was told she could attend the nursery school, which was a modest dream come true for them.⁴⁹ She was accepted into the nursery soon after Gy. began writing reports. Gy. had many reasons to submit to the regime and write reports: the hope that he might be reassigned to a position in the office, the possibility that he might be able to find employment for his wife, and later the hope that his children would be given places in the nursery and kindergarten, since his wife had fallen gravely ill. (He even made specific mention of the question of admittance to the kindergarten in one of his reports, and the secret police helped him resolve the problem.)

Gy. and his case officer learned, largely in the course of their collaborative work, how to write a good report, and this enabled them to write numerous reports, and at their own initiative. Gy. found it difficult to imitate the style of the reports, and he had hardly had much instruction. As a mining clerk, he had grown accustomed to beginning a text by addressing its projected audience, but obviously he couldn't address his first case officer, named Ecsegi, as "esteemed lieutenant, Sir," or "esteemed comrade" because of the conspiracy, because this might imply collusion. He didn't know quite how to start. In the end, he began his first report in an official tone: "I respectfully report that Sándor B., a resident of the Kossuth neighborhood of Kisterenye [...]" This was followed by a brief description of the man in question, "brown-haired, tall," and then a reference to his health as an identifying feature (he had a limp). The physical description was followed by an important characterization of his political stance, which later became one of Gy.'s favorite formulas: "he is an enemy of the people's democracy." This phrase he borrowed from the contemporary propaganda.⁵⁰

Gy. had to be sure to write something that would be useful and incriminating, for he must have feared that if he were to submit a useless report, he himself might be dragged off to prison, as he had been in 1948 and as his coworkers had been after 1956. He was very afraid of prison. According to his wife, "he

49 Recollection of Veronika Gy., Gy.'s widow.

50 ÁSzTL. M-42230. 59–60. Gy.'s report of December 22, 1957.

was badly beaten, he did not engage in politics.”⁵¹ However, of the members of his family, he engaged in politics more intensively than anyone else at that time.

Gy. provided—probably in response to a specific request—a dramatic description of a dialogue just before the Salgótarján massacre that he had heard more than a year earlier: “the aforementioned went over to the shaft [of the mine] and made the following declaration: ‘everyone out of the engine room and off to [Salgó]Tarján. Your place is there. Anyone who doesn’t come is an enemy of the people.’”⁵² Then another cliché regarding the enemy, which this time he put in the mouth of the enemy so that it would be understandable. Gy. submitted reports that clearly resembled denunciations. He thereby managed to ensure that his reports would be read and taken seriously, even if he wasn’t able to imitate the styles of the official discourse perfectly, and that he would be praised for his diligence.

Gy. managed to exceed expectations when completing his next task as well. His task, which was intended as a good warm-up for the novice agent, was to provide descriptions of the characters of two Social Democrats who were well-known in the village. The first of these two men was Gy.’s father-in-law himself, who was almost seventy years old, and Gy. provided a detailed characterization indeed. The warm-up task in other cases was also not something unusual, since first he had to learn the bureaucratic rules of the genre and the form of the report. In 1957, every Social Democrat was regarded as an enemy of the party, as they were seen as people who might insight workers to strike. Gy.’s report on his father-in-law was not restrained. “He is right-wing in his biases, someone who is not pleased by the fact that the Communists are in power,” he wrote, in the precise handwriting he had learned in the higher elementary school. And in order to ensure that his audience appreciated his achievement, he added, “he was never pleased by the fact that in the elections in 1945 and then the next elections, MKP [Hungarian Communist Party] [...] won. He was always an agitator of the former Social Democrat party.”⁵³ But alongside the political concerns, Gy. also makes frequent mention of personal tensions: “He is very verbose and quarrelsome.”⁵⁴

51 Recollection of Veronika Gy., Gy.’s widow. Interview made by the author October 25, 2011 in Kisterenye.

52 ÁSzTL. M-42230. 59–60. Gy.’s report of December 22, 1957.

53 The 1945 national elections in the village were won by the Hungarian Communist Party (MKP: 46.5%). The Independent Smallholders’ Party (FKgP) got only 28.5% of the vote and the Social Democrats only 21.2%. Szomszéd, *Zagyva mentén “egybekelhen”*, 140–41.

54 Ibid.

Gy. wrote this report at home. In the modest miner's residence he seems to have found a corner where he could hide his deeds from his three children. He complained, however, that it was difficult for him to write reports in the tight space of his home. "Back home it was hard to write," he complained. It was difficult to work, and he had not been given an office. His case officer, Ecsegi, liked his style, but Ecsegi's superior wanted something different: "we must find out, by using the agents, what kinds of connections there are among the old Social Democrats in Kisterenye, Nagybátony, and Salgótarján. Are there any such people at all? Who are these people?"⁵⁵ In the end, both Ecsegi and Gy. learned what their task was. They did not have to fumble in the dark. Later, the case officer switched the order of the first two reports in the file precisely for this reason. It became clear for them that the Social Democrats were the topic of interest, not the 1956 massacre in Salgótarján.

The third report was the first to bear this word, "Report," as its title. They finally told Gy. to write this word at the top of the page. Ecsegi told him other things as well. Gy. begins the text with the "my task was to" formula. One of the first Social Democrats Gy. was instructed to observe was his former instructor, the former director of the elementary school in the miner's settlement, Emil Sümegi, who had taught Gy. to write. Gy. contacted Sümegi, allegedly in order to request assistance ensuring that his four-and-a-half year old son would be given a place in the kindergarten. In his report, Gy. complains about the difficulty he faced securing a place for his child in the school: "When the enrollments were going on, on September 1, 1957 my son's application was rejected. I asked him to dictate a petition to the Minister of Education or somewhere. I very much want him to be allowed to attend the school, since he cries about how badly he wants to be a kindergarten pupil. It would be easier for us too, his parents, if the task of caring for one of the children were entrusted to the kindergarten. He replied to my request by saying that we Social Democrats are oppressed." (underlined in the original) Ecsegi found this last half-sentence of the text important, and he underlined it. The link between the agent's task, his complaint, and his personal interest is clear.

Gy. wrote down Sümegi's contention, according to which any petition authored by him would be rejected, no matter where he sent it. (Sümegi was mistaken in this, the secret police may have intervened, since in the end the boy was admitted to the kindergarten.) The question of the boy's enrollment in

55 Ibid., 54.

the kindergarten became an issue with implications relevant to national politics, since according to their dialogue ultimately the issue depended on whether or not it was worthwhile to submit any petition regarding admittance to the school. According to Gy., Sümegi said the following: “In any event let’s wait for the Bulganin peace proposal.⁵⁶ If they can reach an agreement, then elections will be held with oversight, and then we Social Democrats will win.” Following their discussion of the question of enrollment, Gy. asked Sümegi about his views of the peace negotiations. The last sentence of the report caught Ecsegi’s attention: “for the moment we must wait.” Clearly, the implication—that the retired Social Democratic instructor had been waiting for the opportune moment to topple Soviet power in a small village in Hungary—was absurd, but also useful to Ecsegi, since Sümegi was also a functionary of the system. Ecsegi found the report on Sümegi so important that he soon told Gy. to pay him another visit. Sümegi’s opinion, however, was not important because the authorities actually feared him, but rather because he too was an “agent of the department of internal affairs,” as Ecsegi wrote in his assessment of the report. So his political reliability and political inclinations were important from the perspective of his reports.⁵⁷ Gy. and Sümegi were used to keep tabs on each other, while the two of them both used the network of connections to serve their interests (for instance the question of gaining admittance for a child to the kindergarten).

As his next task, Gy. was told to monitor the actions of four Social Democrats. He filled more than five pieces of paper with his observations. The possibility of gaining admittance for his child to the kindergarten made him particularly diligent.⁵⁸ Like his report on his father-in-law, his report on the four Social Democrats also began with the “my task was to” formula (he only later adopted the practice of writing in the third-person singular in order to mislead the enemy years). Gy. began to think of himself as a person of no small importance. He was less afraid, and sometimes he even tried to save or help others. The more politically passive someone was, the more the network of power liked this. In his reports, Gy. noted someone’s political passiveness if he sought to avoid causing the person grief. According to him, in the depths of the mine “the current session of the National Assembly came up.” This observation regarding what transpired in the mines was seen as particularly significant, in

56 For more on this conflict (accessed February 15, 2015), see: <http://web.stanford.edu/group/tomzgroup/pmwiki/uploads/200-1956-11-KS-f-LIZ.pdf>.

57 *ÁSz/TL.* M-42230. 85–86.

58 *Ibid.*, 64–69. Gy.’s report of January 30, 1958.

part because it had been made by Gy. at his own initiative. It had not been part of one of his explicit tasks. He was therefore given a different shift in the mine so that he would be able to observe others while they worked. He was also given a raise.

The text of his next report, which was written less than two months after the first one, is testimony to his development as an agent.⁵⁹ He had something to say. He wrote almost four pages of observations. A good half of his remarks did not directly involve the instructions he had been given and were introduced with the formula, “and in addition I note that...” He provided an account of the ball that was held in the mining community and the profiteering that was allegedly underway involving the sale of wine. In a manner that was thinly veiled at best, Gy. began to use the reports as a forum with which to take steps to improve his life and the lives of those around him. Like a king in disguise, he sought to dispense justice, or at least this is the portrait he paints of himself in the reports.

The detailed description of the costume ball was Gy.’s first carefully thought-out composition in which he himself chose the subject of his report. He wrote a kind of self-standing denunciation within the framework of the report. There are no surviving family pictures of the ball, but there are pictures of the ball that was held the following year. In the pictures, Gy. and the members of his family can be seen wearing their costumes. Gy. is dressed in traditional ceremonial Hungarian attire. His oldest daughter is dressed as one of the odalisque’s of the Turkish pasha. There is a picture of his wife and her younger sister. In his denunciation, Gy. stands up for the crowd at the ball with his contention that Dobrocsi and Ogulin, a miner and a retired miner who were in charge of serving the wine and spirits, were turning a personal profit on the wine. As a conscientious consumer he took a stand and used his connections, though this stance, of course, was little more than a discursive posture that he adopted in order to achieve his personal goals. In fact, Gy. himself could have served the wine, instead of the two “profiteers,” since he and his father-in-law had a good relationship with a wine-grower in the city of Verpelét (a village that was known in the region for its fine wines). The issue at hand was a question of business interests. According to Gy.’s report, “many people say that Dobrocsi and his lot charge as much as they want for wine.” Gy. sometimes also breaks the rule according to which he should use the third-person singular: “On one occasion I asked for a wine spritzer [...] Gy. also asked for a wine spritzer, but

59 Ibid., 73–76.

they didn't give him one because there was no soda water." In order to attain his goal, he even adopted a rather underhanded strategy and referred in his report not only to the alleged profiteering, but also to the acts Dobrocsi and Ogulin had (purportedly) committed in 1956 during the Revolution. According to his report, in 1956 they had "transported the drinks, the wine and brandy."

Gy. wanted to play a central role among the "sport friends" (this was the term that was used for the regular spectators at the soccer games and the people who participated in the organizational work related to the team). After 1956, however, his chances were not good, given his political past. However, years later he became the president of the local soccer division, which was important because at the time as many as 1,000 people might attend a given match, i.e. half of the population of the mining town. The soccer games were the most important social events, after the miners' balls.⁶⁰ It's possible that he accused Dobrocsi of wrongdoing because Dobrocsi, who lived with his family next to the soccer field and across from the sports club, was doing a bit better than he was. He was accused of embezzlement from his workplace, though his daughter and his widow have no recollection of any sanctions or punishment.⁶¹ Gy.'s report did not bring about the result he had hoped for, though officer Ecsegi did send it on to the criminal division.

When the threat of a possible strike had been averted, Gy. was given another range of duties. He was charged with the task of observing his old "bird-of-a-feather colleagues," the former sympathizers of the Arrow Cross. He had to report on people who were regarded as "Arrow Cross" or "gendarmes." Since he himself was on file as a "bird-of-a-feather" (in spite of the fact that he was also considered a Social Democrat because of his father-in-law), he knew who the authorities were thinking about.

In his reports, Gy. frequently recounts how, in the course of soccer matches, he would begin conversations with the people under observation in order to learn more about their political views. The Salgótarján soccer team was one of the best teams outside of Budapest at the time. As a supporter of the local team, the organizer of the various tasks regarding the its upkeep was able to chat with almost anyone about the games, and he could use these opportunities to discover details about people's political views, even the people who were the

60 Recollections of János V., deputy-president of the local soccer division. Interview done by the author. October 25, 2011 in Kisterenye.

61 Recollections of Dobrocsi's widow and daughter. Interview done by the author with Mrs. István Dobrocsi (1919) and her daughter, Mrs. Gábor O. (1942), October 21, 2011, Budapest.

most reluctant to talk on the subject. Gy. sought to cast aspersions on one of the local “petty monarchs,” a man name Racskó, whom he portrayed as someone loyal to the old system.⁶² Thus, he was able to present himself as a righter of wrongs, who was acting not in his own personal interests, but rather in the interests of the community, even if there was some overlap between the two.

Conclusion

As an examination of the early reports submitted by Gy. reveals, in order to attain his goals he first had to learn the style necessary in order to write reports that would be met with interest among the authorities. Later he attempted to portray his work, which was done primarily in the service of his interests, as a kind of process of dispensing justice, a process that was, according to his depiction, closely tied to the exigencies of the state. But loyalty alone would not have been enough to have enabled him to obtain admittance for his child to the kindergarten with the help of the department of internal affairs, or later, in the 1970s, to get permission for a private enterprise of his son. When he wanted to achieve a specific goal, he began to go into copious detail, and he transformed his reports into denunciations, sometimes using articles in the local newspaper for help. On other occasions, when he submitted reports that were curt and offered little detail, this could be interpreted as a form of political passiveness, and he also helped others avoid the wrath of the authorities by characterizing them as politically passive, which at the time was the kindest thing one could say about someone under observation by the state. He portrayed himself as politically passive as well, though by submitting reports he continuously influenced the lives of those around him, since he often steered their conversations in the direction of politics specifically because he had been charged with the task of doing so. He was a bureaucrat without a desk or office. His “friendships” were little more than official affairs. The details of his reports, which were intended to demonstrate his aptness for the role, were as much a part of the game as the reports written in self-defense, the primary goal of which was to ensure that he himself would not be seen as responsible for anything. An act of vengeance motivated by envy (in the case of alleged profiteering with wine) was written in the style of a petition, however, so that it would be sure to catch the attention of the authorities.

62 ÁSzTL. M-42230. 95–96. Report of March 27, 1958.

He was as passionate in his denunciations of the local “petty monarchs” (people who played influential local roles because of their access to political power) as he was in his purported role as the defender of the oppressed and defenseless. In the state bureaucracy, which followed characteristically paternalistic traditions, this mode of administration was entirely commonplace and long-standing. In practical affairs, archaic rhetoric that rested on references to supporters and principles that were little more than matters of terminology harmonized perfectly well with Communist ideology because of the inclination of communist thinking in a normative system.

One of the recurring questions historians who deal with the communist era must address is whether or not the “ordinary people” whose cooperation was instrumental to the functioning of the state actually identified with or how far accepted the goals of that state.⁶³ According to the totalitarian paradigm, the state and the citizen were locked in a struggle like David and Goliath, and in the end the weaker but more clever and cunning of the two would triumph. These are stories of oppression and resistance, the stories of perpetrators and victims, stories the inadequacies of which, as narratives of the past, have already been clearly shown time and time again by representatives of the so-called revisionist school of Sovietology. Gy.’s story and the texts he crafted clearly illustrate that the personal decisions of ordinary people and the methods they used in order to achieve their aims influenced the functioning of the state. Furthermore, the self-portrayals and discourses of the people who used the system for personal advantage also changed, since the acceptance of the rules of the game left its mark on them. The Kádár system, which maintained power in part by searching for compromises, nonetheless still rested on essentially Stalinist principles, though it gave the people who took part in the mechanics of the system the impression that they could exert an influence on it. The sense of an open (or at least somewhat open) public sphere contributed to this, as did the (pseudo) debates in the press or the apparent attention that was given to the reports submitted by the informants who helped the state security forces. All of this provided new energies for the everyday workings of the system, which thus enjoyed a significantly greater degree of acceptance and stability by the 1960s than it had before 1956. Ultimately, to the extent that the Kádár regime represented a rupture with the classic Stalinism of the early 1950s, this

63 See John Connelly’s inquiry on this matter with regards to Nazi Germany, John Connelly, “The Uses of Volksgemeinschaft,” *The Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 4. (December 1996): 899–930.

break lay in its more perceptive grasp of people's everyday lives and inclinations and the discourses on experience.⁶⁴ The denunciations bundled into the reports offered an opportunity for an agent to realize personal aims as if he or she were fighting in the interests of the larger community and sought to take part in the functioning of the state by playing an active role in politics. Dispensing justice like a king in disguise, the agent, who was thus a representative of political power, would obtain his goals by alternately pursuing personal aims and playing the necessary bureaucratic roles. This not only strengthened the appearance of the legitimacy of the state, but also made the role of an agent acceptable to people who portrayed themselves as if they were writing reports on the community (including relatives and neighbors) in the very interests of that community.

Archival Sources

Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára (=ÁSzTL) [Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security Services]

M-42230/1-3.

3.1.9. V-150373. Összefoglaló jelentés Nógrád Megyei Ellenforradalmi fegyveres csoportokról és szervezetekről [Report on the Counter-Revolutionary Armed Groups and Organizations in Nógrád County].

3.2.5. „Colorado” O-8-018/1.

V-141818.

O-15325.

Budapesti Fegyház és Börtön Irattára [Archive of the Budapest Correctional Facility and Prison]. Fegyencnapló [Inmate Log] 3296-3599. Napi parancsok [Daily Orders] 1947–1952.

Budapest Főváros Levéltára [Budapest City Archive] (=BFL)

XXV. 1.a. Budapesti Népbíróság [Budapest People's Court].

XXV. 2-b. Budapesti Népügyészség. Büntetőügyek. Gy. bűnügyének iratai. [Budapest People's Prosecutor's Office. Criminal Cases. Documents of the Criminal Case of Gy.] 689/1948.

64 Cf. János M. Rainer, *Bevezetés a kádárizmusba* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet–L'Harmattan Kiadó, 2011), 144.

- Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára [Hungarian National Archives] (=MNL)
XXXII-23-a 1970. évi népszámlálás [National Census Records, 1970]. Nógrád,
Kisterenye, 1970. évi 019 számlálókörzet anyagai [Materials of the 019 Census
District of Kisterenye from 1970].
- MNL Fejér Megyei Levéltár (=FML) [Fejér County Archive of the Hungarian National
Archives]
IV. 402. Fejér Vármegye Törvényhatósági Bizottságának iratai [Documents of the
Fejér County Council].
XXIV. 18. Székesfehérvár Városi Rendőrkapitányság [Székesfehérvár Police
Headquarters].
XVII. 401. Fejér Vármegye Központi és Székesfehérvár Járási 3. sz. Igazoló
Bizottság [Fejér County Central Székesfehérvár Municipal Justificatory Council 3].
1. d. 22/1945. Törvényszéki alkalmazottak [Employees of the Court of Law].
- MNL Nógrád Megyei Levéltár (=NML) [Nógrád County Archive of the Hungarian
National Archives]
VIII. 202. A Pásztói Állami Polgári Fiú- és Leányiskola iratai. Anyakönyvek. 4. d.
[Documents of the Public Boys and Girls Elementary School of Pásztó. Registers
of Students. 4. d.] 1934–1935 második b osztály anyakönyve [Register of the
Students in the Second Year, B class in 1934–35].
VIII. 287. g. A Kisterenye-Chorin telepi Bányatársulati Elemi Iskola iratai.
Osztálynaplók [Documents of the Mining Society Elementary School of
Kisterenye-Chorin. Class Registers].
VIII. 604. A Pásztói Kereskedelmi Szaktanfolyam iratai [Documents of the “Pásztó
Course in Commerce”].
XXV. 4 c. Balassagyarmati Büntető Törvényszék [Balassagyarmati Criminal Court].
B 273/ 1954.
XXIX. 681. I. A. 16. Nógrádi Szénbányászati Tröszt [Coal Mining Trust of
Nógrád]. (NSZB). Újlaki bányüzem. Csigai lejtősakna [Mining Works of Újlak.
Spiral Mine Shaft].
XXXIII. Anyakönyvi kivonatok másodpéldányai. Születési anyakönyvek [Duplicates
of Registration Certificates]. Zagyvapálfalva. 1915–1924.
- MNL Heves Megyei Levéltár [Heves County Archive] XXXV. 22/2. MSZMP Heves
Megyei Pártbizottságának ülései [Sittings of the Heves County Party Committee
of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party].
- MÁV Irattár [Archives of the Hungarian National Railways].

Bibliography

- Barna, Ildikó, and Andrea Pető. *Political Justice Budapest after World War II*. Budapest: CEU Press, 2014.
- Benziger, Karl P. “The Funeral of Imre Nagy: Contested History and the Power of Memory Culture.” *History and Memory* 12, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2000): 142–64.
- Betts, Paul. *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Connelly, John. “The Uses of Volksgemeinschaft.” *The Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 4. (December 1996): 899–930.
- Deák, István, Jan T. Gross, and Tony Judt, eds. *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. “Supplicants and Citizens: Public Letter-Writing in Soviet Russia in the 1930s.” *Slavic Review* 55 no. 1. (Spring 1996): 78–105.
- Ittzés, Gábor. “Ritual and National Self-Interpretation: The Nagy Imre Funeral.” *Religion and Society in Central and Eastern Europe* 1 (November 2005). Accessed February 3, 2015. <http://www.rascee.net/index.php/rascee/article/view/26/7>.
- Lo, Maria. “Lustration and Truth Claims: Unfinished Revolutions in Central Europe,” *Law and Social Inquiry* 20 (1995): 117–61.
- Majtényi, György. *Vezérvonal. Kádár János mindennapjai* [King’s Gambit. The Everyday Life of János Kádár]. Budapest: Libri Kiadó, 2012.
- Majtényi, György. What Made the Kádár Era? *The Hungarian Historical Review* 2, no. 3 (2013): 667–75.
- Mayer-Rieckh, Alexander and Pablo de Greiff, eds. *Justice as Prevention: Vetting Public Employees in Transitional Societies*. New York: Social Science Research Council, 2007.
- Nagy, Tibor Péter. A növekvő állam árnyékában. Oktatás, politika 1867–1945 [In the Shadow of the Growing State. Education, Politics, 1867–1945]. Budapest: Gondolat, 2011.
- Pásztói Polgári Értesítője* [Gazette of the Pásztó Polgári School].
- Pintér, Nándor, Ferenc Vincze, and István Csépany. *Pásztó története* [History of Pásztó]. Pásztó: a Pásztói Községi Tanács Végrehajtó Bizottsága, 1970.
- Pittaway, Mark. *The Workers’ State: Industrial Labor and the Making of Socialist Hungary, 1944–1958*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012.
- Rainer, János M. *Bevezetés a kádárizmusba* [Introduction to Kádárism]. Budapest: 1956-os Intézet–L’Harmattan Kiadó, 2011.
- Schwartz, Herman. “Lustration in Eastern Europe,” *Parker School Journal of East European Law* 1 (1994): 141–71.

- Stadt, Joachim. *Eingaben: Die institutionalisierte Meckerkultur in der DDR*. Berlin: Forschungsverbund SED-Staat, 1996.
- Stan, Lavinia, and Nadya Nedelsky, eds. *Encyclopedia of Transitional Justice*. Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Stan, Lavinia. “The Vanishing Truth? Politics and Memory in Post-Communist Europe.” *East European Quarterly* 40 (2006): 392–410.
- Szabó, Zoltán. *Cifra nyomorúság* [“Poverty in Fine Dress”]. Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1938.
- Szomszéd, András. *Zagyva mentén “egybekelvén”. Bátornyterenye* [Married by the River Zagyva. Bátornyterenye]. Bátornyterenye: Önkormányzat, 2002.
- Szvirček, Ferenc. *Bányászkönyv* [Miner’s Book]. Salgótarján: Nógrád Megyei Múzeum, 2000.
- Varga, László Á., ed. *1956 Nógrád megyei kronológiája és személyi adattára: a forradalom eseményei és aktív szereplői a megyében* [Chronology and Personal Documentation of 1956 in Nógrád County: the Events and Active Participants of the Revolution in the County]. 2 Vols. Salgótarján: Nógrád Megyei Levéltár, 1996.
- Verdery, Katherine. *Secrets and Truths: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania’s Secret Police*. Budapest: CEU Press, 2014.
- Veress D., Csaba. “A II. világháború hadműveletei Fejér megyében (1944. december 3 – 1945. március 23.)” [Military Operations of the WWII in Fejér County, December 3, 1944–March 23, 1945]. In *Harcok és bűnök* [Fights and Crimes], edited by József Csurgai Horváth, Tamás Tihanyi, and Csaba Veress D., 7–165. Székesfehérvár: Fejér Megyei Önkormányzat, 2002.

Alexander Mirescu

A Curious Case of Cooperation and Coexistence: Church–State Engagement and Oppositional Free Spaces in Communist Yugoslavia and East Germany

The communist parties of Eastern Europe sought to organize power relations to preclude potential opposition. While successful in aligning society, the economy, culture, education and politics in party institutions, East Germany and Yugoslavia approached the execution of religious policy from a contrasting perspective. Unable to marginalize religion completely, the party and national churches entered into a vibrant, incentives-based back-and-forth. Over time, Church–state accommodation crystallized, producing Church-based free spaces located outside of the standard communist power structure. However, the ways in which East Germany and Yugoslavia engaged their churches generated different forms of Church-based free space, which, by the late 1980s, produced variegated forms of anti-communist opposition.

Keywords: Eastern Europe, Civil Society, Church, Communism, Religious Policy, Nationalism, Oppositional Movements

Introduction

Government policy affects the spaces in which social actors work, designates and delineates boundaries and creates distinguishable spheres in which stakeholders act. While laws and legislation demonstrate where the lines of acceptable political behavior lie, often they are subject to negotiation, mutual agreements or contentious dispute. These back-and-forth exchanges produce policies that rarely remain static. Over time, fluid, dynamic relationships evolve between key stakeholders and elites, which further modify the policy's trajectory, opening doors for new interpretations and new modes of acting.

Even in communist East Germany (GDR) and Yugoslavia, where authority was concentrated in single-party authoritarianism, power relations were neither a one-way street, nor were they monopolistic. There was one policy arena, in which one finds an illustrative example of fluid two-way, agent-to-agent engagement and cooperation: the arena of Church–state relations. Despite times of marginalization and suppression, it was the only policy arena that

necessitated negotiation and active *quid pro quo*.¹ This study claims that decision-making processes in East German and Yugoslav Church-state relations led to variegated forms of Church-based oppositional *free spaces*, in which people were able to plant the seeds of opposition to the legitimacy of communist rule.² In this essay, I claim that if religious policy allows Churches to influence social issues, it is more likely that free spaces will emerge in which principles of non-violence, peaceful resolution and human rights prevail, and these spaces may play active roles in mediation in times of unrest. If, however, religious policy excludes the Church on issues of social policy, this will lead to the emergence of free spaces, the actors of which will be less loyal and less invested as social stakeholders. Since its intermediary role is thwarted, the Church will be less interested in liberal-democratic reform and will make fewer demands based on non-violence, inclusion and peace.

Religion policy and Church–state engagement under a communist regime was highly unique. The GDR and Yugoslav communist regimes devoted tremendous human and financial resources to the regulation of religious life, entrusting the various tasks to state secretariats, commissions for religious affairs, and security agencies. Despite their monopoly on authority, these regimes were never monolithic and, in turn, Churches were never passive victims. Rather, there arose a pragmatic exchange and vibrant Church-state dialogue based on negotiated responses to incentives: the state needed the Church for popular legitimacy, the consolidation of power and international credibility, while the Church was dependent on the state for material goods, social services and sheer survival. Neither could function properly without the other, so a symbiotic necessity emerged, marked by micro-level discussions, communiqués, backroom deals and public deliberations. This fluid quality was the fundamental mechanism that linked a set of conditions to the outcome of free spaces.³

1 Steve Bruce, *Politics and Religion* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 172.

2 Free spaces are an integral pillar for oppositional groups working in authoritarian societies, without which the chances of success in challenging, reforming or toppling illiberal regimes may be significantly lessened. The ability to organize, cultivate and articulate critical expression, free of governmental intervention or violent crackdown, are the very heart of what makes oppositional movements successful. While they may not be necessary for every movement and while each authoritarian regime may deal with its undesired, unsanctioned oppositional agents in different ways, the growing number of successful regime-critical groups which have demonstrated or currently demonstrate the usage of similar forms of free space, from Africa to Latin America, North America to Arab states, can no longer be ignored by social scientists.

3 Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen, “Taking Process Tracing Seriously – The ‘Mechanismic’ Understanding and Tracing Causal Mechanisms,” paper presented at the Southern Political Science Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, January 5–8, 2011.

Categorizing Conditions of Church–State Engagement

The first set of conditions accounts for the initial types of religious policy from 1945 to the early 1950s. The end of the Second World War constituted a clear historical break from the recent past and a new political existence for the GDR and Yugoslavia. Each state approached its Churches in unique ways, while trying to solidify the supremacy of the Communist Party. In the Soviet Zone of Occupation (hereafter, SBZ) that would become East Germany, German communists needed to have a steady hand in navigating the chaotic post-war waters. The Communist Party (hereafter, SED) was institutionally weak and lacked popular support. Hence, it sought to avoid unnecessary challenges from the Church in an effort to build support. As a type of *participatory religious policy*, the SED extended an olive branch to the Church and publicly supported its participation in the establishment of the new state.

Yugoslav religious policy from 1945 to the mid-1950s can be characterized as *extremely repressive*. Since Tito's partisans had secured Western support in their struggle against fascism, their power base required less consolidation in the post-war period. Still, Yugoslav communists viewed religious institutions with trepidation since some segments of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) and, more notably, the Catholic Church had aligned themselves with anti-Yugoslav forces. Yugoslav religious policy in this initial period, by virtue of its repressiveness, re-entrenched the Churches in a critical posture vis-à-vis the state, giving them no other options but to embrace nationalism.

The second condition accounts for how the regimes dealt with their national Churches from the mid-1950s to the late-1980s. As public dissent against the regime and repression of the Church became repetitive, party leaders were forced to employ different methods to pacify unrest and suppress challenges to their authority. As a means of restoring order and preserving a good international reputation, the option emerged to engage the Church as the only mediator between the state and protestors. As multiple incidents of protest and unrest occurred and as non-Church oppositional groups sought protection in Church spaces, communicative cooperation between Church and state became more robust.⁴ Each profited from this back-and-forth relationship: the state was able to re-establish its authority, while the Church received considerable concessions

⁴ John T.S. Madeley, *Church and State in Contemporary Europe: The Chimera of Neutrality* (London: Cass Publishers, 2003), 13.

and established its role as chief mediator, thereby becoming useful to the state and indeed almost indispensable.

Within this second typology, my cases bifurcate along two distinct lines: inclusive and exclusionary engagement. Regimes that *inclusively engage* include their religious groups in ending periods of national unrest make them part of the confidence-building process after periods of violence. Going against Marxist ideology, the East German regimes willingly assigned the Church the role of primary negotiator in mediation. By the late 1980s, as the East German regime reverted to repressive measures against opposition, the Protestant Church carefully articulated liberal-democratic demands, such as respect for human rights, freedom of expression and non-violence, often phrased in masterfully-expressed socialist language. However, since the Protestant Church had experienced significant drops in Church membership, the SED was not constrained to seek out the Church's good offices for challenges to regime authority. The weak position of the Church meant that inclusive regime engagement was possible. Moreover, East Germany could embrace a more receptive stance to the Church, when its own institutions were unsuccessful in responding to oppositional challenge. This institutional weakness necessitated *inclusionary engagement*.

Yugoslavia's *exclusionary regime engagement* stands in stark contrast. High levels of Church repression from 1945 to 1953 were replaced in the mid-1950s by liberalization and political decentralization within the party and its federal-level and republic-level institutions. After two decades of repression, church life was suddenly allowed to expand, and this opened the door for initial critical expression. Congruent with its refusal to incorporate the Churches into the governance of immediate post-war Yugoslavia, Tito and Yugoslav communists never looked upon Church leaders as mediators in times of unrest. Unable to erase prior repression and having offered a maximum amount of space for Church activity, the regime could neither regain the confidence of the Church, nor could it offer concessions. The regime lost the carrot *and* the stick. This opened up avenues for Church spaces to embrace critical stances against religious policy by using language and symbols that questioned and ultimately rejected the supra-ethnic Yugoslav mantra of "brotherhood and unity." Since both the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) and the Croatian Catholic Church had been thoroughly excluded from statecraft, there was neither significant sympathy nor convincing incentive for them to intervene on behalf of a weakened regime, which they had never viewed as a social partner.

East German Participatory Church–State Engagement: 1945–1953

From its inception, the SED was faced with the daunting task of convincing the public of its socialist mission, while concomitantly discrediting Western democratic legitimacy. Working from such a weakened position in an ideological minefield, it was necessary to concede substantial points from its party platform by acknowledging “a special German road to socialism.”⁵ SED General-Secretary Erich Honecker reflects:

We calculated that the situation in Germany at that time did not provide the necessary requirements for the immediate establishment of socialism. That’s why the goal of the German Communist Party (KPD) was to create an antifascist, democratic regime, a parliamentary republic with all the democratic rights and freedoms for the people.⁶

Behind the façade, hardliners altered the party’s institutional core, securing a maximum amount of space in all realms of political, public and private life.⁷ Religious policy would be the only exception. In July 1946, Central Committee documents demonstrate the policy of the regime of binding the Church to the new state:

Churches have a stake in East Germany’s reconstruction. Their positive cooperation is to be welcomed... Reasonable requests by the Church for the return of occupied Church buildings for religious purposes should receive support from our representatives in administration, in command structures and in the SMAD.⁸

Spaces for political participation corresponded to physical spaces at the national level. Properties belonging to convicted Nazi party members and estates larger than 100 hectares were summarily brought under governmental

5 Monika Kaiser, “Change and Continuity in the Development of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 30 (1995): 688.

6 Erich Honecker, *Aus meinem Leben* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1988), 181.

7 Monika Kaiser, “Die Zentrale der Diktatur – organisatorische Weichenstellung, Strukturen und Kompetenzen der SED-Führung in der SBZ/DDR,” in *Historische DDR-Forschung: Ansätze und Studien*, ed. Jürgen Kocka (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993), 78–79.

8 Gerhard Besier, *Der SED-Staat und die Kirche: Der Weg in die Anpassung* (Munich: Bertelsmann Verlag, 1993), 55.

administration.⁹ However, so as not to disturb the delicate Church-state balance, the SED exempted *all Church properties* from land reforms.¹⁰ As a further measure of avoiding confrontation, GDR security organs protected the Church from intervention. In January 1947, Soviet and East German officials established the K-5 security apparatus (a precursor to the Ministry for State Security, or Stasi) under the command of the Soviet–East German Central Administration of the Interior.¹¹ K-5 contained special units for de-Nazification, the elimination of political opponents and monitoring the Evangelical Church.¹² To avoid potentially explosive situations, all interaction between K-5 officials and the Church required high-ranking approval from the Ministry of Interior.

Not only were its institutional autonomy and organizational structure left intact, but the Church reclaimed and expanded its pre-war position. Properties confiscated by the Nazis were returned to the Church and theological centers, which had been closed during the war, reassumed full activity.¹³ The SED granted construction permits for new buildings and provided funding for damaged dioceses.¹⁴ With state collection agencies placed at the Church's disposal, Church coffers were replenished with the reintroduction of Church taxes. Moreover, unlike the other Allied sectors, the Evangelical Church was free to introduce pastoral care service for university students.¹⁵ Lastly, Church radio programs, newsletters, periodicals and newspapers further attest to the regime's desire to avoid conflict with the Church.¹⁶

The official founding of the GDR on October 7, 1949 and the period of Stalinization rapidly consolidated party structures and vigorously centralized all state institutions. The SED injected a new ideological moniker in public debate: pacifist policy (*Friedenspolitik*), upon which it crafted its utopian commitment

9 Arnd Bauerkämper, "Bodenreform und Kollektivierung," in *Handwörterbuch zur ländlichen Gesellschaft in Deutschland*, ed. Stephan Beetz, Kai Brauer, and Claudia Neu (Berlin: VS Verlag, 2005), 17–18.

10 Clemens Vollnhals, "Zwischen Kooperation und Konfrontation: Zur Kirchenpolitik von KPD/SED und SMAD in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone," *Deutschland Archiv* 27 (1994): 486.

11 Monika Tantzsch, "In der Ostzone wird ein neuer Apparat aufgebaut: Die Gründung des DDR-Staatssicherheitsdienstes," *Deutschland Archiv* 31, no. 1 (1998): 48–49.

12 Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv/SAPMO-BArch, nr. 002071, Establishment of Division E in Department V, 1947.

13 Detlef Pollack, *Kirche in der Organisationsgesellschaft: zum Wandel der gesellschaftlichen Lage der evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR* (Berlin: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1994), 95.

14 "Kirchen entstehen neu!" *Die Kirche*, October 30, 1949, 1.

15 "Tätigkeit des Evangelischen Konsistoriums Berlin-Brandenburg," *Provinzialsynode Berlin-Brandenburg 1951* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1951), 27.

16 Pollack, *Kirche in der Organisationsgesellschaft*, 96.

to the advancement of peace. ‘Peace committees’ and public panel discussions on non-violence were established statewide to disseminate the regime’s pacifist message. Though aimed at external threats, East German pacifism discreetly targeted domestic provocateurs with links to the West.

During this *Kirchenkampf* period, the repression of the Church became more direct. Seeking to create a cadre of regime-friendly priests, the regime kept them under active surveillance and assessed their attitudes, which were characterized either as progressive or “reactionary” (critical of the regime).¹⁷ This would later create fissures among East German bishoprics: Berlin-Brandenburg Bishop Otto Dibelius was a defiant critic of East German communism, while, for example, Bishop of Thüringen, Moritz Mitzenheim, followed a much more conciliatory, less-critical line.¹⁸

The 1949 East German constitution guaranteed the separation of Church and state. This afforded the SED a legal justification officially to include Marxist scientific materialism and atheism in all school curricula. This prompted several synods in 1951 to issue letters of protest:

The constitutionally guaranteed right to the freedom of religion is effectively removed, so school lesson plans recognize only historical and dialectical materialism. We realize that belief is not for everyone... but we request that no one be pressured to accept the absence of faith. The freedom of belief in schools can only exist, if instruction in all subjects is carried out in such a way so that Christians and non-Christians can participate with the same amount of personal freedom.¹⁹

Still, the SED demonstrated veiled caution by instructing teachers and school directors to “avoid under all circumstances creating the impression of a state-controlled campaign against religion.”²⁰

The SED also pressured the Church to move its headquarters from the British Sector to the territory within GDR borders. Even before the 1949 state declaration, Evangelical leaders refused to recognize inter-zonal borders, since

17 Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv (BLA), Repository 203, nr. 144, *Positive zur Nationalen Front eingestellte Pfarrer des Landes Brandenburg*.

18 Pollack, *Kirche in der Organisationsgesellschaft*, 131.

19 Ralf Altenhof, “Aufarbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur in Deutschland,” *Die Enquetekommission des deutschen Bundestages* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1993): 164.

20 SAPMO-BArch, Sensitive Information – Directive from the Central Committee of the SED and the Department of People’s Education to regional SED party offices and Departments of People’s Education, January 7, 1950.

several parishes straddled the frontiers.²¹ Party leaders demanded a relocation so that

priests in leading positions of the National Front and peace committees will no longer be hindered by restrictions, reprimands and threats from the Church leadership in West Berlin... The ministerial council for the province of Brandenburg is of the opinion that it is no longer tolerable that the West Berlin Church administration threatens its priests, citizens of the GDR, simply because they fight for peace.²²

The SED countered with threats of allocating funding only for religious groups that were in SBZ.²³ Pastors and theology students from the West were prevented from entering the East.²⁴ While workers easily traveled to their factories in East Berlin, Church employees were singled out as undesirable visitors.

Against this growing tension, high-ranking Evangelical officials agreed on June 6, 1952 to an informal exchange with state representatives in the home of Brandenburg General-Superintendent Braun. Despite the informal nature and the palpable strains, both entities conducted an unexpectedly cordial discussion. The Church emphatically expressed its concerns regarding the wellbeing of its youth, travel restrictions for West Berlin priests and the party-run Free German Youth's agitation against the Church youth movement (*Junge Gemeinde*).²⁵ Bishop of Berlin-Brandenburg and chairman of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany Dibelius unambiguously confirmed the Church's bond to the Holy Scriptures as its sole source of guidance. He reiterated the independent nature of the Church and its resistance to political manipulation.²⁶ Provincial Vice-Minister Jahn of Brandenburg urged the Church to repeal its 1950 consistorial order blocking priests from joining political groups.²⁷ Though it concluded with little more than a handshake, this micro-level encounter proved that informal agent-to-agent dialogue was not only possible, but would be the necessary mechanism for future interaction and reconciliation.

21 Ehrhart Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition in der DDR, 1949–1989* (Berlin: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1998), 76.

22 "Kirchenleitung gehört in das Land Brandenburg!" *Märkische Volksstimme* December 6, 1950, 2.

23 BLA, Repository 202A, nr. 531, Letter from the Brandenburg Provincial Prime Minister to Evangelical Superintendents, Priests and Parish Commissioners, Pg 2, January 26, 1951.

24 BLA, Repository 202G, nr. 45, Special Report on the meeting between state representatives and those of the Church on 06.06.1952 in the home of Superintendent-General Braun, Potsdam, June 10, 1952.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

By 1953, East German mismanagement had produced a struggling, dysfunctional economy that ideologically diverted resources to heavy industry instead of addressing consumer needs, and this in turn created shortages of basic goods and food, as well as prohibitive taxes. Over 330,000 young, educated members of the East German workforce left for the West. Due to overzealous goals, the SED brought the country to near economic collapse. According to an SED document, Ulbricht recognized the possible gains to be won from policy “liberalization”:

It is not necessarily effective to lead a campaign of protest resolutions and demonstrations against Church leadership. Instead of intervening in religious events and Church services, religious policy should publish concrete evidence of the subversive activity of individual priests.”²⁸
We are neither leading a Church conflict, nor do we recognize any such Church conflict. We are simply looking for certain bases of the enemy... And when the Church positions itself in solidarity with such people, well then it’s too bad for the Church.²⁹

Ulbricht and other high-ranking SED officials were ordered to report to Moscow on June 2, 1953. Fearing a collapse of the GDR, the Soviet Council of Ministers demanded a reversal of SED Church-state relations.³⁰ As a result, the SED announced a high-level church-state summit scheduled for June 10, 1953, just days before the June 17, 1953 Berlin Workers Revolt. However, the eleventh-hour implementation of the Council’s orders proved to be insufficient in averting the revolt.³¹

Leading up to 1953, the Evangelical Church expanded its position and social presence to levels not seen since before the Third Reich and, as the only other significant social stakeholder, it tacitly participated in the formation of the new state. Moreover, the regime’s calculated policy of non-confrontation allowed

28 SAPMO-BArch, Repository IV 2/3/380, “Opinion of the Schwerin District Administration Report and the Gera District Administration on the Reactionary Activity of Priests,” Protocol of the SEC Central Committee, May 4, 1953.

29 Martin Georg Goerner, *Die Kirche als Problem der SED: Strukturen kommunistischer Herrschaftsausübung gegenüber der evangelischen Kirche 1945 bis 1958* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), 109.

30 Christian F. Ostermann, “Keeping the Pot Simmering: the United States and the East German Uprising of 1953,” *German Studies Review* 19, no. 1 (1996): 63.

31 “Kommuniqué der Sitzung des SED-Politbüros vom 9 Juni 1953,” *Dokumente der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands: Beschlüsse und Erklärungen des Zentralkomitees sowie seines Politbüros und seines Sekretariats* 4 (Berlin: Berlin, 1953), 428.

the Church to maintain institutional autonomy in its decision-making processes, social outreach and public activities. By actively seeking out the Church's support in crafting a new, socialist German state, the SED's overarching design of integration produced only low-levels of anxiety among its decision-makers. At the time of Stalin's death in March 1953, Church-based free spaces were intact and vibrant.

East German Inclusive Engagement from 1953–1989

As part of the SED's *inclusive engagement*, two salient features emerged in this period. Firstly, the state sought to elevate socialism above religion by coopting progressive pastors from ones that were critical of the regime. This *policy of differentiation* gave rise to the second feature of this period: conciliatory, cooperative factions in Church ranks, which led to visible fissures among Church leaders. Inclusive engagement could take place with a weakened Church not only because secularization became an increasingly measurable characteristic of East German society after the mid-1950s, but also because the state had succeeded in changing people's attitudes toward religion.

State-lead high-level talks of June 10, 1953 signaled the adoption of an approach based more on dialogue. The resulting communiqué codified an agreement, whereby both entities negotiated a halt in all repressive action against Church youth. Imprisoned Church members were released without delay³² and students who had been expelled or blacklisted could resume their studies.³³ Teachers, sacked based on religious belief, were reinstated.³⁴ The Central Committee also promised to refrain from intervening in Church institutions.³⁵ In exchange, Church leaders agreed to temper their reproaches of the regime, limit the use of the pulpit and retract their criticisms of economic and political life.³⁶ Leaders from Church and state together released a joint statement celebrating

32 Kommunique der Sitzung des SED-Politbüros, Juni 9, 1953, 428.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 "Entschliebung der 15 Tagung des SED-Zentralkomitees vom 24. bis. 26. Juli 1953 – Der neue Kurs und die Aufgaben der Partei," *Dokumente der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands: Beschlüsse und Erklärungen des Zentralkomitees sowie seines Politbüros und seines Sekretariats* 4 (Berlin: SED, 1953), 449.

36 BLA, Repository 530, nr. 2188, SED Provincial Secretariat's Report entitled "On the Activity of the Church after the Communique from June 10, 1953 and Suggestions for Improvements in the Arena of Religious Policy" Potsdam, January 8, 1954.

the fruitful discussions, in which the regime had re-instated the Church as a social stakeholder.³⁷

The June talks proved to be nothing more than a stopgap measure. Stasi directives reveal that it maintained its prior characterization of Church leaders as “reactionary, imperialist intelligence agents working in support of criminal activities against the GDR.”³⁸ Open conflict with the Church was to be replaced with a covert, operative approach: publicly demonstrating willingness to engage in dialogue, while remaining inwardly uncompromising.

In 1954, alongside the Ministry of Interior, other state institutions were to craft religious policy. The Department for Church Relations served as the government mediator between the General-Secretary, the politburo, the Central Committee and the Church. The regime then established the Working Group for Church Questions of the SED’s Central Committee (*die Arbeitsgruppe für Kirchenfragen* or AK), which was to handle Church–state relations, monitor the political activities of religious groups and report their findings directly to the highest levels of government. While the AK set the overall policy tone,³⁹ the Council of Ministers created the State Secretariat for Church Questions (SSCQ) in 1957, which served as the state contact and intermediary for Church leaders.⁴⁰

By 1960, several theologians began to search for an identity in the now solidified Communist state. Günter Jacob, Evangelical General-Superintendent of Cottbus, introduced the first interpretations of the Scriptures into the Church–state debate. By liberating itself from political manipulation, the Church could create a space for itself in which “the true, apolitical message of the Evangelical scriptures” could find expression.⁴¹ At an extraordinary session of the EKD 1956 Synod in Berlin, the Union of Evangelical Priests in the GDR (Bund evangelischer Pfarrer der DDR or BEP-DDR) claimed that “concessions for greater religious freedoms within the realm of dialectical Marxist authority”

37 BLA, Repository 530, nr. 2187, Bishop Otto Dibelius’ pastoral letter entitled “To all Parishes in Germany,” Berlin, June 12, 1953.

38 BLA, Repository 530, nr. 2188, SED Provincial Secretariat’s Report entitled “On the Activity of the Church after the Communiqué from June 10, 1953 and Suggestions for Improvements in the Arena of Religious Policy” Potsdam, January 8, 1954.

39 SAPMO-BArch, Repository DY 30/J IV 2/2/516, Protocol nr. 62/56 of the Meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee, November 27, 1956.

40 SAPMO-BArch, Repository DC 20/4/228, Decision 53/14 of the Council of Ministers for the Appointment of a State Secretariat for Church Questions, February 21, 1957.

41 Günter Jacob, *Der Christ und die Mächte* (Stuttgart: Lettner Verlag, 1960), 330.

were only possible if the individual... respected and reciprocally recognized the given borders between public life and the space of pure religion.”⁴²

We are separate from any hyphenated-form of Christianity, unbound from a fantastical, civic-capitalist system, foreign to Evangelicals. We seek neither to be a center of conspiracy, nor a state-run propaganda institute. Rather, we in the BEP-DDR seek to offer brotherly help, to ponder theologically the existential question of the Church in our republic and at the same time to be active as loyal and responsible GDR citizens. This union works for freedom in the world and supports the efforts of the German Democratic Republic towards this end, while being obligated to the social renewal that is taking place in the GDR.⁴³

The Church’s contribution to the new path took form in the first observable expressions of a *Kirche im Sozialismus*, a position that was neither supportive of the regime, nor ostensibly against the regime, but rather existed parallel to it.

Due to the SED’s initial skepticism, Church leaders sent a delegation led by bishops from Thuringia and Pomerania to participate in discussions with the Ministry of Interior, SSCQ and the Council of Ministers.⁴⁴ The delegates at the Church–state talks agreed to a monumental joint communiqué on July 21, 1958. Unlike the June 10, 1953 agreement, the church successfully weakened the state. The Church offered its most demonstrative statement yet:

The representatives of the Evangelical Church in the GDR declare that the Church, with all means at its disposal, strives for peace amongst all peoples and hence is principally in agreement with the peaceful efforts of the GDR and its government. In accordance with their conscience, Christians shall fulfill their civic duties based on the legal foundations. They respect the socialist development and shall contribute to the peaceful construction of civic life.⁴⁵

Short of declaring loyalty, the Church recognized the existing political conditions and Marxist socialism. Regime officials promised only to review

42 Günter Jacob, “Der Raum für das Evangelium in Ost und West,” *Kirchliches Jahrbuch 1956* (Gütersloh: Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1956): 13.

43 Evangelisches Zentralarchiv Berlin (EZB), Repository 4, nr. 666, Newsletter nr. 1 from BEP-DDR in the German Democratic Republic to all Pastors, June 19–20, 1958.

44 Besier, *Der SED-Staat und die Kirche*, 71.

45 *Kirchliches Jahrbuch 1958*, 241.

certain measures taken in public education and reiterated their constitutional responsibility to protect the rights of religious practice.⁴⁶ This stood in stark contrast to the 1953 point-by-point retraction of repressive measures against the Church. The policy of differentiation had accomplished its goals. Church membership and congregations fell rapidly throughout the 1950s and 1960s.⁴⁷ Only one-third of the children from religious households were confirmed in the Church, while the *Jugendweibe* exploded in popularity from 26 percent of school classes in 1955 to over 80 percent in 1960.⁴⁸ With the beginning of the construction of the Berlin Wall on August 13, 1961, rather than expand its administrative reach to near totalitarian domination, the regime chose begrudgingly to accommodate the Church.⁴⁹

Under state expansion, the SED began to militarize society: military service in the People's National Army (NVA) was mandated for all men in January 1962 without the option of conscientious objection.⁵⁰ Since the majority of objectors were from Christian households or theology students, the move gave the Churches a new lifeline. Church leaders approached the regime about the negative effects of forcing Christians to carry arms against their will.⁵¹ Ulbricht and the National Defense Council, keen on avoiding confrontations, conceded their position to the Church on September 7, 1964 and ordered the creation of unarmed NVA 'construction units' that exempted Christians from weapons exercises. The *Bausoldaten* were tasked with building military installments, housing units and transporting material. With this, the GDR became the only Communist state that allowed for conscientious objection.

By the late 1960s, the Evangelical Churches decided territorially and institutionally to re-organize themselves from the all-German Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD). After much debate, East German bishops in 1969 formally separated themselves from the EKD, establishing the regime-friendly Union of Evangelical Churches in the GDR (BEK-DDR). Despite the BEK's separation from the EKD, the two entities maintained close lines of communication up to 1989.

46 Ibid.

47 "Statistical Report on Exiting the Church – 1950 to 1956," *Amtsblatt der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland* 19, no. 6 (1958): 17.

48 Pollack, *Kirche in der Organisationsgesellschaft*, 150.

49 "Programm der SED," *Neues Deutschland* January 25, 1963, 1.

50 Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition in der DDR, 1949–1989*, 187.

51 Ibid.

In 1971, Walter Ulbricht's successor, Erich Honecker, sought a more conciliatory approach to Church–state relations. His approach included the establishment of a Church media service,⁵² construction permits and the expansion of the Church's presence in religion-free “workers cities.” Moreover, in hopes of improving the GDR's international image, Evangelical bishops' were encouraged to participate in international ecumenical conferences.⁵³ Church–state interaction demonstrated the GDR's new readiness to seek a *modus vivendi*. For its part, the Church again expressed its readiness to

neither inflate, nor downplay the existing contrasts between Marxist-socialism and theology. Neither option is in our interest. Rather, we need better to understand what occurs in this country, which is also our home. We shall soon discover the real commonalities in our responsibility to man and those social areas, where we are needed. In the past, anti-communism distorted our vision from our real opportunities and true challenges.⁵⁴

The purpose of the Church was to be firmly located in working within East German society for the good of its citizens.⁵⁵

On August 18, 1976, Church–state relations were profoundly unsettled by an act of self-immolation. Before pouring petrol over himself, Pastor Oskar Brüsewitz had unrolled a banner with the words “the Church in the GDR condemns communist repression of school children!” While the regime claimed the priest suffered from delusion, it feared a public protest, a damaged international image. Honecker and Church representatives met for another round of talks on March 6, 1978, which introduced conditions that set the stage for the largest expansion of Church space.⁵⁶ In *quid pro quo*, the Church agreed to respect the SED's request to halt all political criticism and accept the existing power relations of the GDR. In turn, the SED offered a lengthy list of concessions and policy liberalizations, including more construction permits, 2.2 million Marks for

52 EZB, Repository 4, nr. 304, Letters between the Berlin Church Council and Reinhard Henkys of the Berlin Arbeitsgemeinschaft für kirchliche Publizistik, July 12, 1973.

53 “Hohe DDR-Kirchenvertreter besuchen Genf – Ökumenische Verbindungen sollen ausgebaut werden, Werben für Anerkennung.” *Frankfurter Rundschau* March 22, 1972, 1.

54 SAPMO-BArch, Repository DO4/320, State Committee for Radio Services – Department of Monitoring, July 2, 1971.

55 “Kirche will in der Gesellschaft der DDR künftig mitreden,” *Der Tagespiegel* July 6, 1971, 45.

56 SAPMO-BArch, Repository DY IV 2/2036/49, Our Approach to the Talks with Representatives of the Evangelical Church of the GDR, May 10, 1977.

restoration projects, lifelong health care for all Church employees, pastoral care in prisons and retirement homes, pay increases for priests⁵⁷ and greater access to state media for holy days.⁵⁸ While Honecker viewed the talks as a “crowning moment and new beginning,” the Church secured a long sought after document that better outlined its legal position in the GDR.⁵⁹

Despite the March 1978 talks, the SED became increasingly suspicious of Church-based peace initiatives⁶⁰ and “the serious security concern of broader peace movements solidifying around Church.”⁶¹ Indeed, by 1982, a number of students, theologians, Church congregants and veteran Bausoldaten had found a protected space in the Church.⁶² Ulrike Poppe, founder of “Women for Peace” and the “Initiative for Peace and Human Rights,” recognized that the existence of these groups was best guaranteed under the protective umbrella of the Church.⁶³ Equally, Church leadership was aware of the fate that would await these individuals, if the activism and pacifist message of these groups were to take on stronger contours. The Church’s protective stance assumed a more communicative quality, acting as the mediator and ‘translator’ between the two entities.⁶⁴ Bishops oversaw cooperation among the groups, warned of risks, advised the opposition and the regime on better forms of communication and diluted their messages in the interest of maintaining public order. Despite this protective cover, oppositional groups had grown skeptical of becoming too compromised by the Church. Poppe was aware that “oppositional groups were at times afraid of the Church’s paternalist role vis-à-vis East German human rights groups.”⁶⁵ Hence, the relationship between Church and opposition was not without contention. Nevertheless, if peaceful resolutions to conflict and

57 SAPMO-BArch, Repository DY 30 IV 2/2/1740, Decision of the Politburo supporting an increase in basic wages of Evangelical regional Churches, August 22, 1978.

58 Ibid., Addendum 1 on the Commitments to Concerns Brought by the Union of Evangelical Churches in the German Democratic Republic.

59 Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, (BStU), Protocol from a speech held by Bishop Albrecht Schönherr on the importance of the March 6, 1978 talks, MfS Document 8103, October 10, 1986.

60 SAPMO-BArch, Internal Party Document – Information on the Relationship between State and the Evangelical Church in the GDR, DY 2/3/119, December 2, 1980.

61 Ibid.

62 Interview with Manfred Stolpe and Joachim Heise, July 14, 2008.

63 Interviews with Ulrike Poppe, December 2008 and January 2009.

64 Interview with Manfred Stolpe, July 14, 2008.

65 Interviews with Ulrike Poppe, December 2008 and January 2009.

the avoidance of human rights violations were topics for both Church and opposition, they had now become salient issues between Church and state.

The SED's lack of preparation in adapting to a third, new critical element became apparent. By 1982, Stasi documents warned of Church-based "enemy-negative forces attempting to establish an independent movement for peace under the guise of pacifism."⁶⁶ Attempts were made to remove students from schools and universities based on membership in illegal organizations, while other peace activists were taken into police custody. The SED resorted to more extreme measures: the regime quietly offered leading members of oppositional groups travel permits or stipends to study in the West; others were forcefully expatriated.⁶⁷ But even state security organs feared that overt repressive measures could push the Church to become confrontational. Intelligence reports pressed the SED to engage in another round of talks with the SSCQ and Church leaders to ease tensions. Stasi reports even suggested using the Church leadership to steer the peace movements away from the public sphere.⁶⁸ The regime desperately resorted to its old Janus-faced playbook: it actively engaged with Church leaders, using their mediation between regime and opposition, while cracking down on those who drifted beyond the accepted boundaries.⁶⁹ Police and Stasi units increasingly stormed Churches and parish halls and confiscated printing presses and Church libraries. At the Zionskirche in East Berlin, Stasi units arrested members of a Church-based environmental initiative. The regime's desperate show of force not only made it more dependent on the Church's communicative role, it also improved the Church's image and increased the public's solidarity with it.

By late 1989, Evangelical Churches were ready to channel massive public frustration peacefully and prevent a potential violent state intervention. In Leipzig, Monday prayers for peace at the Nikolaikirche by October 9, 1989 drew 70,000 demonstrators; one week later, over 120,000 gathered before the Church. Trying to stave off unrest, the politburo replaced Honecker with Egon Krenz on October 18. With change evident, over 320,000 called for peaceful reforms in Leipzig. Tensions grew to a fever pitch as rumors spread amongst the peaceful

66 BStU, Internal document from Ministry of State Security to all working units of the Stasi, MfS Document 7604, March 17, 1982.

67 Interviews with Ulrike Poppe, December 2008 and January 2009.

68 BStU, Suggestions of talks with the State Secretary for Church Questions, Comrade Gysi, with the bishops of the provincial Evangelical Churches in the DDR, MfS Document 7605.

69 BStU, Quarterly Report – Church and Religious Communities in the GDR – Excerpts of an interview with Berlin-Brandenburg Bishop Albrecht Schönherr, MfS Document 8103, April 1985.

protestors that units of the NVA, riot police and undercover Stasi agents had been given orders to use force to control the growing protest.⁷⁰ But by now, word had spread throughout the GDR that Church buildings and squares were safe areas for expressing popular frustration and desires for reform.

The GDR reached a point of no return on November 9, 1989, when Party Secretary Krenz ordered the opening of border crossings between East and West Berlin. Upon hearing the news from West German media sources, East Germans gathered at the border crossings by the thousands. Overwhelmed East German border guards, at first unsure how to proceed, yielded to the swelling masses. Once the barriers were raised, West and East Berliners were united in a celebration of peace.

Post-War Yugoslav Religious Policy: More Soviet than Thou

In this section I claim that a unique set of processes stemming from Yugoslavia's particular Church–state engagement planted the seeds for the exclusionary characteristics of Church-based free spaces that later generated nationalist sentiment. Yugoslav religious policy was not marked by public agreements or joint communiqués resulting from regular high-level Church-state negotiations. Once the country swung from a repressive model to an open, quasi-Western one, freedoms in economics, labor, media and travel undermined the necessity to lodge human rights complaints. By liberalizing religious policy, Yugoslav communists gave up an important bargaining chip: they could not offer concessions to Churches, since the Churches already enjoyed the most open religious atmosphere in the communist world.

From end of the war to the late 1950s, the Yugoslav regime maintained a posture of *extreme repression*. The decision to take immediate measures against the Catholic and Orthodox Churches was a manifestation of Tito's distrust and the Yugoslav Communist Party's (CPY) rapid consolidation of power. Neither the Catholic Church nor the SOC became participants in the reconstruction of the new Yugoslav state. As a result, the regime's position offered the Churches no other option but to look upon the authorities with suspicion, if not enmity. Such distrust bolstered the Churches' unwillingness to support the regime, which

70 Interview with Hans Modrow, September 2008.

created a crucial by-product for later periods: the regime could never request the Churches' mediation in times of unrest.⁷¹

Two points are crucial to understanding the post-war phase in Yugoslav Church-state relations. Firstly, the CPY systematically applied the Soviet playbook, which erased the political landscape of subversives and prevented religio-nationalist rhetoric from challenging the state, a type of post-war *tabula rasa* devoid of opposition.⁷² The second approach involved state institutions confronting the Churches through nuanced repression that targeted their greatest weakness. This individualized method removed the presence and visibility of Church space from the public sphere. In 1945, the Yugoslav Council of Ministers established the Federal Commission for Church Questions (SKVP), which passed down party directives to republic-level Commissions for Religious Relations (KVP), the purpose of which was to

research all questions concerning life outside the religious communities, their inter-confessional relations and the position of the Churches vis-à-vis the state and the People's authorities, as well as the preparation for all legislative solutions on relations between religious communities and the state.⁷³

Yugoslav authorities considered religious groups to be a security threat and therefore placed the SKVP under the command of the Ministry for State Security (UDBA). Authorities detained, physically assaulted and murdered hundreds of Orthodox and Catholic bishops, priests, nuns, and laypersons. Judges in politically rigged trials speedily handed down execution sentences and lengthy jail times.⁷⁴ Grand show trials served as a means of eradicating Church-

71 Interviews with Bishop of Australia and New Zealand of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Irinej Dobrijevic, April 2007 and the Vicar General of the Catholic Archdiocese of Sarajevo, Monsignor Mato Zovkić, September 2010.

72 Darko Bekich, "Soviet Goals in Yugoslavia and the Balkans," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 481 (1985), 2.

73 Arhiv Jugoslavije (AJ), Repository 144, no. 1-1, The Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia brings forth the decree on the establishment of a federal commission for religious questions – Article 1 (Pretsedništvo Ministarskog Saveta Demokratske Federativne Jugoslavije donosi uredbu o osnivanju državane komisije za verska pitanja – Član 1), September 21, 1945.

74 AJ, Inventory 144, nr. 1-4a, Executive of the Bishops' Conference in Zagreb (Predsjedništvo Biskupih Konferencija u Zagrebu), no. 64, May 8, 1945.

linked regime-opponents.⁷⁵ In a politically rigged court in 1946, anti-communist Royalist Četnik commander Draža Mihailović was found guilty of collaborating with Nazi Germany and summarily executed by firing squad. Mihailović's stature in the SOC was considerable. The SOC leadership perceived the court's decision as a volley across its bow.

Similarly, the 1946 trial of Catholic Archbishop of Zagreb Alojzije Stepinac for his alignment with German and Croatian fascists highlighted the regime's intent to silence any opposition. On May 8, 1945, Stepinac publicly demanded an explanation for the maltreatment of Catholic priests,⁷⁶ which was followed by a pastoral letter slamming the regime's repression.⁷⁷ However, he offered no word of atonement to either the regime or the SOC for wartime atrocities perpetrated by Croatian clergy.⁷⁸ As a result, Tito personally engaged him to consider the possibility of an *independent, Yugoslav Church*.⁷⁹ Meeting with Stepinac, Tito states

the Church should be more national, more adapted to the nation: perhaps you are surprised that I approach the subject of nationality with such emphasis. Too much blood flowed, I have seen too much suffering of the people, and I would like the Catholic clergy in Croatia to be more deeply linked in its national feeling with the people than it now is [...] We want to create a great community of South Slavs in which there will be both Orthodox and Catholics [...] linked with all the other Slavs.⁸⁰

75 Dunja Melčić, "Abrechnungen mit den politischen Gegnern und die kommunistischen Nachkriegsverbrechen," in *Der Jugoslawien-Krieg: Handbuch zu Vorgeschichte, Verlauf und Konsequenzen*, ed. idem (Opladen: Westdeutsche Verlag, 1999), 198.

76 AJ, Inventory 144, nr. 1–3, Improving and renewing the Church – authorization for the collection of necessary resources (Predmet: Popravak i obnova crkvi – dozvola sabiranja potrebnih sretstava), Letter from Stepinac to the Vlada and the republic-level Commission for Religious Affairs of Croatia, August 14, 1945.

77 AJ, Inventory 144, nr. 1–4, Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops of Yugoslavia, Publication of the Bishop's Conference in Zagreb (Pastirsko Pismo Katoličkih Biskupa Jugoslavije, Izdano s Općih Biskupskih Konferencija u Zagrebu), September 20, 1945. Also see, Zvonimir Despot, *Vrijeme Zločina: Novi Prilozi za Povijest Koprivničke Podravine 1941 – 1948* (Zagreb: Hrvatski Institut za Povijest, 2007), 258.

78 Milovan Djilas, *Jahre der Macht: Im Jugoslawischen Kräftespiel – Memoiren 1945–1966* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992), 56.

79 Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941–1945: Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 562–63.

80 Stella Alexander, *The Triple Myth: A Life of Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 117.

This effort sought to “yugoslavize” the Church and, as was being done in the GDR, align it with the state’s new identity.⁸¹ After such repression, Stepinac refused any such agreement and was placed on trial for collaboration, the dissemination of Fascist ideology in Church media and the forced conversion of Orthodox citizens.⁸² Stepinac was found guilty on all counts and sentenced to 16 years of hard labor followed by house arrest.

The CPY continued its drastic reduction of Church space. Religious instruction in state-run secondary schools was discontinued in 1945 without negotiation.⁸³ Partisan units physically removed all religious symbols from schools and public buildings and marriage documents were placed under civil code. A 1947 federal law prohibited the public celebration of religious holy days. Instead, the official Socialist calendar replaced holy days with workdays.⁸⁴ In 1949, the Ministry of Education declared all theological faculties private institutions and removed them from public universities.⁸⁵

The nationalization of property rounded out the palette of policy instruments. In a move against the Catholic Church, the army and security forces placed all Church-administered hospitals, nursing schools and pension homes under governmental administration. Moreover, chapels, prayer rooms, religious artwork and crosses in hospitals were removed and nuns, though still allowed to work, had to remove their habits and other displays of religious symbolism.⁸⁶ The regime undertook a similar, nuanced measure against the SOC by targeting its property holdings, one of its sources of income. From 1946 onward, security forces again occupied hundreds of SOC buildings, parish halls, secretariats and residencies.⁸⁷ In Bosnia, over 140 Churches and offices were placed under rent-

81 Margareta Matijević, “Religious Communities in Croatia from 1945 to 1991: Social Casualty of the Dissent Between Communist Authorities and Religious Communities’ Leadership,” *Časopis sa Suvremenu Povijest* 2, no. 1 (2006): 122.

82 Alexander, *The Triple Myth*, 146.

83 Katarina Spehnyak, *Javnost i Propaganda Narodna Fronta u Politici i Kulturi Hrvatske 1945–1952* (Zagreb, 2002), 187–90.

84 Thomas Bremer, *Kleine Geschichte der Religionen in Jugoslavien: Königreich-Kommunismus-Krieg* (Freiburg: Herder Verlag), 86.

85 AJ, Inventory 144, no. 2-46, Briefing for the head of the Federal Commission for Religious Questions on the current state of Orthodox Faculty (*Kratak referat o današnjem založnim stanju na našem Pravoslavnom Bogoslovskom Fakultetu*), July 7, 1949.

86 Matijević, *Religious Communities in Croatia from 1945 to 1991*, 125.

87 AJ, Inventory 144, Decrees from SKVP no. 534 and no. 68 of 1946 identified these measures.

free military and police occupation.⁸⁸ In cases where non-military individuals occupied Church land, the regime refused requests for compensation.⁸⁹ As the party predicted, critique of this measure remained limited only to protest letters by the synod⁹⁰ and Patriarch Gavriilo to the federal and the Serbian KVP.⁹¹

By 1953, the LCY had neutralized the last forms of domestic opposition and now had a free hand in pursuing socio-economic policies, which anticipated a sharp about-face from centralized resource allocation to one of “workers’ self-managed” production.⁹² They laid the groundwork for political re-adjustments in Church-state relations. In 1953, the Yugoslav Federal Assembly adopted the *Law Concerning the Legal Status of Religious Communities*, which formalized the separation of Church and state, guaranteed freedom of conscience and religious belief and stipulated the rights of atheists and the consequences of abusing religion for political purposes.⁹³ By the late 1950s, the regime had increased the number of construction permits and funds for damaged buildings.⁹⁴ Lastly, the weekly newspapers, the Catholic *Glas Koncila* and the Orthodox *Pravoslavlje* were allowed to circulate in larger numbers.⁹⁵

The Rise of the Churches from 1966 to the Late 1980s

In 1966, the Fourth Plenum of the Central Committee and the six republic Central Committees introduced extensive political liberalizations.⁹⁶ Centrist factions gave way to decentralist forces that favored devolution of powers to the

88 AJ, Inventory 144, 1-9, List of Church Buildings Occupied or Used by State Authorities (Spisak Crkvenih Zgrada Zauzetih i Upotrebljivih od Strane Gradjanskih Vlasti), February 1947.

89 Ibid.

90 AJ, Inventory 144, 1-9, Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church, no. 346, Letter of protest from the synod of the SOC to the republican-level KPV of Serbia with a request to reverse the decrees, February 11, 1947.

91 AJ, Inventory 144, 1-9, Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church, no. 1147, Letter of protest to the Executive of the Federal Government, March 31, 1947.

92 Thomas A. Marschak, “Centralized versus Decentralized Resource Allocation: The Yugoslav Laboratory,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 82 (1968): 566.

93 Radić, *Država i Verske Zajednice, 1945–1970: Prvi Deo 1945–1953* (Belgrade: Institut za Novu Istoriju Srbije, 2002), 385–400.

94 Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 121.

95 Marcus Tanner, *Croatia: A Nation Forged in War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 194.

96 Radio Free Europe, Internal Affairs, *Central Committee Plenums of Yugoslavia's Six Republics Approve Purge of Ranković and Party Reforms*, October 3, 1966: 1.

republics.⁹⁷ With this came a new stance on Church-state policy: the SKVP and KVPs were removed from UDBA oversight and transformed into independent governmental units, ending the regime's security and intelligence gathering approach. State institutions were mandated to engage in dialogue, monitor media and manage Church life through *quid pro quo*, but also to prevent Churches from weighing in on social issues. With this change, the SOC and Croatian Church became less constrained in expanding Church media, holding public masses and criticizing the regime. One could hardly imagine a more comprehensive change.

Although calls for decentralization first came from the Serbian and Slovenian parties, Croatian communists most demonstratively demanded for a loosening, beginning with appeals for a constitutionally recognized Croatian language, separate from its almost identical Serbian counterpart. This peaked with the Croatian Spring or Mass Movement (*Masovni Pokret*, Maspok) from 1967 to 1972, which took on more alarming contours. Calls were made for the establishment of an independent Croatian national bank, greater autonomy in education and economic policy and territorial defense units.⁹⁸ Maspok supporters criticized the Yugoslav National Bank's distribution of federal development funds to poorer regions, while extremist fractions demanded a separate seat at the United Nations and revisions of official Yugoslav history.⁹⁹

Maspok coincided with the rise of the Catholic Church's renewed organization of large-scale masses and celebrations. A symbolic start took place with the Marian Congress and the consecration of the holy shrine at Marija Bistrica in August 1971 in front of 150,000 pilgrims.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, *Glas Koncila* profited from limited state censorship by publishing criticisms of Yugoslav socialism, while celebrating the upsurge as solidifying the Croatian nation. As violent Maspok demonstrations in Zagreb threatened to destabilize the regime in 1972, Tito quickly purged leaders en masse and imprisoned activists.¹⁰¹ Under the threat of irredentism, Tito and Executive Bureau Secretary Stane Dolanc cleansed the

97 Sabrina Ramet, *Nihil Obstat: Religion, Politics, and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 41.

98 Vjekoslav Perica, "The Catholic Church and the Making of the Croatian Nation, 1970–1984," *Eastern European Politics and Societies* 14, no. 3 (2000): 532.

99 Viktor Meier, "Der Titostaat in der Krise: Jugoslawien nach 1966," in *Der Jugoslawien-Krieg: Handbuch zu Vorgeschichte, Verlauf und Konsequenzen*, ed. Dunja Melčić (Opladen: Westdeutsche Verlag, 1999), 202.

100 Perica, "The Catholic Church and Making of the Croatian Nation," 540–41.

101 Holm Sundhausen, *Geschichte Serbiens: 19.–21. Jahrhundert* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2007), 375.

Croatian League of Communists and other republican leagues.¹⁰² Faced with the threat of violence, Yugoslav communists never requested mediation from the Church. Unlike in the GDR, in Yugoslavia there was no rapprochement between Tito and Catholic bishops to restore peace. Despite the regime's later inclusion of Maspok's demands in the 1974 constitution, the crackdown shifted outlets for critical expression into the hands of the Church.¹⁰³

The Church wasted no time in expanding its free space. In September 1974, the episcopate began the Great Novena, celebrating 1,300 years of Christianity. The icon of Our Lady of the Great Croatian Christian Covenant was paraded around the countryside, accompanied by liturgical celebrations, pastoral theater plays and a children's educational course. Large Eucharistic festivals followed: the 1977 celebration of King Zvonimir, the 1979 declaration of the Year of Prince Branimir and the 1981 National Eucharistic Congresses in Split and Zagreb. The pinnacle was reached in September 1984 at the final celebration of the Great Novena, where over 400,000 convened at Marija Bistrica.

The SOC in this period became equally active with its social presence, organizing numerous public liturgies, jubilees and celebrations. In May 1968, the SOC organized a commemoration of the ancient Serb ruler, Czar Dušan. In September 1969, the SOC celebrated the 750th anniversary of autocephaly before a crowd of nearly 10,000 Orthodox faithful. The jubilee was continued at the Žiča monastery, where the conciliatory Archbishop German stated the following:

All who live with us here in our common home, in our common fatherland of Yugoslavia want to live in concord with all, in brotherhood, in love, in community. We have in our present homeland many different nationalities and religious communities... We want to live with all as with brothers and sisters in one single house.¹⁰⁴

Church-organized celebrations continued throughout 1970 as the SOC commemorated the 50th anniversary of the restoration of the Serbian patriarchate (1920–1970) and in 1971 the 300th anniversary of Saint Basil of Ostrog.¹⁰⁵

102 David Binder, "Marko Nikežic, Yugoslav Liberal Forced to Quit by Tito, Dies at 69," *New York Times*, January 9, 1991, 20.

103 Peter Palmer, "The Churches and the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia," in *Religion and International Relations*, ed. Ken R. Dark (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2000), 87.

104 Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 51.

105 *Ibid.*, 52.

This atmosphere empowered the SOC to articulate grievances vocally. It initiated criticism of the regime's inability to resolve brewing conflicts in regions considered important to the Church. Since Kosovo's post-war inclusion in Yugoslavia, ethnic Albanians had long been dissatisfied with its position as a non-Slavic minority without its own republic.¹⁰⁶ To ease tensions in 1966, Tito greatly expanded Kosovar rights and obliged the wealthier Northern republics to assist in the economic development of the territory. Nevertheless, Kosovo's frustration gradually became violent. Orthodox churches, shrines and gravestones were increasingly desecrated and priests, nuns and monks harassed. Tensions exploded in November 1968, when large-scale demonstrations and violent riots broke out.¹⁰⁷ Under media suppression, Tito deployed the JNA to quell the unrest. While quick to crackdown, Tito made no attempt to seek other forms of resolution. Despite being one of the targets of the riots, neither the SOC nor Kosovar party representatives were asked to cooperate to reduce the tensions. Again, an opportunity for inclusive Church engagement was missed.

On May 4, 1980, Josip Broz Tito passed away. Millions of shocked Yugoslavs gathered, tearfully laying flowers, holding military memorials and paying their last respects. However, the country would again be rocked by violent demonstrations in Kosovo. The March 1981 riots were fuelled by demands for republic status, only this time, accompanied with violence against Serb symbols and the SOC and rioters demanding "Unification with Albania."¹⁰⁸ Again, the regime answered with force, sending in militia and tank units and arresting hundreds of protestors.¹⁰⁹

Less hindered by the 1966 accords, several SOC clerics penned an "Appeal for the Protection of the Serbian Population and their Sacred Monuments in Kosovo" on Orthodox Good Friday 1982 to the Presidency of the Yugoslavia, claiming that Albanian plans for "genocide" were being carried out.¹¹⁰ Using its publication outlets, it published the entire text in *Pravoslavlje* and other media, as Church spaces increasingly became the only venue where grievances could be expressed. Once again, aside from heavy-handed repression, no efforts were undertaken to bring the major stakeholders together to calm Kosovo.

106 Ger Duijzings, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 38–45.

107 Hugh Poulton, "Macedonians and Albanians as Yugoslavs," in *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918–1992*, ed. Dejan Djokić (London: Hurst & Company, 2003), 129.

108 Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 334–35.

109 "Belgrade Sends Tanks to Rebellious Region," *The New York Times*, April 4, 1981, 21.

110 Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 123–24.

The final years of the Yugoslav project were characterized by greatly expanded activities of protest. The federal SKVP and the republican KVPs were ineffectual in reeling in the Churches, which began to mobilize their spaces to fill the social vacuum. Tito's passing and his apparent indifference to grooming a successor left many asking what might become of Yugoslavia. The party's fear of a situation in which religion would align itself with anti-Yugoslav political forces would come true by the mid-1980s. The SOC Holy Bishop's assembly began publicly to chronicle criminal acts perpetrated by Kosovar suspects against the Church. *Pravoslavlje* echoed the Church's concern in regular columns and articles on the rise of the "Albanian terror," as well as in seminars and discussions on the topic held by the Church.¹¹¹ The Church submitted formal complaints to provincial authorities in Kosovo, the Serbian KVP and the republican government, but they were never thoroughly investigated. The continued failure by Yugoslav governmental structures to have at least a cursory review of the legitimacy of such claims and take measures against perpetrators contributed to the SOC's heightened sense of being placed at an institutional disadvantage. With no credible guarantor, the SOC gradually began to instrumentalize its rich nationalist history of suffering.¹¹²

By 1987, Slobodan Milošević had risen through the party ranks to become head of the Serbian Communist Party. His springboard to political power took place at the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo. Flanked by ranking party members from the republics and SOC bishops, Milošević addressed a crowd of nearly one million. Though sanctioned by the Yugoslav federal government and couched in socialist language, the event resembled a Church celebration. As one of the first high-ranking Serb officials to call for a comprehensive change in policy toward Serbia, Milošević found an ally in the SOC. Religion, religious symbolism and politics had now become inextricably intertwined in a self-reinforcing dance.

The Catholic Church also strengthened its social profile. By the mid-1980s, the large-scale Catholic celebrations began to take on more ethno-nationalist symbolism. While grand Church events continued to demonstrate the Church's organizational ability, *Glas Koncila* had become the key voice in Church media. With little governmental censure, *Glas* significantly contributed to creating a distinct Croatian identity. By 1989, the Catholic Church in Croatia had successfully

111 Ibid., 124–25.

112 Mitja Velikonja, "In Hoc Signo Vincas: Religious Symbolism in the Balkan Wars 1991–1995," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 17, no. 1 (2003): 30–32.

carved out its own space for re-assessing the foundation of Croatian identity within a larger Yugoslavia. The rise of Croat nationalist Franjo Tudjman in the late 1980s corresponded with that of the Church. In 1987, Tudjman and his far-right Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) turned to ultranationalist diaspora Church centers in Western Europe, Australia and North America.¹¹³ By 1989, the HDZ's platform was thoroughly laden with revisionist ideas of historical injustices, Croat nationalism, conservative Catholic values and anti-Yugoslav, anti-Serb populism. Like Milošević, Tudjman received massive support from all elements of the clergy. The marriage of growing political nationalism and a potent religious element gave even more popular credibility to the HDZ.

As the fronts began to harden between Serbia, which was seeking to re-centralize Yugoslavia, and an increasingly independence-minded Croatia, which sought to rid itself of the rest of Yugoslavia, each camp gained political legitimacy from their respective Church. Set in motion by Tito's liberalizations of the Yugoslav system 1966, the departure from a repressive to a open religious policy channeled Serb and Croat frustrations with the direction of Yugoslavia's path into the hands of national Churches.

Conclusions: Assessing Church–State Engagement and Free Spaces

Challenges to authoritarian rule can take on different forms, while factors that affect the complex institutional interaction between a regime and its stakeholders can be infinite. Moreover, anti-authoritarian opposition is made increasingly complex by case-specific experiences. Attempts to explain changes in power structures through the scope of elections, voter behavior, civil society, democratization, ethnicity and identity, revolution or violence have yielded endless lists of works from across the landscape of ancient and modern political science. It is a common trait of human behavior and demonstrates one of the most essential pillars of political science: the struggle to attain, maintain and challenge power and accommodate competing ideas.

To try to capture the vastness of this central component is beyond the scope of this article. However, I claim that the uniqueness of this study lies *not* in explaining the end of East German and Yugoslav communism, although it does contribute to a more nuanced understanding of this. I offer here an alternative

113 Paul Hockennoos, *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 76.

explanation to a different question: which set of conditions and types of processes help us to temporally locate, theoretically identify and comparatively explain the variegated forms of Church–state engagement which brought forth Church-based free spaces. The momentous year of 1989 in Eastern Europe is not the point of departure here. Rather, it is the outcome of a near 45-year-long history of debate on religious policy.

The empirical focus of this study seeks to paint a picture in which free spaces are neither the natural outcome of private meetings between small numbers of individuals working in safe havens, nor do I claim that national Churches retained an innate oppositional quality. Contrary to the debate surrounding the development and role of civil society, which tends to overlook the precise policy mechanisms and agent-to-agent interactions at the micro-level, this contribution demonstrates that Church-based free spaces are in fact a constructed social phenomenon, resulting from negotiated, institutional interactions by Church and state elites. To conclude, the complex interaction between Church and state in the execution of religious policy across temporally organized periods offers us an additional tool in explaining the rise of Church-based free spaces in authoritarian societies and the relationships between the rise of these free spaces and end of the European communist project.

Archival Sources

ARHIV JUGOSLAVIJE (= A) [Archives of Yugoslavia]

Inventory 144, No. 1-1. The Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia brings forth the decree on the establishment of a federal commission for religious questions. September 21, 1945.

Inventory 144, Nr. 1-4a. Executive of the Bishops' Conference in Zagreb No. 64. May 8, 1945.

Inventory 144, Nr. 1-3. Improving and renewing the Church – authorization for the collection of necessary resources, Letter from Stepinac to the Vlada and the republic-level Commission for Religious Affairs of Croatia. August 14, 1945.

Inventory 144, Nr. 1-4. Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops of Yugoslavia, Publication of the Bishop's Conference in Zagreb. September 20, 1945.

Inventory 144. No. 2-46. Briefing for the head of the Federal Commission for Religious Questions on the current state of Orthodox Faculty. July 7, 1949.

Inventory 144, 1-9. List of Church Buildings Occupied or Used by State Authorities. February 1947.

Inventory 144, 1-9. Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church. No. 346. Letter of protest from the synod of the SOC to the republican-level KPV of Serbia with a request to reverse the decrees. February 11, 1947.

Inventory 144, 1-9. Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church. No. 1147. Letter of protest to the Executive of the Federal Government. March 31, 1947.

BRANDENBURGERISCHES LANDESHAUPTARCHIV

Repository 203, Nr. 144. *Positive zur Nationalen Front eingestellte Pfarrer des Landes Brandenburg.*

Repository 202A, Nr. 531. Letter from the Brandenburg Provincial Prime Minister to Evangelical Superintendents, Priests and Parish Commissioners. Pg 2. January 26, 1951.

Repository 530, Nr. 2188. SED Provincial Secretariat's Report entitled "On the Activity of the Church after the Communique from 10 June 1953 and Suggestions for Improvements in the Arena of Religious Policy," Potsdam. January 8, 1954.

Repository 530, Nr. 2187. Bishop Otto Dibelius' pastoral letter entitled "To all Parishes in Germany," Berlin. June 12, 1953.

Repository 530, Nr. 2188. SED Provincial Secretariat's Report entitled "On the Activity of the Church after the Communique from 10 June 1953 and Suggestions for Improvements in the Arena of Religious Policy," Potsdam. January 8, 1954.

Repository 202G, Nr. 45. Special Report on the meeting between state representatives and those of the Church on 06.06.1952 in the home of Superintendent-General Braun, Potsdam. June 10, 1952.

BUNDESBEAUFTRAGTE FÜR DIE UNTERLAGEN

DES STAATSSICHERHEITSDIENSTS DER EHEMALIGEN DEUTSCHEN DEMOKRATISCHEN REPUBLIK [BStU]

Protocol from a speech held by Bishop Albrecht Schönherr on the importance of the 6 March 1978 talks. MfS Document 8103. October 10, 1986.

Internal document from Ministry of State Security to all working units of the Stasi. MfS Document 7604. March 17, 1982.

Suggestions of talks with the State Secretary for Church Questions, Comrade Gysi, with the bishops of the provincial Evangelical Churches in the DDR. MfS Document 7605.

Quarterly Report – Church and Religious Communities in the GDR – Excerpts of an interview with Berlin-Brandenburg Bishop Albrecht Schönherr. MfS Document 8103. April 1985.

EVANGELISCHES HAUPTARCHIV BERLIN

Repository 4, Nr. 666. Newsletter Nr. 1 from BEP-DDR in the German Democratic Republic to all Pastors. June 19–20, 1958.

Repository 4, Nr. 304. Letters between the Berlin Church Council and Reinhard Henkys of the Berlin Arbeitsgemeinschaft für kirchliche Publizistik. July 12, 1973.

STIFTUNG ARCHIV DER PARTEIEN UND MASSEORGANISATIONEN
DER DDR IM BUNDESARCHIV

Nr. 002071. Establishment of Division E in Department V, 1947.

Sensitive Information – Directive from the Central Committee of the SED and the Department of People's Education to regional SED party offices and Departments of People's Education. January 7, 1950.

Repository IV 2/3/380. "Opinion of the Schwerin District Administration Report and the Gera District Administration on the Reactionary Activity of Priests." Protocol of the SEC Central Committee. May 4, 1953.

Repository DY 30/J IV 2/2/516. Protocol Nr. 62/56 of the Meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee. November 27, 1956.

Repository IV 2/3/380. "Opinion of the Schwerin District Administration Report and the Gera District Administration on the Reactionary Activity of Priests," Protocol of the SEC Central Committee. May 4, 1953.

Repository DO4/320. State Committee for Radio Services – Department of Monitoring. July 2, 1971.

Repository DY IV 2/2036/49. Our Approach to the Talks with Representatives of the Evangelical Church of the GDR. May 10, 1977.

Repository DY 30 IV 2/2/1740. Decision of the Politburo supporting an increase in basic wages of Evangelical regional Churches. August 22, 1978.

Internal Party Document – Information on the Relationship between State and the Evangelical Church in the GDR. DY 2/3/119. December 2, 1980.

Bibliography

"Belgrade Sends Tanks to Rebellious Region." *The New York Times*, April 4, 1981, 21.

"Hohe DDR-Kirchenvertreter besuchen Genf – Ökumenische Verbindungen sollen ausgebaut werden, Werben für Anerkennung." *Frankfurter Rundschau*, March 22, 1972, 1.

"Kirchen entstehen neu!" *Die Kirche*, October 30, 1949, 1.

- “Kirchenleitung gehört in das Land Brandenburg!” *Märkische Volksstimme*, December 6, 1950, 2.
- “Kirche will in der Gesellschaft der DDR künftig mitreden.” *Der Tagesspiegel*, July 6, 1971, 45.
- “Statistical Report on Exiting the Church – 1950 to 1956.” *Amtsblatt der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland* 19 (1958): 17.
- “Tätigkeit des Evangelischen Konsistoriums Berlin-Brandenburg.” In *Provinzialsynode Berlin-Brandenburg 1951*. Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 1951.
- Alexander, Stella. *The Triple Myth: A Life of Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac*. Columbia University Press: New York, 1987.
- Altenhof, Ralf. *Die Enquetekommission des deutschen Bundestages*. Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1993.
- Bekich, Darko. “Soviet Goals in Yugoslavia and the Balkans.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 481 (1985): 81–91.
- Bauerkämper, Arnd. “Bodenreform und Kollektivierung.” In *Handwörterbuch zur ländlichen Gesellschaft in Deutschland*, ed. Stephan Beetz, Kai Brauer, and Claudia Neu, 16–24. Berlin: VS Verlag, 2005.
- Bremer, Thomas. *Kleine Geschichte der Religionen in Jugoslawien: Königreich-Kommunismus-Krieg*. Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 2003.
- Bruce, Steve. *Politics and Religion*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003.
- Beach, Derek and Rasmus Brun Pedersen. “Taking Process Tracing Seriously – The ‘Mechanismic’ Understanding and Tracing Causal Mechanisms.” Paper presented at the Southern Political Science Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, January 5–8, 2011.
- Besier, Gerhard. *Der SED-Staat und die Kirche: Der Weg in die Anpassung*. Munich: Bertelmann Verlag, 1993.
- Binder, David. “Marko Nikežić – Liberal Forced to Quit by Tito, Dies at 69.” *New York Times*, January 9, 1991, 20.
- Despot, Zvonimir. *Vrijeme Zločina: Novi Prilozi za Povijest Koprivničke Podravine 1941–1948*. Zagreb: Hrvatski Institut za Povijest, 2007.
- Djilas, Milovan. *Jahre der Macht: Im Jugoslawischen Kräftespiel – Memoiren 1945–1966*. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992.
- Duijzings, Ger. *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Goerner, Martin Georg. *Die Kirche als Problem der SED: Strukturen kommunistischer Herrschaftsausübung gegenüber der evangelischen Kirche 1945 bis 1958*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997.

- Heise, Joachim. "Kirchenpolitik von SED und Staat: Versuch einer Annäherung." In *Kirchen in der Diktatur: Drittes Reich und SED-Staat*, edited by Günther Heydemann and Lothar Kettenacker, 129. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht Verlag, 1993.
- Honecker, Erich. *Aus meinem Leben*. Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1988.
- Hockenos, Paul. *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.
- Jacob, Günter. *Der Christ und die Mächte*. Stuttgart: Lettner Verlag, 1960.
- Jacob, Günter. "Der Raum für das Evangelium in Ost und West." In *Kirchliches Jahrbuch 1956*, 13. Gütersloh: Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1956.
- Kaiser, Monika. "Change and Continuity in the Development of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany." *Journal of Contemporary History* 30 (1995): 687–703.
- Kaiser, Monika. "Die Zentrale der Diktatur – organisatorische Weichenstellung, Strukturen und Kompetenzen der SED-Führung in der SBZ/DDR." In *Historische DDR-Forschung: Aufsätze und Studien*, edited by Jürgen Kocka, 78–79. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993.
- Madeley, John T.S. *Church and State in Contemporary Europe: The Chimera of Neutrality*. London: Cass Publishers, 2003.
- Malcolm, Noel. *Kosovo: A Short History*. New York: New York University Press, 1998.
- Matijević, Margareta. "Religious Communities in Croatia from 1945 to 1991: Social Casualty of the Dissent Between Communist Authorities and Religious Communities' Leadership." *Časopis sa Suvremenu Povijest* 2, no. 1 (2006): 117–40.
- Marschak, Thomas A. "Centralized versus Decentralized Resource Allocation: The Yugoslav Laboratory." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 82 (1968): 561–87.
- Melčić, Dunja. "Abrechnungen mit den politischen Gegnern und die kommunistischen Nachkriegsverbrechen." *Der Jugoslawien-Krieg: Handbuch zu Vorgeschichte, Verlauf und Konsequenzen*, edited by Dunja Melčić, 201–09. Opladen: Westdeutsche Verlag, 1999.
- Neubert, Ehrhart. *Geschichte der Opposition in der DDR, 1949–1989*. Berlin: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1998.
- Ostermann, Christian F. "Keeping the Pot Simmering: the United States and the East German Uprising of 1953." *German Studies Review* 19 (1996): 61–89.
- Palmer, Peter. "The Churches and the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia." In *Religion and International Relations*, edited by Ken R. Dark, 83–99. MacMillan: Basingstoke, 2000.
- Perica, Vjekoslav. *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Perica, Vjekoslav. "The Catholic Church and the Making of the Croatian Nation, 1970–1984." *Eastern European Politics and Societies* 14 (2000): 532–64.

- Pollack, Detlef. *Kirche in der Organisationsgesellschaft: zum Wandel der gesellschaftlichen Lage der evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR*. Berlin: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1994.
- Poulton, Hugh. "Macedonians and Albanians as Yugoslavs." In *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed State, 1918–1992*, edited by Dejan Djokić, 115–35. London: Hurst & Company, 2003.
- Radić, Radmila. *Država i Verske Zajednice, 1945–1970: Prvi Deo 1945–1953*. Beograd: Institut za Novu Istoriju Srbije, 2002.
- Radio Free Europe. "Central Committee Plenums of Yugoslavia's Six Republics Approve Purge of Ranković and Party Reforms." October 2, 1966.
- Ramet, Sabrina. *Nil Obstat: Religion, Politics and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.
- Sozialistische Einheitspartei. "Kommuniqué der Sitzung des SED-Politbüros vom 9 Juni 1953." *Dokumente der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands: Beschlüsse und Erklärungen des Zentralkomitees sowie seines Politbüros und seines Sekretariats* 4. Berlin: SED, 1953.
- Sozialistische Einheitspartei. "Entschliebung der 15 Tagung des SED-Zentralkomitees vom 24. bis. 26. Juli 1953 – Der neue Kurs und die Aufgaben der Partei." *Dokumente der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands: Beschlüsse und Erklärungen des Zentralkomitees sowie seines Politbüros und seines Sekretariats* 4. Berlin: SED, 1953.
- Spehnyak, Katarina. *Javnost i Propaganda Narodna Fronta u Politici i Kulturi Hrvatske 1945–1952*. Zagreb: Institut za suvremenu Povijest, 2002.
- Sundhausen, Holm. *Geschichte Serbiens: 19–21. Jahrhundert*. Cologne: Böhlau, 2007.
- Tanner, Marcus. *Croatia: A Nation Forged in War*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.
- Tanztscher, Monika. "In der Ostzone wird ein neuer Apparat aufgebaut: Die Gründung des DDR-Staatssicherheitsdienstes." *Deutschland Archiv* 31, no. 1 (1998): 48–56.
- Tomasevich, Jozo. *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941–1945: Occupation and Collaboration*. Stanford University Press: Stanford, 2001.
- Velikonja, Mitja. "In Hoc Signo Vincas: Religious Symbols in the Balkan Wars 1991–1995." *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 17 (2003): 8–25.
- Vollnhals, Clemens. "Zwischen Kooperation und Konfrontation: Zur Kirchenpolitik von KPD/SED und SMAD in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone." *Deutschland Archiv* 27 (1994): 478–90.

Marie Černá

From “Occupation” to “Friendly Assistance”: The “Presence” of Soviet Troops in Czechoslovakia after August 1968¹

The Warsaw pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 was without doubt a milestone in the history of Czechoslovakia. In the beginning, it mobilized and unified almost the whole nation against the enemy, whose status as enemy was quite apparent. But unified resistance to the occupation did not last long. It began to crumble as steps were taken to present a reinterpretation of the “occupation” as an act of “friendly assistance.” A shift in the image of the Soviet Army became a prerequisite of the normalization policy of the regime. This article identifies and explains the most important aspects of the changing image of the Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia in the late 1960s and early 1970s and some of the consequences of these changes for Czechoslovak society. These changes occurred mainly at the level of official presentation. Nevertheless, the official politics of friendship had tangible consequences, reflected both in everyday life and the overall social and political climate.

Keywords: Soviet Troops, Czechoslovakia, occupation, normalization, friendship

Introduction

The Warsaw Pact military intervention in August 1968 and the subsequent presence of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia² unquestionably played an essential role in Czechoslovakia’s history. It is generally known that important changes

1 This article was supported by the grant-funded project no. DF11P01OVV030, “Stories from the History of the Czechoslovak State: Research and Experimental Development of Software Simulations for the Teaching of the History of the Bohemian Lands in the Twentieth Century,” funded by the Czech Ministry of Culture and carried out at the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Charles University, Prague, and the Institute of Contemporary History, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, from 2011 to 2014.

2 Historians have estimated the number of Soviet soldiers who remained in Czechoslovakia after the signing of the agreement in October 1968, according to the initial agreements, at about 75,000. Antonín Benčík, Jan Paulík, and Jindřich Pecka, *Vojenské otázky československé reformy 1967–1970: Srpen 1968–květen 1971* (Brno: Doplněk, 1999), 79. The exact number was not reported by the Soviet side until the numbers for 1990–91 were made public, according to which there were 73,500 soldiers and 56,832 family members on Czechoslovak territory. Jindřich Pecka, *Odsun sovětských vojsk z Československa 1989–1991* (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny, 1996), 288. The number of garrison sites has been estimated at 33, to which one should add four airports, three military hospitals, nineteen depots, and five training grounds, though

took place in Czechoslovakia after August 1968. The regime came down hard on the population and limited civil rights and freedoms. These acts of interference ended the previous process of gradual relaxation, which had been accelerated mainly by the Prague Spring, which began in January 1968.³ In this process, called, in the jargon of the period, “consolidation” or “normalization,” the intervention played the key role. In this respect, various observers of and actors in the events of the past have pointed to, first and foremost, the reconfirmation of the limited autonomy of the Czechoslovak political elites in decision-making and their dependence on the Soviet leaders.⁴ In more general works about the normalization of Czechoslovak society, however, Soviet political and local military representatives are largely absent. Whereas the military and political aspects of the intervention⁵ and the numbers of victims⁶ are on the whole well charted, the impact in practice of the subsequent presence of the Soviet troops on Czechoslovak society and on its normalization has been neglected. This is surely also linked to the fact that we recall mostly the times during which most of Czechoslovak society, officially and unofficially, perceived the Soviet Army as an occupying force, that is, the period which began in the wake of the intervention and came to an end with the withdrawal of the Soviet troops in

these numbers could in the course of time also change somewhat. Jindřich Pecka et al., *Sovětská armáda v Československu 1968–1991: Chronologický přehled* (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny, 1996), 198–206; Benčík, Paulík, and Pecka, *Vojenské otázky československé reformy*, 51.

3 The Prague Spring and subsequent intervention of Warsaw Pact armies rank among the most significant topics of Czech history and historiography. See Věra Břeňová, *Pražské jaro '68: Bibliografie*, Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny, 2013. Of the vast amount of research on this period, I would mention at least some of the English-language works: H. Gordon Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and Its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics, 1968–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Fred H. Eidlin, *The Logic of 'Normalization': The Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia of 21 August 1968 and the Czechoslovak Response* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); Miklós Kun, *Prague Spring – Prague Fall: Blank Spots of 1968* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1996).

4 Jindřich Madry, *Sovětská okupace Československa, jeho normalizace v letech 1969–1970 a role ozbrojených sil* (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 1994); Ondřej Felcman, *Invaze a okupace: K úloze SSSR a sovětských vojsk ve vývoji Československa v letech 1968–1991* (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 1995). Zdeněk Doskočil, *Duben 1969: Anatomie jednoho mocenského zvratu* (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2006).

5 Benčík, Paulík, and Pecka, *Vojenské otázky československé reformy*; Antonín Benčík, *Operace Dunaj aneb Internacionální vražda Pražského jara* (Prague: Krutina Jiří–Vacek, 2013); Daniel Povolný, *Vojenské řešení Pražského jara 1968*, vol. II: *Československá lidová armáda v srpnu 1968* (Prague: Ministerstvo obrany ČR, 2010); Jiří Fidler, *21.8.1968 – okupace Československa* (Prague: Havran, 2003); Jan Pauer, *Prag 1968: Der Einmarsch des Warschauer Paktes. Hintergründe – Planung – Durchführung* (Bremen: Temmen, 1995).

6 Milan Bárta et al., *Victims of the Occupation: Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia: 21 August–31 December 1968* (Prague: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, 2008); Hynek Fajmon, *Sovětská okupace Československa a její oběti* (Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2005).

1990–91.⁷ “Occupation” has thus become the lens through which the presence of the Soviet Army has usually been seen since 1989. Nevertheless, the term actually had a very short life in the post-August history of Czechoslovakia, and its gradual vanishing of the term “occupation” from the political scene, the mass media, and public life was of key importance for Czechoslovak society in this period. Just as significant is the fact that the term, with all its practical implications, did not officially return until the collapse of the Communist regime in late 1989.

If we want to consider the more complex question of the presence of the Soviet Army and its impact on Czechoslovak society and normalization, it is necessary first to identify the gradual essential change in the perception of the Soviet Army since the intervention. A shift in the image of the Soviet Army became a prerequisite of the normalization policy of the regime, which was based on discrediting the Prague Spring by describing it as an attempted counterrevolution. Only if the image of the Soviet Army as an occupying force were transformed into the image of a savior would it be possible to reinterpret the Prague Spring as an attempt at counterrevolution and condemn and discredit its leading actors. The social and political changes that took place in Czechoslovakia after 1968 would have been impossible or at the very least meaningless if the image of the Soviet Army as the occupier had not changed considerably. Other contemporaneous terms, such as “right-wing opportunism” and “anti-socialist elements,” acquired meaning only if the occupation by the Soviet forces was perceived as friendly assistance, and terms such as “occupation,” “collaboration,” and “democratization process” lost their meaning. Considering that the main shift in the official perception of the Soviet Army occurred in the first two years after the beginning of the intervention, it is obvious that a lot must have happened in this period. A great deal of effort at various levels must have been expended in order for a spontaneously shared image of the occupier and enemy to change into its complete opposite in this short period. It was mainly change at the level of official presentation. Nevertheless, even that had tangible consequences, reflected both at the level of everyday life and the overall social

7 This has been occurring in the mass media during the annual commemoration of the August intervention and of the withdrawal of Soviet troops, as well as in academic writing. The most significant work undertaken thus far, which charts the presence of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia from the beginning to the end and thus captures the changes in the attitudes of Czechoslovak politicians and society towards the Soviet Army, is Jindřich Pecka et al., *Sovětská armáda v Československu 1968–1991*. It provides a brief summary of events, negotiations, and meetings, together with articles related to the presence of Soviet troops and excerpts from a variety of archival records or periodicals.

and political climate. With the gradual change of the official image of the Soviet Army, the declared attitude toward it necessarily had to change, too. Friendship became an integral part of state policy, and as part of policy rhetoric it was implemented across society. As the pressure demanding a reinterpretation of the August 1968 events increased, opinions about different forms of contact with the Soviet Army changed as well, from despised collaboration to valued cooperation. The initial covert cooperation of politically radical and socially ostracized individuals with Soviet officers gradually developed into an officially endorsed norm. In this article, I endeavor to identify and explain the most important aspects of the changing image of the Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia in the late 1960s and early 1970s and some of the consequences of this change for Czechoslovak society.

The sources that I use in my research are of various provenances. A special source of information, particularly for the early stage of the presence of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia, is the collection of documents of the Government Commission of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic for Analysis of the Events of 1967–1970, which was established in the early 1990s. The collection is held at the Institute of Contemporary History in Prague. It contains records from various regions of the Czech Republic, which help the historian understand the problem at the local level in the very places where Soviet troops were based. Among the other local materials I have used are town chronicles, regional newspapers, and archive records from two former garrison towns, Vysoké Mýto, a town of several thousand people in east Bohemia, and Trutnov, a regional capital in northeast Bohemia.

The Occupation and the Community of Non-violent Resistance

When troops from the Soviet Union, Hungary, East Germany, Poland, and Bulgaria poured into Czechoslovakia on August 21, 1968,⁸ most of the inhabitants of the country were shocked. The trauma that this event caused ranked with that of the other national tragedies, such as the annexation of the Sudetenland to the Third Reich in autumn 1938 and the German occupation that began in mid-March 1939. Today, it is recalled in respectful commemorations and written about in history books. The explanation for the significance of this trauma

⁸ More precisely: the East German army remained on alert in their own country and, except for a few specialists, ultimately did not even cross the frontier into Czechoslovakia. The total number of soldiers could never even be precisely determined. Estimates range from 200,000 to 500,000.

lies not only in the number of dead and wounded civilians,⁹ but also, perhaps mainly, in the great wave of non-violent national resistance that followed in its wake. What is essential, however, is that slogans in Czech and Russian¹⁰ and resolutions and declarations condemning the occupation as an illegitimate and violent intervention in the internal affairs of the state were written by almost everyone. Open political conflict with the Soviet Union was unthinkable for the Czechoslovak political leadership; nevertheless, among them, tendencies to condemn the military intervention triumphed. Thus, members of the top party and government bodies at first joined together with journalists and editors, employees of all kinds of institutions and enterprises, and students, school children, and other individuals in the nationwide protest. For having done this, they received extraordinary support. This unity experienced immediately after the August military intervention went beyond the political protests, which were ultimately doomed to failure. One finds signs of solidarity that resemble what the political scientist James Krapfl referred to, when examining Czechoslovak society in 1989, as a “sacred sense of community.”¹¹ Both in 1968 and in 1989, in addition to protesting and referring to the occupiers as the enemy, people expressed solidarity with one another, and they identified common values and basic principles of community, creatively ascribing special meaning to the August events by doing so. In parallel with the everyday danger, frustration, humiliation, and sense of powerlessness when face to face with tanks, a wave of expression welled up, which was a celebration of national solidarity and declarations of shared values. Those values were not just values of resistance, but also, and indeed mainly, prudence and non-violence. The general sharing of these values became a further source of pride at the time.¹² At this level, the actual impossibility of effectively preventing the military intervention could be recast into the positive value of non-violence, from which society could draw a

9 By mid-December 1968, the records show 94 dead and 345 seriously wounded Czechoslovak citizens. For more on this, see Bárta et al., *Victims of the Occupation*.

10 “Pochemu?” (Why?), “Sovetskíe okupanty” (Soviet occupiers!), “Sovetskíe fashisty” (Soviet fascists!), “Idite domoi” (Go home!), “Lenine, probud’ se, Brežněv se zbláznil” (Lenin, wake up! Brezhnev’s gone mad!), “Mnichov 1938, Bratislava 1968” (Munich 1938, Bratislava 1968), “Eto naše delo” (It’s our affair), “At’ žije Rudá armáda, ale někde jinde” (Long live the Red Army! But somewhere else), “Proletáři všech zemí, odejděte” (Proletarians of all countries, go away!), and thousands of others.

11 James Krapfl, *Revolúcia s ľudskou tvárou: Politika, kultúra a spoločensvo v československu po 17. novembri 1989* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2009); idem, *Revolution with a Human Face: Politics, Culture, and Community in Czechoslovakia 1989–1992* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

12 “It turned out, however, that [the occupation] did not crush the good qualities of our nations; rather, it galvanized them. The whole world now admires our nations,” *Zemědělské noviny*, August 27, 1968, quoted

sense of moral superiority. The basic principle upon which solidarity was being formed after August 21, 1968 was, apart from prudence and non-violence, rejection of the military intervention. And the intervention was considered chiefly a Soviet affair.

Collaborators

Any community threatened by an external enemy seeks to defend certain values, prescribing appropriate conduct with regards to the enemy and, by contrast, condemning inappropriate conduct. This code was embodied in a number of ceremonial commitments incorporated into numerous statements, such as “We shall not be traitors,” and also in the slogans that surfaced on occasion, such as “Not a slice of bread or drop of water for the occupier!” and “Shame on collaborators!” It would be wrong to think that everyone was of the same opinion on that point, for had there been unanimity, there would have been no “letter of invitation.”¹³ There were definitely many people who were nervous about the developments leading towards the democratization of Czechoslovakia, and they felt that things were getting out of hand and moving in the wrong direction. There were also people who were afraid, insulted, and abused by developments in the weeks and months before the August intervention.¹⁴ One would be better

in *Sedm pražských dnů: Dokumentace* (1968), ed. Milan Otáhal, Vilém Prečan et al (Prague: Academia, 1990), 286; published in English as Robert Littell, ed., *The Czech Black Book* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1969); the Czech is now published online January 20, 2014, <http://www.68.usd.cas.cz/cz/sedm-prazskych-dnu.html>.

13 The so-called “letter of invitation” was signed by five high-ranking party and state functionaries, mostly members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party: Alois Indra, Drahomír Kolder, Vasil Biřák, Oldřich Švestka, and Antonín Kapek. In the letter, they point to the danger of counterrevolution in the country and urge the Soviet side “to provide effective support and aid by all means.” Concerning the fate and importance of this letter, see František Janáček and Marie Michálková, “Příběh zvacího dopisu,” *Soudobé dějiny* 1 (1993), 87–101; “The ‘Letter of Invitation’ from the Anti-Reformist Faction of the CPCz Leadership,” in *The Prague Spring 68: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, ed. Jaromír Navrátil (Budapest: CEU Press, 1998), 324–25.

14 It is probably impossible to quantify in any objective way the proportion of these people in society at the time. The sources mention various instances of people who rejected the general protest against the occupation or soon welcomed it, to a more than usual extent, as friendly assistance, or directly established contact with military representatives. The behavior of these people is often explained away as their having been members of organizations such as the People’s Militia, the Czechoslovak–Soviet Friendship Association, and local or workplace Communist Party organizations. In this connection, the Prague meeting of about 400 “old Communists,” on October 9, 1968, and the meeting held by two district chapters of the Czechoslovak–Soviet Friendship Association, in the Lucerna building, Prague, to mark the anniversary of the October Revolution in Russia, are well known. Soviet delegations were present at both, and the military intervention was assessed there as having been friendly assistance.

off assuming that the voices of these people were not really heard in the turmoil of late August, and that when they were heard, these people faced threats of revenge from others.

For example, the general manager of Dioptra, a state-owned business in the town of Turnov in northern Bohemia, was with his apprentices on an excursion in Hungary when the Soviet-led troops arrived, and he openly praised the intervention. At a Communist party meeting of the factory after he returned, he was called a collaborator and was subsequently dismissed from his post as general manager.¹⁵ Today, of course, it is hard to ascertain the exact motives and facts of such stories. We will never learn what the Dioptra general manager said in Hungary or who said what about him or to him. We do not know what resentments, interests, and passions played a role. What is important, however, is that the accusations of collaboration, of improper conduct with regards to the occupiers and inappropriate opinions, could have real power and lead to tough and often officially approved sanctions. That, however, could only have been the case under circumstances in which the generally shared norm of rejecting the “occupation” was expressed by a wide range of more or less practical or symbolic acts of protest.

Occupation?!

Unified resistance to the occupation did not last long, in spite of the fact that the resistance found significant support in all of the social strata of the country. The pressure exerted by the Soviets in their power politics was relentless. The physical presence of armed Soviet soldiers, who often crudely intervened in local events, was combined with systematic pressure by Soviet politicians on their Czechoslovak counterparts.¹⁶ This pressure began immediately after the military intervention with the Soviet “abduction” of the Czechoslovak state and party leaders to Moscow. During the talks with the Soviets, the Czechoslovak delegation was forced to accept a number of compromises, including the invalidation of the Extraordinary Party Congress (*Mimořádný sjezd KSČ*) on August 22, 1968, and all

15 Ústav pro soudobé dějiny [Institute of Contemporary History, Prague – ÚSD], sbírka Komise vlády ČSFR pro analýzu událostí 1967–1970 [Collection of the Government Commission of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic for Analysis of the events of 1967–1970], Okresní zmočněc Semily [Authorized district archivist]. The astute reader certainly already suspects that the sanctions did not last long.

16 For a summary, see Ondřej Felcman, *Imáže a okupace: K úloze SSSR a Sovětských vojsk ve vývoji Československa v letech 1968–1991* (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny, 1995), or Antonín Benčík, “Intervence,” in *Sovětská vojska v Československém vývoji 1968–1991*, ed. Jindřich Pecka (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny, 1998), 9–23.

of its resolutions. They also had to accept limitations on the freedom of speech and association, the withdrawal of Czechoslovak demands to have the crisis put on the agenda of the UN Security Council, and mainly the de facto legitimation of the “temporary presence” of Warsaw Pact troops in Czechoslovakia.¹⁷ These compromises were confirmed by the signing of the “Moscow Protocol.”¹⁸ Of all the generally known facts, I would emphasize that among the basic demands of Moscow was a reinterpretation of the Warsaw Pact intervention and the establishment of “friendly” relations. It is clear that the designation “occupier” profoundly upset and offended the Soviet politicians. At the end of August, General Nikolai Ogarkov (1917–1994), a plenipotentiary of the Soviet Minister of Defense, in a conversation with Josef Smrkovský (1911–1974), the Chairman of the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly, demanded that in their speeches the representatives of the Czechoslovak state should “speak a normal language” and not use words like “occupier,” because it prevented “normalization.”¹⁹

This was definitely not merely the reaction of a jilted partner, who jealously seeks to compel a rebel to return to his or her former devotion and compliance. The continuous push for Soviet interests in “twinning” (*družba*) and cooperation between the Soviet troops and various institutions (including factories, schools) and in personal contacts between Soviet officers and Czechoslovak citizens, officials, and institutions was mostly strategic. Not merely a matter of ceremony, it was an effective means of gathering intelligence and gaining control over otherwise unpredictable events. It is therefore no surprise that the planning of “friendly” relations became the subject of official reports of leading Soviet ideologues. For example, as early as September 4, 1968, the Chief of

17 In addition to the main actors of the Prague Spring, such as First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party Alexander Dubček, Speaker of the National Assembly Josef Smrkovský, Premier Oldřich Černík, and a member of the CPCz Presidium, František Kriegel, and the delegation of Czechoslovak President Ludvík Svoboda, on the Czechoslovak side some of the authors of the letter of invitation also participated in the dramatic negotiations, such as Vasil Biľak, Oldřich Švestka, and Alois Indra. For a personal recollection of participants in the Moscow talks in August, see Zdeněk Mlýnář, *Mráz přichází z Kremlu* (Cologne: Index, 1988), 267–314; published in English as *Night Frost in Prague: The End of Humane Socialism* (London: C. Hurst, 1980). For the minutes of the talks, see Jitka Vondrová, *Mezinárodní souvislosti Československé krize 1967–1970: Dokumenty ÚV KSSR 1966–1969* (Brno: Doplněk, 2011), 213–66. For an English translation of excerpts of these negotiations, see Navrátil ed., *The Prague Spring 68*, 465–73.

18 For the “Protokol z jednání delegací SSSR a ČSSR 23.–26. srpna v Moskvě,” see Jitka Vondrová and Jaromír Navrátil, *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize 1967–1970. Červenec–srpen 1968* (Prague–Brno: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR and Doplněk, 1996), 271–74 and, “The Moscow Protocol, August 26, 1968,” in Navrátil (ed.) *The Prague Spring 1968*, 477.

19 Jindřich Pecka, “Rozhovor Josefa Smrkovského s generálem N. V. Ogarkovem 30.8.1968,” *Soudobé dějiny* 1 (1997): 158–66.

the Main Political Directorate, General Alexei Yepishev, was proposing ways for the Soviet Army to contribute to the “normalization” of Czechoslovakia to the Central Committee of the CPSU. Part of his proposal was a broadly conceived “buttressing of twinning and comradely relations with the population and members of the Czechoslovak People’s Army,” including military and political contacts with local party and state bodies, the Czechoslovak Armed Forces, social organizations, industrial and agricultural enterprises, and schools. These contacts entailed, among other things, “twinning evenings” (*večery družby*), participation of members of the local population in cultural events organized by Soviet soldiers, performances by music and dance troupes of the Soviet Army in Czechoslovak milieus, and even assistance by Soviet soldiers in farming. Yepishev recommended in particular using the Soviet fight against fascism for propaganda purposes, therefore to invite soldiers who had participated in the liberation of Czechoslovakia in 1945, and to emphasize the “fighting friendship” (*bojové přátelství*) between the Soviet and Czechoslovak armed forces.²⁰ In a similar spirit, during the Moscow talks in October 1968, Brezhnev offered the Czechoslovak delegation a detailed description of his vision of comradely friendship.²¹

A turnaround in relations between Czechoslovaks and the Soviet army may have seemed unthinkable in August 1968, because any such move would have been condemned as treason and collaboration.²² Nevertheless, the fundamental consequence of signing the “Moscow Protocol” was that the united resistance

20 “Náčelník hlavní politické správy SA generál A. Jepišev ústřednímu výboru KSSS. Návrhy na činnost sovětských vojsk při zajišťování ‘normalizace’ v Československu” [Chief of the Main Political Directorate, General Alexei Yepishev, to the Central Committee of the CPSU. Proposals for Activity by Soviet Soldiers to Implement “Normalization” in Czechoslovakia], ÚSD, Sbírnka KV ČSFR, Z/S, 4. 9. 1968.

21 Apart from contacts between local politicians and local governmental bodies on the one hand and Soviet soldiers on the other, this was also meant to include exchanges between folklore troupes and the promotion of Soviet culture in general, twinning at the regional, district, and town levels, and the exchange of delegations of workers and scholars. *Záznam z jednání delegace KSČ s vedením KSSS v Moskvě 3.-4. října 1968*, in Jitka Vondrová, *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize: září 1968–květen 1970* (Brno: Doplněk, 1997), 116–35.

22 The author of the article “Bez kolaborantů jsou vyřízeni” [Without Collaborators, They Wouldn’t Stand a Chance], boasts in the Communist Party daily *Rudé právo*, on August 27, 1968, that even by the sixth day after the arrival of the troops the occupiers had not managed to create “collaborationist bodies and institutions,” with which they had hoped to create the impression that the intervention had been legal. That is not to say that no one was willing to collaborate; there were such people, but they stood aside because of the “astonishing spontaneous unity, the huge activity of the absolute majority of the nation, the unconcealed contempt and hatred.” “One can have no doubt therefore that collaboration with the occupiers is the worst treason [...]”

began to crumble and the first step was taken in the reinterpretation of the “occupation” as an act of “friendly assistance.”

It's Better Not To Write Anything about Them

In the Moscow Protocol, the representatives of the Czechoslovak party and government committed themselves to taking power back from the mass media “so that they fully serve the cause of Socialism” and to taking measures that “would prevent the publishing in the press and broadcasting on radio and television of speeches that could cause conflict and tension between the population and the allied troops on Czechoslovak territory.”²³

In order for the Soviets to withdraw their troops from the streets and government offices to garrisons and then eventually from the country altogether, the Czechoslovaks were expected to fulfil these terms and conditions, as well as a number of others. Shortly after the Czechoslovak leadership returned from Moscow, measures were taken to suppress the hitherto spontaneous expressions of resistance to Soviet troops. Among the most important was a government decree of August 30, 1968, which created the Press and Information Office (*Úřad pro tisk, rozhlas a televizi*). Upon its establishment, the office immediately issued orders that brought freedom of expression in line with the Moscow Protocol.²⁴ According to the instructions that were issued, one was forbidden to use the word “occupier” or “occupation,” criticize the Warsaw pact countries or their Communist parties, attack their troops based on Czechoslovak territory, or write about victims or damages caused by the military intervention.²⁵ These orders were subsequently implemented in all editorial offices throughout the country.

At a press conference, Oldřich Černík (1921–1994), the Czechoslovak premier, met with the editors-in-chief of Czech periodicals to explain the situation and called on them to heed the new restrictions. When asked what journalists were allowed to write with regards to the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact countries, he replied, “It’s better not to write anything about them.”²⁶

During the process of normalization, in the most basic sense of the word (in other words the withdrawal of the allied forces from public spaces

23 “Protokol z jednání delegací SSSR a ČSSR 23.–26. srpna v Moskvě.”

24 Jiří Hoppe, *Pražské jaro v médiích: Výběr z dobové publicistiky* (Brno: Doplněk, 2004), 16–17.

25 Ibid.

26 ÚSD, sb. KV ČSFR, A3, “Zpráva z tiskové konference šéfredaktorů s předsedou vlády O. Černíkem dne 28.8.1968.”

and government offices and the restoration of the usual administration of the country), this legislation assigned the main responsibility to Czechoslovak society. How the situation developed would allegedly be up to the people of Czechoslovakia. The message that the Czechoslovak political leaders took back home from Moscow in August 1968 was essentially that they should act with discipline and avoid any measures or steps that Moscow might perceive as provocative. Only this would make a return to normality possible. It was in this spirit, as an expression of the required self-discipline, that the Czechoslovak political leaders, upon their return, also presented the re-imposition of censorship and restrictions on the freedom of association. Normalization began to be the mantra to which everything was supposed to be subordinated, although the term gradually went from meaning the restoration of the basic operations of the state to meaning the shoring-up of the authoritarian regime and the imposition of limitations on civil rights and freedoms. We can clearly see that politicians thus stopped unanimously saying “No, to occupation,” and a considerable number of them soon began pointing out other threats to order and unity. Henceforth, those who were to be considered dangerous were those who rebelled too openly against the occupation. These voices against rebellion gradually gained strength. And the essential thing is that one of the two fundamental principles of national solidarity that had been so solemnly proclaimed after August 21, 1968 began to thrive at the expense of the other. Resistance to the occupation began to give way to prudence, non-violence, and self-discipline. The national solidarity that had been created by everyday politics thus gradually, but increasingly, became a caricature of the national solidarity that had grown out the August events. Nevertheless, it provided the opportunity for some continuity and, last but not least, for continuous support for the political leaders who in the eyes of the public represented the liberalization that had begun in January 1968.

A Rift

In a resolution of the November 1968 plenum of the CPCz Central Committee, the top party leadership called the rightwing, anti-Socialist forces the foremost enemies of the state and more or less officially abolished the term “collaborator,” or, rather, logically came to the conclusion that where there is no occupation, there is no collaboration: “The Central Committee and its officials will also come out against all attempts to discredit Czechoslovak comrades who honorably

promote party policy principles against any bullying they face for their openly internationalist relations with the USSR.”²⁷

With these statements, the Czechoslovak politicians quickly defined themselves as being in opposition to the rebelliously minded part of society, and they took their primary task to be the quelling of expressions of defiance. In November 1968, when university students and some secondary-school students went on strike in support of the November plenum of the CPCz Central Committee, to encourage the Committee to stay the course of democratization and maintain the gains that had been made in civil rights, the party leadership rejected their support. The student activities were condemned as “ill-considered” and the public was called upon “not to allow this dangerous situation to grow.”²⁸

Open resistance to the occupation and to the concessions made by the Czechoslovak politicians began to be politically undesirable and, as such, gradually became the target of police surveillance and repression. During the spontaneous demonstrations that were held in Prague on October 28, 1968 (the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic) and November 7, 1968 (the fifty-first anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution; both occasions were state holidays), the police intervened and took some demonstrators into custody. The events were closely observed and assessed by the secretariat of the Ministry of Interior.²⁹ The First Secretary of the CPCz Central Committee, Alexander Dubček (1921–1992), the icon of the reform process, spoke out clearly on this point: “The greatest pitfalls of the consolidation process are [...] attitudes that directly accuse the political leaders of capitulatory behavior and

27 “Hlavní úkoly strany v nejbližším období: Rezoluce plenárního zasedání ÚV KSČ” [The Main Tasks of the Party in the Near Future: A Resolution of the Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the CPCz], *Rok šedesátý osmý v usneseních a dokumentech ÚV KSČ* (Prague: Svoboda, 1969), 383.

28 “Provolání představitelů strany a státu” [Proclamation of the party and state representatives], *ibid.*, 393–94.

29 The turnaround in the public perception of people protesting openly against Soviet troops is graphically illustrated by a document from the Ministry of the Interior. Originally, it summarized serious cases of Soviet soldiers who had restricted the personal freedom of some Czechoslovaks, mainly by reacting with excessive force to an imagined or real protest, such as the shouting of abuse, the posting or distribution of leaflets, and the writing of slogans. The fact that what was originally a list of victims of Soviet military aggression could also serve as a list of potential rabble-rousers is illustrated by the names and acts of protest later being carefully and thoroughly underlined. See the report about the detention of Czechoslovak citizens by foreign soldiers, dated August 21, 1968, accessed October 14, 2013, <http://www.ustrcr.cz/data/pdf/projekty/srpen1968/srpen-zpravy-014.pdf>.

treason, causing an anti-Soviet psychosis.”³⁰ The political leaders thus made it clear who had to be excluded from the national community.

The Treaty on the “Temporary Presence” of Soviet Troops

Dubček’s mention of capitulatory behavior and treason was undoubtedly related to other political events: as set out in the Moscow Protocol, the Treaty on the Temporary Presence of Troops was signed in October 1968.³¹ That meant an important change in developments. Under the terms of the treaty, most of the Warsaw Pact troops were withdrawn from Czechoslovakia, but, on the other hand, the “temporary presence” of Soviet troops was made legal; the secret codicil to the treaty mentions 75,000 Soviet soldiers.³² The treaty was concerned with matters such as what the Czechoslovaks were meant to provide for the Soviet soldiers, who would bear the costs for their basing, how foodstuffs, goods, and services would be supplied to the Soviet garrisons, and who would pay for them. Once adopted, the treaty shifted the problem of the basing of Soviet troops considerably towards practical matters. In the 33 locations where the garrisons were stationed throughout the country, many problems had to be dealt with, including housing, rent, administration, supplies, the movement of soldiers and military equipment, the determining of jurisdictions, and the use of energy and water.³³ For local governments, working together became an unavoidable technical necessity. And the better such collaboration took place, the easier it was to find a solution acceptable to both sides, or to obtain redress if the Soviets in some way flagrantly breached agreements. At a meeting of the chairmen of the national committees, held at the Presidium of the Government on October 29, 1968, to discuss the adopted treaty, the question was also raised by the Deputy Minister of Defense, General Václav Dvořák: “Regular matter-of-fact relations with the Soviet commanders are proving to be fruitful and are thus

30 “Z projevu soudruha Alexandra Dubčeka Hlavní úkoly strany v nejbližším období,” *Rudé právo*, November 15, 1968, 1, 3.

31 The full name of the treaty is the “Smlouva mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Svazu sovětských socialistických republik o podmínkách dočasného pobytu sovětských vojsk na území Československé socialistické republiky.” It was signed in Prague on October 16, 1968. For an English translation, see “Bilateral Treaty on the ‘Temporary Presence of Soviet Forces on Czechoslovak Territory’, October 16, 1968,” in Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968*, 533–36.

32 Benčík, Paulík, and Pecka, *Vojenské otázky československé reformy*, 79.

33 These practical matters led to the signing of other, more detailed treaties, ratified in early 1969, concerning specific aspects of the basing of troops.

helping to prevent conflicts.”³⁴ The minutes of the meeting include the opinions and local experiences that contributed to good relations with Soviet soldiers. A representative of the Municipal National Committee of Mladá Boleslav, for example, “talked about his three-week experience of the presence of Soviet troops there, with whom a detailed regimen was agreed on in the interests of the citizens and the operation of the town. He pointed out that the expansion of good relations between the Czech authorities, collective farms, and factories on the one hand and the Soviet command on the other facilitated the work and improved the status of the national-committee officials dealing with daily problems.”³⁵

Clearly, cooperation and twinning, politically required and practically necessary, could be put to practical use at the garrison bases in the service of the interests of locals as well. The fact that using Soviet soldiers for various part-time jobs gradually became quite common practice is demonstrated by an October 1970 entry in the Vysoké Mýto town chronicle: “Relations with the local Red Army garrison should no longer be unrestricted and accessible to all. Enterprises, including collective farms, have begun to use the services of the garrisons at all workplaces where they are behind schedule. Relations will henceforth be possible only by means of the local committee for garrison relations [...]”³⁶

We Want Friendly and Comradely Relations

In the Treaty on the Temporary Presence of Soviet Troops, the Czechoslovak Republic also committed itself “to endeavor to buttress friendship and collaboration” with the Soviet Union. In practice, this turned out to be no mere formality; it was a commitment that the Czechoslovak politicians were determined to keep and to demand of others.

In November 1968, the Presidium of the CPCz Central Committee received a letter for approval the contents of which were to be passed on to district and regional party committees. The letter includes the following passage: “it is fully in our interests to normalize relations with the USSR and to establish and

34 ÚSD, KV ČSFR CI/9, “Záznam o poradě konané 29. října 1968 na předsednictvu vlády.”

35 Ibid.

36 “Pamětní kniha Vysokého Mýta 1961–1973,” entry from October 1970, accessed October 14, 2013, http://vychodoceskearchivy.cz/ebadatelna/zobrazeni-publikace-usti/?adresar=CZ_225204010_0381_x00002&nadpis=CZ_225204010_0381_x00002&strana=1.

develop social relations with Soviet troops. These relations can also significantly contribute to the gradual overcoming of problems and misunderstandings [...] [W]e want these relations to be friendly and comradely.” The letter also emphasized that “Communists in particular should actively endeavor to achieve the normalization of our relations with Soviet troops.”³⁷ Such instructions gave considerable impetus to efforts to ensure that comradely friendship with Soviet soldiers where they were stationed would become one of the important tasks for party units and organizations at all levels. It was therefore a task that could not easily be avoided. Considering that basic party organizations existed in practically all institutions, offices, and enterprises and that these organizations regularly had to provide evidence and accounts of the work they had done and the tasks they had fulfilled, the space for working together was thrown wide open.

Soviet officers and agents oversaw the fulfillment of obligations stemming from the Treaty, and they did not hesitate to protest if they felt that Czechs were hampering the development of friendly relations.³⁸ Clearly, the Czechoslovak side could not turn a deaf ear to such complaints and demands for the simple reason that it had to deal with them at the highest party and government levels. The measures were not long in coming. In 1969, for example, in the north-east Bohemian district of Semily alone the state police sent nineteen people to court for the production and dissemination of printed matter, including leaflets, and for writing anti-Soviet slogans.³⁹

The Local Press

Places where Soviet garrisons were based had to find a way to deal with their presence and the associated pressures. The local press found itself in a strange position. To a large extent, it continued to obey the premier’s instructions that it was “better not to write anything about them.” The official district weekly, *Jiskra Orlická* (The Orlice District Spark), mentioned only in passing that Soviet soldiers would be stationed in the Ústí nad Orlicí district.⁴⁰ The Soviet soldiers were not mentioned again until November 5, 1968, about a month after they

37 Návrh dopisu předsednictva ÚV KSČ krajským výborům strany o vzájemných stycích se sovětskými vojsky, ÚSD, sb. KV ČSFR, DII/121.

38 “Protest vládního zmocněnce SSSR pro záležitosti sovětských vojsk dočasně umístěných na území ČSSR,” ÚSD, sb. KV ČSFR, DII/122.

39 ÚSD, sb. KV ČSFR, OZ Semily.

40 “Události těchto dnů,” *Jiskra Orlická*, September 24, 1968.

had been stationed in the area. The fact that the weekly completely omitted the massive troop movements that accompanied the deployment⁴¹ is an indication of how Soviet soldiers would be reported on in future. In an interview held on November 5, the chairman of the District National Committee assured a reader that Soviet troops would not “make claims to flats” or other housing, that they would be provided only with surplus local foodstuffs, that the soldiers’ representatives would hold talks about complying with local rules and regulations, and that the movement of common soldiers would be restricted to joint leave in closed units.⁴² By not discussing certain problems in the newspaper, the chairman of the National Committee was endeavoring to forestall fear and panic caused by the unchecked movement and behavior of Soviet troops in garrison towns. Not admitting a problem, or veiling it in impersonal administrative terms, was the general approach used in this weekly. From this local periodical we therefore learn little about the various aspects of the coexistence of Soviet garrisons and local populations. We do, however, learn how the official image of unproblematic and mutually beneficial coexistence was gradually formed in part with the use of the local press. When, on rare occasions, local newspapers did report on conflicts or incidents between Soviet soldiers and Czech civilians, it was with the aim of “scolding” undesirable Czech excesses. In the garrison town of Česká Třebová in eastern Bohemia, some panic was caused among Soviet soldiers when a young man, identified only as Mr H., fired a toy pistol near their patrol. The *Jiskra Orlická* journalist commented:

Most of the people with whom I have discussed this case condemn the behavior of Mr H., because it does not help to calm already stormy waters. [...] Similar acts, which lead to such conclusions, should disappear from daily life. They are no solution to the complicated problems of contemporary life.⁴³

In a similar spirit, the weekly paper briefly reported in May 1969 that ten young men in Vysoké Mýto had attacked a Soviet major and that “young men” had torn down a red flag from the secondary school. The mention of these

41 This included the withdrawal of Polish troops who had been based in the district since August, the clearing out of barracks and military areas by Czechoslovak garrisons, and the redeployment of Soviet troops and all their military vehicles.

42 “S předsedou okresního národního výboru: O pobytu sovětských vojsk v okrese,” *Jiskra Orlická*, November 5, 1968.

43 “Proč se střílelo?,” *Ibid.*

cases in the crime and accident column ranks them with other small crimes, and in a similarly dry tone concludes, “All the culprits have been taken into police custody.”⁴⁴ A June issue of the weekly published an interview with the chairman of the District National Committee about the “consolidation” of the country and the “principles of the consolidation of public order.” The chairman said that it was unthinkable that “we would not intervene decisively against disorderly conduct [...], rowdyism, [...] and vandalism.”⁴⁵

The attacks against Soviet soldiers came under the category of “rowdyism” (*výtržnictví*) and “vandalism” (*vandalství*). The local press thus communicated the idea that those who protest in any way against the basing of the Soviet soldiers are a dangerous element that is disturbing the peace. The press was helping the Czechoslovak and Soviet representatives remove public references to the fact that many people perceived the Soviet military intervention as an act of political aggression. The delicate topic of the coexistence of Soviet garrisons and Czechoslovak civilians, with all the possible problems that it really entailed, was more or less avoided by the local press. Gradually, it was depicted mainly with conflict-free images and reports about friendly, comradely relations and joint ceremonies. For example, the district press devoted much more space to the peace celebrations in the garrison town of Česká Třebová to commemorate the 1944 Slovak National Uprising than it did to the first anniversary of the August intervention:

A procession of local citizens, members of the Soviet Army, and units of the People’s Militia, which had participated in operations against anti-Socialist elements in Prague, passed through the town. [...] To shouts of approval and the thunderous applause of the participants in the celebrations, the secretary of the District Committee of the Czechoslovak–Soviet Friendship Association thanked members of the People’s Militia, the police, and the Czechoslovak Army, who had come out decisively against the rowdies and anti-Socialist forces in Czechoslovakia.⁴⁶

The rift between the official Czechoslovak representatives and opponents to the military intervention probably came to a peak in August 1969. The

44 “Černá kronika,” *Jiskra Orlicka*, May 13, 1969.

45 „Pro konsolidaci života země,” *Jiskra Orlicka*, June 3, 1969.

46 “Slavnost míru a přátelství,” *Jiskra Orlicka*, August 26, 1969.

demonstrations during the first anniversary of the Warsaw Pact intervention⁴⁷ were suppressed by the Czechoslovak Army, the People's Militia, and the police, without the Soviet Army having to move in.⁴⁸ The official press stood fully behind the crackdown, crudely denigrated the demonstrators, and offered readers a picture of peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Army.⁴⁹

Boycott

Obviously, not everything was as the press presented it at the time. The *Vysoké Mýto* Chronicler was not afraid to take the position of an ordinary citizen and to enumerate the difficulties Soviet soldiers were causing in the town. Foremost among those difficulties was the movement of heavy military equipment, the buying-up of goods, small incidents caused by drunken soldiers, occasional acts of petty theft, the illegal requisitioning of land by the Soviet Army, and the using up of drinking water.⁵⁰

After the resolution and official proclamation of the party and government representatives about the need to foster friendly relations with the Soviet Union and its army, it took some time before the idea was fully accepted among the locals with all of its consequences. People did not easily abandon the idea that the Soviet soldiers who were settling in their towns were occupiers. The *Vysoké Mýto* chronicler also recorded local attempts to boycott this comradeship and to resist or protest the presence of the Soviet Army. This protest was of a highly diverse nature. No Soviet films were shown in the local cinema; by contrast, admission to a newsreel about the August events in Prague was free of charge.

47 It was for a long time the last mass demonstration against the occupation and the regime that had approved the occupation.

48 The preparations for August, however, were carefully supervised by the Soviet side, as is attested to by the numerous visits by Soviet politicians and Soviet army officers at the state and the local level during the summer of 1969. Nothing was to be left to chance. At the local level, special teams were assembled consisting of functionaries of the national committees and commanding officers of the security forces, who were responsible for maintaining order in their town. SOkA Trutnov, f. MěNV Trutnov, i.č. 20, kart. 3, Zápisy z plenárního zasedání, 20. dubna 1969 [Minutes from the Plenary Session, April 20, 1969].

49 In an article entitled "Reakční síly otevřeně proti republice" [Reactionary forces openly against the republic], the national daily newspaper *Rudé právo* described the Prague demonstrations as the "rioting of hooligans and déclassé elements." This effort to discredit the participants in the demonstrations intensifies later in the article: "Most of the participants in the acts of provocation were young people, the kind about whom one immediately sees that they are not fond of work or soap, not to mention order." *Rudé právo*, August 22, 1969.

50 *Pamětní kniha Vysokého Mýta. 1961–1973.*

Even the town councilors were writing protests against the establishment of Soviet garrisons in Vysoké Mýto. A separate, especially creative part of the story involves the leaflets, pamphlets, slogans, and jokes made at the expense of Soviet soldiers. Information about various social events, such as parties and balls, were not publicly advertised in the town; sometimes they were by invitation only, so that the Soviet garrison would not find out about them and would not attend. Proposals for twinning were rejected by the institutions that were put forward for this. There were even occasional scuffles between young civilians and Soviet soldiers, particularly in pubs, when Czechs, for example, took soldiers' caps or cut off their buttons or insignia,⁵¹ verbally attacked soldiers, and shouted out protest slogans in front of the barracks.⁵²

Similar behavior, however, led to condemnation not only in the local press but also, indeed mainly, from the local political representatives, who were held responsible for the implementation of commitments stemming from the signing of the Czechoslovak–Soviet agreements. They saw the public protests as disloyalty in a situation complicated by the presence of Soviet soldiers and various, often contradictory pressures. As the chairman of the Trutnov national committee said:

Normalization in our town is being impaired by various incidents that are being provoked by irresponsible individuals from the ranks both of adults and of the youth. [...] The scenes they are making do not attest to the cultural quality of our nation, and truly discredit us. [...] Nor, however, can we passively look on forever at the gross disregard shown for commitments that our representatives accepted by signing the Moscow and Prague agreements.⁵³

The local representatives considered any protest against the presence of Soviet troops to be irresponsible because it harmed the interests of the community as a whole, for instance the eventual return to normal life in the town and the resolution of everyday problems; moreover, the protests were in opposition to views and decisions that were made at the highest levels of the

51 Ibid.

52 Státní okresní archiv [State District Archive] Trutnov, fond MěNV Trutnov [fond Trutnov National Committee], inventární číslo 57 [Inventory number], karton 18 [box 18], Zápisy ze schůzí rady, 10.12.1968 [Minutes of a council meeting], December 10, 1968.

53 SOkA Trutnov, f. MěNV Trutnov, k. 3, i.č. 19, Zápisy z plenárního zasedání, 3. prosince 1968 [Minutes of the Plenary Session, December 3, 1968].

state and party. As such, any protest had to be systematically made illegitimate and practically wiped out.

Influenced by these circumstances, open individualized protest against the presence of Soviet troops became increasingly risky, and thus moved to the anonymous level. It mainly took the form of anecdotes and jokes, which mocked the growing cooperation and comradely friendship with Soviet troops and reacted to developments in politics and society in general.⁵⁴

Breaking the Ice

The mounting pressure was also linked to gradual personnel changes in senior positions. This first took place at the state-wide level and eventually, from mid-1969 onwards, also at the regional level. They included the usual exchanges of regional and district party secretaries, which led to a series of other personnel changes in the leadership of the national committees and important industrial and agricultural enterprises. An integral part of these changes was the reassessment of the recent past, including the recanting of previous statements of support for the Dubček leadership and of disagreement with the occupation. In the “break” with the past before August 1968 and shortly afterwards, the Soviet Army played a key role. The declared attitude towards the Soviet Army became an index of the more general attitude towards political developments. It was by means of comradely friendship that the new and old established local notables demonstrated their political loyalty. For example, the new mayor of Trutnov, in a speech about the activity of the city council in February 1970, distanced himself from the pre-August 1968 political developments by criticizing the previous leadership of the district national committee for having been politically reckless (*avanturismus*), for having failed to respect the Moscow Protocol, and for having refused to “enter into relations” with Soviet Army representatives. He characterized the tearing down of a Soviet tank from a pedestal in August 1968 as an “anti-Soviet and counterrevolutionary act,” for which the erstwhile representatives of the district national committee were also responsible.⁵⁵

54 For example, the Vysoké Mýto chronicler recorded an anecdote in May 1969, which appeared after Gustáv Husák had taken Alexander Dubček's place as First Secretary of the CPCz Central Committee in April: “We built socialism with a human face; now we are building socialism with the hide of a hippo [i.e. insensitivity].” *Pamětní kniha Vysokého Mýta 1961–1973*, entry from May 1969.

55 SOKA Trutnov, f. MěNV Trutnov, k. 3, i.č. 21, Zápisy z plenárního zasedání, 11.2.1970 [Minutes of the Plenary Session, February 11, 1970].

With similar speeches, functionaries made it clear whose side they were on, and in general they distanced themselves from the displays that were perceived negatively and proscribed, now called, for example, anti-Socialist, anti-Soviet, and rightwing opportunist. They thereby accepted the interpretation of the Prague Spring as an attempt at counterrevolution and the Soviet-led intervention as an operation to deliver the country from chaos.

The willingness to establish and develop comradesly friendly relations, which had only recently met with resentment and thus been socially degraded, was gradually transformed at the official level into a positive expression of loyalty in unfavorable circumstances. This loyalty, however, now ceased to be pilloried as deviant conduct by obstinate oddballs, hardline dogmatists, and jilted individuals. Owing to gradually changing circumstances, it began to be increasingly rewarded. Together with this, the people who were previously punished for their “collaborationist attitude” were exonerated. That is also reflected in the minutes of the June 1969 plenum of the Ústí nad Orlicí District Committee of the CPCz. The minutes state that the District Committee of the CPCz “has made amends for mistakes and errors; it has restored the honor of people who were smeared and attacked for having defended international alliances.”⁵⁶ The Soviet command, the exonerated conservatives and collaborators, including the leadership of the new course, strengthened one another’s positions. Under these circumstances, the Soviet soldiers were increasingly admitted into Czech enterprises and schools and were invited to participate in the founding meetings of branches of the Czechoslovak–Soviet Friendship Association.

Furthermore, the Czechoslovak–Soviet Friendship Association provides a convenient illustration of changes in the perception of the USSR and the Soviet Army in Czechoslovak society more broadly during the relatively short period since August 1968. At first, it may have seemed that the August intervention would be fatal to an organization with a pre-war tradition and a mass grass-roots membership. A number of local chapters did indeed close down, people en masse cancelled their memberships, which, anyway, they had been called upon to do by slogans chanted in the streets and on posters.⁵⁷ The Association was

56 ÚSD, sb. KV ČSFR, OZ Ústí nad Orlicí. The former managing director of Dioptra, who was dismissed in 1968 because of his “collaborationist” statements, was fully exonerated in the early 1970s. By contrast, those who had dismissed him were punished. ÚSD, sb. KV ČSFR, OZ Semily.

57 For example, “The Czechoslovak–Soviet Friendship Association asks its members to pay any outstanding membership dues, because this friendship is now ending.” Jindřich Pecka, *Spontánní projevy Pražského jara 1968–1969* (Brno: Doplněk, 1993), 98.

eventually discredited in the eyes of the public by the contacts between several of its members and the Soviet Army soon after the intervention. In the course of 1969, when popular protest against the occupation was petering out, new chapters of the Czechoslovak–Soviet Friendship Association were founded, but considering the general atmosphere this was usually done privately, almost clandestinely. Nevertheless, the change in the official course of the uppermost level of politics, which, in its attitude to the USSR and Soviet Army, was gradually projected into the mass media, as well as into local politics, also brought about a fundamental transformation in the perception of the Czechoslovak–Soviet Friendship Association. The sudden growth in membership over the course of the 1970s⁵⁸ demonstrates that the Association had freed itself of the reputation of being a collaborationist organization for a handful of conservative dregs. Although its proclaimed mission was the “buttressing” of relations with the Soviet Union and also the establishment of contacts with the Soviet Army,⁵⁹ it became for many people an acceptable variant of the required public involvement and loyalty towards the political regime. One’s attitude to the Soviet Union became part of the assessment of anyone who aspired to hold a job other than manual laborer.

The fact that one registered at one’s workplace (instead of one’s home) to join a branch of the Czechoslovak–Soviet Friendship Association had a fundamental impact on the growth in membership, because it became part of how one was assessed politically and occupationally by one’s employer. Comradely friendship was thus incorporated in the generally implemented cadre system, which included the regular political assessment of employees.⁶⁰ This was of course most strikingly reflected during the political vetting of party and non-

58 In early 1972, the Czechoslovak–Soviet Friendship Association had, according to its own information, 1,021,407 members in a total of 17,617 chapters. See *VII. Sjezd Svazu Československo-sovětského přátelství: Dokumenty z jednání sjezdu Praha, 16.-17. června 1972* (Prague: Lidové nakladatelství, 1972). Although this source does not state the numbers of members in 1968–69, it does mention the “intense pressure” to which the Association was subjected on all sides. The course it entered on to achieve the widest membership base turned out to be effective. At the next congress, in 1977, its central secretary stated that the Association had 2,241,617 members in 28,574 chapters. *8. Sjezd Svazu Československo-sovětského přátelství: Dokumenty z jednání sjezdu Praha, 12.-13. prosince 1977* (Prague: Lidové nakladatelství, 1978), 22.

59 “It would certainly be useful if the Soviet Army representatives gave speeches more often at our meetings, gatherings, and seminars. [...] Such meetings will have to be attended by increasingly larger numbers of members of the Czechoslovak–Soviet Friendship Association and of other citizens of our towns and villages.” “Zpráva ústředního tajemníka SČSP,” in *VII sjezd Svazu*, 24.

60 Marie Černá, “Cadre Policy, Cadre Work and Screening in Communist Czechoslovakia: Simple Ideas, Complicated Practice,” *Studia Territorialia* 11 (2011): 9–28.

party members in 1969–70. One's attitude to the presence of the Soviet Army in Czechoslovakia or to the Soviet Union in general became a key topic on the basis of which the vetted employees and party members were assessed.⁶¹ This also contributed to the official reassessment of the basing of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia.

Official Images of Friendship

Contacts between Soviet soldiers (mainly officers) and the local population occurred mostly at the workplace, schools, national committees and social organizations. A delegation of soldiers, for example, was received by a factory organization of the CPCz and a branch of the Soviet–Czechoslovak Friendship Association; it was shown around these institutions, given refreshments, and then took part in a friendly discussion. Also publicized in the press were other, less formal meetings and contacts, including social gatherings of women, visits by Soviet teachers to local schools, joint programs for Soviet and Czechoslovak children, visits by Pioneers (a Communist organization for children) to garrisons, sports matches, performances by the Soviet garrison band at various social and arts events, and New Year's Eve celebrations together. Official and unofficial events occasionally overlapped. Sometimes, certain natural, spontaneous tendencies and interests could be intentionally used for similar “twinning” or “comradely friendship” ends.⁶² And it was the “informal” component of meetings, such as concerts, dances,⁶³ sports matches, and gatherings for children, which were meant to play an important role in the creation of a positive image of the Soviet Army as an ardent friend.

An important way of initiating mutual contacts was to hold public political and ritualized events, which, since May 1945, had been a tradition for more than twenty years. And though the tradition was sometimes interrupted under the influence of the Thaw in the 1960s, it offered something on which to build. One could cyclically return to the regular commemorations of events such as the

61 For the meaning of the mass vettings in the so-called consolidation process, see Marie Černá, “Comprendre le processus de consolidation: Les campagnes de vérification de 1970 en Tchécoslovaquie,” *Cahiers du CEFRES* 32 (2012): 199–233.

62 A graphic example is a sixteen-year-old girl from a secondary school in the town of Česká Třebová, who appeared as a singer with a local Soviet army band. See “Děvče v uniformě,” *Jiskra Orlicka*, March 16, 1971.

63 Music ensembles of various styles, playing for the “listening and dancing pleasure” of their audiences, were an important asset of the Soviet Army, and often were part of social events.

birth of Lenin, May Day (1 May), the Liberation (9 May), Soviet Armed Forces Day, and the October Revolution. (Indeed, since the date of the Revolution by the New Style calendar was 7 November, rather than 25 October, the whole month of November was devoted to Czechoslovak–Soviet friendship.) Many holidays and other important days were one way or another linked with the Soviet Union. The public events that accompanied them, which included parades, the laying of wreaths, demonstrations, concerts, and exhibitions, became a natural platform for public appearances by Soviet soldiers as well. Such ceremonies also contributed to the rapid change in the official image of the Soviet Army. This was perhaps most strikingly manifested during the celebrations in May 1970 to mark the Red Army’s liberation of Czechoslovakia 25 years earlier. The speeches, public appearances, and articles that appeared to mark the occasion reflect the symbolic linking of the Red Army liberators of 1945 and the Soviet soldiers of 1968. The events of August 1968 thus officially became another milestone in the history of Czechoslovak–Soviet friendship. As the newspaper of the Karosa bus manufacturer in Vysoké Mýto put it,

the friendship between the common people of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union is sprinkled with blood [...]. Do those 144,000 Soviet citizens who had to die in our country during the Second World War mean nothing? [...] In August [1968] they did not leave us in danger either; they came [...].⁶⁴

Soviet ideologues also recommended linking the Red Army soldiers of 1945 with the Soviet soldiers of 1968. With this copiously employed symbolic fusion there emerged an image of the timeless Soviet soldier-liberator and benefactor, who could not be opposed, because that would mean trampling on the memory of the anti-fascist fighters. The presence of the Soviet Army also brought repeated exaltation of the Soviet struggle against fascism.

The official reception of the Soviet Army as a savior was accompanied by a renewed wave of idealization and the promotion of the Soviet Union, Soviet culture, the land of the Soviets, and the Soviet people. *Rudé právo* journalists reported on a two-week visit to the USSR in August 1969: “The striking production successes of the Soviet workers and technicians were visible everywhere [...]

64 “Přátelství je věčné,” *Karosář*, May 8, 1970.

Many of us did not hide our admiration for the all-round progress, especially technical progress, to which we were witnesses.”⁶⁵

The rhetorical style of this official confirmation of the indestructible bond was openly inspired by the Communist culture of the pre-war period and the Stalinist post-war period,⁶⁶ which expressed love for and devotion to everything Soviet.⁶⁷ At a somewhat less lyrical level, the reestablished friendship was expressed by an emphasis on the teaching of Russian, the promotion of courses in Russian, the increased importation of Soviet arts, including film, the establishment of comradely friendship and twinning at the district, town, enterprise, and school levels, organized excursions to the Soviet Union, and many competitions in poetry recitation and knowledge about the Soviet Union, just as Brezhnev and his ideologues had wanted.

Conclusion

Every political intervention carried out by military means also involves questions of resistance, conformity, and collaboration. In this sense, the turnaround in the official image of the Soviet Army from occupier to savior is probably not exceptional in history. We might today be surprised by the speed with which it occurred. This is undoubtedly connected to certain characteristics of the system that made such a quick change possible. It may seem that in the 1960s the authoritarian regime experienced a thaw. The events after August 1968, however, clearly show that the centralist principle of government remained essentially unchanged: censorship was immediately re-imposed, a number of civil rights and freedoms were revoked, personnel changes were quickly made according to the rules of promoting nomenclature cadres and keeping an eye on them, and

65 *Rudé právo*, August 12, 1969.

66 Again, for example, the 1948 words of the first Communist President of Czechoslovakia, Klement Gottwald, were recalled about how Czechoslovak bonds with the Soviet Union were “inviolable” and how the state was “moving side by side with the Soviet Union in everything and will never do otherwise.” According to Gottwald, “the common Czechoslovak people will not put up with anti-Soviet witch-hunts and intrigues.” *Zpráva ústředního tajemníka SČSP, VII sjezd Svazu*, 13–14. With renewed force, therefore, terms such as “historical necessity,” “inseparability,” and “longevity” appeared in the political vocabulary in connection with the Soviet Union.

67 At the celebrations to mark the anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army, which were held in the district capital, Ústí nad Orlicí, in the presence of Soviet war veterans in May 1970, a poem by the Communist writer S. K. Neumann (1875–1947) was recited, which had first been published in the collection *Srdce a mračna* in 1935. It included the line: “Vám poděkování a lásku vám” [To you, thanks, and love to you]. The same title is used for the article about the events, *Jiskra Orlicka*, May 12, 1970.

mass vetting and purges were carried out. Open resistance to the intervention was quickly made illegal, and it was turned into a matter of investigation and prosecution by a strong secret police force. As soon as the political leadership of the country committed itself to the terms of the Moscow Protocol and the subsequent agreement on the temporary presence of Soviet troops, it had at its disposal a number of traditional instruments to pacify majority society and to foist responsibility on it for meeting its commitments. Since part of the agreements involved nurturing, fostering, or at least creating a semblance of friendly Czechoslovak–Soviet relations, active and public maintenance of a negative image of the Soviet Army as an occupying force was practically unsustainable in the long run.

The question of resistance, conformity, and collaboration is doubtlessly always partly a matter of personal choice. In this article, I explained mainly the wider structural or systemic aspects, which to a large extent created the framework for personal choices. In addition to informal, spontaneous, and private relations (which are more difficult to research), there were organized and official contacts. Above all, comradely friendship with Soviet soldiers or, more generally, a positive attitude towards the Soviet Union as a political commitment was integrated into the existing political and cadre system. This enabled control of the mass media, as well as supervision by the highest bodies of the state and party over the activity of subordinate bodies to ensure that they would not deviate from the centrally determined political line. Friendship became one of the criteria of the political assessment of individuals, groups, and institutions. One of the most common ways to meet such a commitment was to become a member of the Czechoslovak–Soviet Friendship Association. What membership actually entailed was determined by local conditions, as was the social inclusion of an individual. Clearly, the most frequent direct contacts with the Soviet officers took place at the level of the local and regional political élites and nomenclature cadres. An important aspect of the change in the official image of the Soviet Army was the experience of long-fostered friendship with the Soviet Union, both at the level of politics and politicians and of various institutions, as well as specific individuals. This tradition could be renewed by the usual tried and tested political rituals and by incorporating a new circumstance—the 1968 intervention—into it. This tradition included the systematic promotion and idealization of the Soviet Union and everything connected to it. The Soviet Army was then made an inconspicuous but important part of the image of the Soviet Union as benefactor, an image that had been created in a wide variety of ways.

The political consequences of the 1968 military intervention were undoubtedly far-reaching. Nevertheless, at the official level, one of the consequences of the subsequent political measures was the transformation of the image of the Soviet soldiers from the henchmen of an occupying force to saviors who brought deliverance. In the eyes of the public, their political importance was gradually but increasingly trivialized, and this shift was reflected in everyday life. They were incorporated into public political rituals, celebrations, social gatherings, and cultural events, and they became part of both the official and also the unofficial economy. In the mass media, they were often depicted in contexts and roles that were apparently not connected to politics, such as musicians in concerts, sportsmen in matches, people attending friendly discussions, volunteer workers helping out in factories and on cooperative farms. Similarly, contacts between Czechoslovak organizations and citizens and Soviet garrisons gradually lost their negative political associations of collaboration and betrayal. They became part of ceremonial acts and expressions of loyalty, which the citizens of the communist state were regularly forced to perform. These acts were judged positively by the regime, but were often considered a formality, devoid of meaning (including political meaning). The Soviet Army was thus gradually stripped of the meaning of occupier and important political actor, not only because of the ways in which it was presented in official propaganda, but also because of people's real-life experiences.

Archival Sources

Ústav pro soudobé dějiny [Institute of Contemporary History, Prague], sbírka Komise vlády ČSFR pro analýzu událostí 1967–1970 [Collection of the Government Commission of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic for Analysis of the Events of 1967–1970].

Státní okresní archiv Trutnov [State District Archive Trutnov], fond Městský národní výbor Trutnov [fond Trutnov National Committee].

Bibliography

Bárta, Milan et al. *Victims of the Occupation: Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia: 21 August–31 December 1968*. Prague: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, 2008.

Benčík, Antonín, Jan Paulík, and Jindřich Pecka. *Vojenské otázky československé reformy 1967-1970. Srpen 1968-červen 1971* [Military Aspects of the Czechoslovak Reform of 1967–1970: August 1968 to May 1971]. Brno: Doplněk, 1999.

- Benčík, Antonín. *Operace Dunaj aneb Internacionální vražda Pražského jara* [Operation Dunaj. An International Assassination of the Prague Spring]. Prague: Krutina Jiří-Vacek, 2013.
- Břeňová, Věra. *Pražské jaro '68: Bibliografie* [Prague Spring 1968: Bibliography]. Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny, 2013.
- Crapfl, James. *Revolution with a Human Face: Politics, Culture, and Community in Czechoslovakia 1989–1992*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013.
- Černá, Marie. “Cadre Policy, Cadre Work and Screening in Communist Czechoslovakia: Simple Ideas, Complicated Practice.” *Studia Territorialia* 11 (2011): 9–28.
- Černá, Marie. “Comprendre le processus de consolidation: Les campagnes de vérification de 1970 en Tchécoslovaquie” [A Contribution to the Study of the Consolidation Process. Political Screenings of 1970 in Czechoslovakia]. *Cahiers du CEFRES* 32 (2012): 199–233.
- Doskočil, Zdeněk. *Duben 1969: Anatomie jednoho mocenského zvratu* [April 1969: An Anatomy of Power Reverses]. Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2006.
- Eidlin, Fred H. *The Logic of ‘Normalization’: The Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia of 21 August 1968 and the Czechoslovak Response*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.
- Fajmon, Hynek. *Sovětská okupace Československa a její oběti* [The Soviet Occupation of Czechoslovakia and Its Victims]. Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2005.
- Felcman, Ondřej. *Invaze a okupace: K úloze SSSR a sovětských vojsk ve vývoji Československa v letech 1968–1991* [Invasion and Occupation: The Role of the USSR and Soviet Troops in Czechoslovak Developments, 1968–1991]. Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 1995.
- Hoppe, Jiří. *Pražské jaro v médiích: Výběr z dobové publicistiky* [Prague Spring and the Media: Selection of Contemporary Political Writing]. Brno: Doplněk, 2004.
- Janáček, František and Marie Michálková. “Příběh zvacího dopisu” [The Story of the Letter of Invitation]. *Soudobé dějiny* 1, no. 1 (1993), 87–101.
- Kun, Miklós. *Prague Spring – Prague Fall: Blank Spots of 1968*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1996.
- Madry, Jindřich. *Sovětská okupace Československa, jebo normalizace v letech 1969–1970 a role ozbrojených sil* [The Soviet Occupation of Czechoslovakia, Normalization 1969–1970 and the Role of the Armed Forces]. Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 1994.
- Mlynář, Zdeněk. *Night Frost in Prague: The End of Humane Socialism*. London: C. Hurst, 1980.

- Navrátil, Jaromír (ed.). *The Prague Spring 68: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*. Budapest: CEU Press, 1998.
- Otáhal, Milan, Vilém Prečan et al. *The Czech Black Book*, edited by Robert Littell. London: Pall Mall Press, 1969.
- Pauer, Jan. *Prag 1968: Der Einmarsch des Warschauer Paktes Hintergründe – Planung – Durchführung* [Prague 1968: The Backgrounds of the Warsaw Pact Invasion – Planning – Realization]. Bremen: Temmen, 1995.
- Pecka, Jindřich. *Spontánní projevy Pražského jara 1968–1969* [Spontaneous Expressions of the Prague Spring 1968–1969]. Brno: Doplněk, 1993.
- Pecka, Jindřich. *Odsun sovětských vojsk z Československa 1989–1991* [The Withdrawal of Soviet Troops from Czechoslovakia]. Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny, 1996.
- Pecka, Jindřich et al. *Sovětská armáda v Československu 1968–1991: Chronologický přehled* [The Soviet Army in Czechoslovakia: A Chronology]. Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny, 1996.
- Pecka, Jindřich. “Rozhovor Josefa Smrkovského s generálem N. V. Ogarkovem 30.8.1968” [A Discussion Between Josef Smrkovský and General N. V. Ogarkov]. *Soudobé dějiny* 1 (1997): 158–66.
- Povolný, Daniel. *Vojenské řešení Pražského jara 1968*. Vol. II: *Československá lidová armáda v srpnu 1968* [The Military Solution of the Prague Spring, 1968. The Czechoslovak People’s Army in August 1968]. Prague: Ministerstvo obrany ČR, 2010.
- Skilling, H. Gordon. *Czechoslovakia’s Interrupted Revolution*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.
- Vondrová, Jitka. *Mezinárodní souvislosti Československé krize 1967–1970: Dokumenty ÚV KSSS 1966–1969* [The International Contexts of the Czechoslovak Crises of 1967–1970. Documents of the Central Committee of Communist Party of the Soviet Union]. Brno: Doplněk, 2011. 213–66.
- Vondrová, Jitka and Jaromír Navrátil. *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize 1967–1970. Červenec–srpen 1968* [The International Contexts of the Czechoslovak Crises of 1967–1970. July–August 1968]. Prague and Brno: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR and Doplněk, 1996. 271–74.
- Vondrová, Jitka. *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize: září 1968–květen 1970* [The International Contexts of the Czechoslovak Crises of 1967–1970. September 1968–May 1970]. Brno: Doplněk, 1997.
- Williams, Kieran. *The Prague Spring and Its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics, 1968–1970*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

- VII. *Sjezd Svazu Československo-sovětského přátelství: Dokumenty z jednání sjezdu Praha, 16.–17. června 1972* [7th Congress of Czechoslovak–Soviet Friendship Association. Documents Prague, June 16–17, 1972]. Prague: Lidové nakladatelství, 1972.
8. *Sjezd Svazu Československo-sovětského přátelství: Dokumenty z jednání sjezdu Praha, 12.–13. prosince 1977* [The 8th Congress of Czechoslovak–Soviet Friendship Association. Documents Prague, December 12–13, 1977] Prague: Lidové nakladatelství, 1978.

Translated by Derek and Marzia Paton

Tibor Takács

Them and Us: Narratives of Agents from the Kádár Era¹

Today a good deal of scholarly work has been published the authors of which use, as their primary sources, the documents that were created by the state security services of the communist dictatorships of East Central Europe. These documents reveal a great deal concerning the primary characteristics of the mechanisms of state security and, more specifically, the network of agents. Most of the inquiries that have been published so far have been of a moralizing nature, in that they seem to have been motivated at least in part by the desire to pass judgment on those who cooperated in an organized way with the state security services of the dictatorial states or, in some cases, to find justifications for the conduct of the people involved by offering explanations according to which they were compelled to collaborate. I have set a very different goal in this article. I examine how the people in the network interpreted their cooperation with the state. I draw on recollections that were written not after the fall of the Kádár regime, but rather in its early stages. These texts offer different perspectives on the identity of the agent and shed some light on how the collaborator him or herself understood his or her acts of collaboration with the dictatorship.

Keywords: collaboration, recollections, state security, agent network, Kádár era, communist regime, Hungary

A few years ago, in his reflections on the moralizing narrative mode of the assertions that have been made in Hungary regarding the network of the state security services of the fallen regime, Balázs Berkovits raised the essential question: “Can one speak of agents in any other tone than that of moral outrage, victimhood, and forgiveness? Can one escape the moral defining terms that infer one another, the vicious cycle of sin—confession—forgiveness? How can we avoid the ethical and psychological/sociological conjectures and aims that already determine, before we have begun our examination, where we will end up?”²

The moralizing that seems to prevail in discussions of the topic seems to be tied to the tendency in public opinion to identify the people who were in the network as “denouncers,” i.e. people whose endeavors are almost always deleterious, whatever the culture or society in question, and even more so in

1 This article was written with the support of program number K-104408 of the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA).

2 Balázs Berkovits, “Erkölcstelen besúgók, tehetséges áldozatok, áldozatos erkölcsbírók”, *anBlok* 3. (2009): 13.

the case of a dictatorship. The foundation of this discourse is the assumption according to which the simple citizen (as the agent *seems* to be) owes his loyalties first and foremost to his own community, in other words to the society that has been subjugated by the dictatorial power. Thus, if someone cooperates with power, for instance by providing information concerning his fellow sufferers, he or she merits the label traitor.³ This “transgression” seems more damnable in retrospect than it did at the time because at the time of the dictatorial regime it was “invisible,” as it was committed in secret and only came to light after the fall of the regime. As Hungarian historian Gábor Gyáni has observed, however, with this disappearance of the world of the dictatorship, “denouncing lost any ethical justification and its ‘usefulness’ also frayed.” Consequently, “this form of cooperation with the oppressive power of yore is simply stamped as immorality or futility.”⁴

The moralizing approach is also dominant in the scholarly research on the network of agents who worked together with the state security services. Practically, this means that the historian cannot completely avoid or ignore entirely the influence of the interpretive models that prevail in public opinion and thus is inevitably compelled to orient him or herself to this narrative mode. The practice of historical scholarship involves a series of ethical and moral choices, from the selection of a subject of focus to the manner in which findings are put in writing, and even if a historian is cautious to avoid making explicit judgments, his or her use of language nevertheless bears certain (inherent) values.⁵ This problem lies more in the fact that (as the citation from Berkovits’ work suggests) the moralizing approach results in methodological and thematic narrowing in the research on the network of agents used by the state security, essentially as if the only genuine goal of an inquiry into this history were to “name” the “guilty” with the intention, whether admitted or not, of denouncing and pillorying them.

The foundation of moralizing in the case of scholarly inquiries is the use of the top-down model based on a sharp distinction between “power” and

3 Cf. Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately, “Introduction to the Practices of Denunciation in Modern European History,” *The Journal of Modern History*, 68 (1996): 765–66.

4 Gábor Gyáni, “Kollaboráció és a hatalom titka,” in *Az ügynök arcai. Mindennapi kollaboráció és ügynökkérdés*, ed. Sándor Horváth (Budapest: Libri, 2014), 43–44.

5 Richard T. Vann, “Historians and Moral Evaluations,” *History and Theory*, Theme Issue 43 (2004): 3–30.

“society.”⁶ Accordingly, historians tend (retrospectively) to present the period between 1945 and 1990 as a struggle between the “good” and the “bad,” the “oppressed” and the “oppressors.” The picture, however, is hardly this black-and-white. For instance, even research on “informants” (both people who only occasionally provided reports and those who regularly worked as part of the established system) shows that this distinction does not hold up under scrutiny. There were innumerable links and relationships between the system and Hungarian society. Indeed, this is logical. In order to ensure that their subjects remain submissive, disciplined, and “normal,” first and foremost modern states must be able to keep the citizenry under observation and keep records of its acts. In addition to the various techniques and institutions that are used to enforce discipline, power cannot do without the cooperation its citizens, whether we are speaking of casual informers of those who violate its rules, deviants or non-conformists, or members of the more or less structured informers’ network of the (political) police.⁷ It is quite clear that in authoritarian systems, which wish to exercise more than usual supervision over society, there is an even greater desire for this kind of participation on the part of the citizenry in the maintenance of power. This is true in part simply because, since any potentially critical organ of the press has essentially been silenced and the freedom of speech denied, the people in power have more difficulty obtaining reliable information about those “underneath” them.⁸ From the perspective of the regime, this means that the much-feared *Stasi*, for instance, would not have been nearly as effective without the active participation of tens of thousands of citizens.⁹ From the perspective of society, this means essentially that people were coopted and made part of the mechanisms of their own surveillance.¹⁰ As Corey Ross noted with regards to the GDR, “the state did not so much rule *over* society as *through* it.”¹¹

6 This is by no means true exclusively for conditions in Hungary. Jens Gieseke, „Staatssicherheit und Gesellschaft – Plädoyer für einen Brückenschlag,” in *Staatssicherheit und Gesellschaft Studien zum Herrschaftsalltag in der DDR*, ed. idem (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 7–22.

7 Fitzpatrick and Gellately, “Introduction”, 759–63.

8 Robert Gellately, “Denunciation in Twentieth-Century Germany: Aspects of Self-Policing in the Third Reich and the German Democratic Republic,” *The Journal of Modern History*, 68 (1996): 931–33, 966–67.

9 Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 23, 49.

10 Robert Gellately, “Denunciation as a Subject of Historical Research,” *Historical Social Research* 26, no. 2 (2001): 20.

11 Corey Ross, *The East German Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR* (London: Arnold, 2012), 63.

If we wish to further a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon at hand (rather than pass judgment on the people involved), we would definitely do better to regard the network of agents as a tool of the everyday exercise of power and a medium of communication. There are innumerable ways of studying the acts of agents, from examination of contemporary documents produced about and by the agents to interviews with agents themselves. Naturally, active informants did not reflect in their reports on their endeavors. In general, functionaries of the state security offices assessed and interpreted the work of the people who were members of the network. The interviews gave the former agents a chance to speak about how they remembered their activities, though of course one must keep in mind that whatever statements they made were products of memory acts, retrospective constructions that were to a large extent determined by the circumstances under which they were recollected, the attitude of the person retelling his or her memories at the time, and so on. Furthermore, in this case the *gap*¹² between the narrating subject and the narrated subject in the memoirs or autobiographies is inevitably much more emphatic, since the *former* agent (who is, in other words, no longer an agent) is the person conjuring the figure of the agent from the past.

In this essay I examine recollections that active members of the agent network wrote at the request or order of the state security (auxiliary materials that the operational officers used in training). Among the documents of the secret police of the period of state socialism in Hungary there are four such texts: two reports found in a dossier entitled “A network man’s recollections of his own secret work,” one dated May 27, 1958, the other dated May 28, 1958;¹³ a text entitled “Dear Friend! The recollections of an agent,” which bears the initials T. M. and was written sometime around 1960;¹⁴ and a recollection entitled “How I saw it. Anonymous notes from an abandoned apartment,” written in 1969–70 by an agent who went by the code-name “Koroknai.”¹⁵

12 István Dobos, *Autobiographical Reading*. Spectrum Hungarologicum, vol. 3 (Jyväskylä–Pécs: University of Jyväskylä, 2010), 9.

13 Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára (hereafter: ÁBTL) 4.1. A-3253.

14 ÁBTL 4.1. A-3783.

15 ÁBTL 4.1. A-2103.

Us and Them

The texts in question here constitute only one possible world¹⁶ of the network of the state security, though this is perhaps their principal merit: they shed light on the functioning of this world from a perspective that one does not find in other documents. They contain the remarks of agents who had been working in the service of the state for a long time and who reflect explicitly on their work as agents. Thus, the narrators provide narratives only they could provide, narratives that are, given the circumstances of the narrators, genuine and are not found, or are found only in an implicit and highly embedded form, in the reports they and other agents submitted. These narratives can offer some understanding of the stresses and demands involved in the execution by the agents of the tasks they were assigned, tasks that were considered simple by the case officers (“*tartóbizt*”, the state security officers who were responsible for the reports of an informant) who assigned them, whether we are speaking of obtaining a manuscript, coming to a meeting, or authoring a report. In addition to providing insights into the everyday workings of the network and the ways in which agents themselves experienced life as part of this network (i.e. the construction of the aforementioned “possible world”), the recollections also help further our understanding of collaboration with the secret police and in general the dictatorial system. In this article I examine the documents in question primarily from the latter perspective.¹⁷

For T. M., the author of “Dear Friend,” his recruitment must have been a decisive experience, since the description of it comprises almost half of the text of his recollections. This description sheds light on how the “candidate” experienced his apprehension by the authorities, the interrogation (which was like a prelude to his recruitment), and, finally, his recruitment. For some time, he did not actually know what was happening to him, and when he finally did begin to understand what they were asking of him, he was not particularly opposed. Indeed, on the contrary he was eager to bring the whole process to an end. (The fact that he was in a hurry to meet with the ambulance in order to be able to take his sick children to the hospital played a role in this.) Later, however, he recounts the “troubled and unpleasant months” following his recruitment, when for a long time he felt like an “ethical corpse.”

16 Jerome Bruner, *Actual minds, possible worlds* (Cambridge–London: Harvard University Press, 1986).

17 I have analyzed these texts in greater detail elsewhere: Tibor Takács, *Beszűgők a beszűgásról. Ügynök-nisszaemlékezések a Kádár-korszakból* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2013).

There are signs in the other recollections that initially having accepted the role of denouncer left the agents with a feeling of moral trepidation and they were troubled by doubts concerning the ethics of their work as “snoops.” As one reads in the report of May 28, 1958, “when a beginner starts to work, he is full of inhibitions, fears, and ethical scruples. He thinks that what he is doing in his work is the most scandalous act one could commit. He does not trust his contact, and he ponders how to free himself from the ‘burden’ that ‘weighs him down.’” The most effective means of doing this was “de-conspiring,” i.e. the person who had been enlisted would inform the people around him that he had been enlisted. “There is a decisive moment at the beginning of the position: the first inner impulse of someone who becomes a secret employee is the thought that he can only free himself from ‘ethical slavery’ if everyone discovers his secret—he drives away anyone who is burdened with sin in order to avoid causing him harm. This is a kind of obsession with the protection of one’s integrity, and it is coupled with a compulsion to speak, which the beginner hopes will liberate him from his inhibitions.” The case officer who maintained ties with the author of the report, however, made him understand “that every word spoken, every bit of chatter would destroy me ethically, for no matter where I went to complain, they would cast me out with the greatest disgust.”

As a means of assuaging their ethical anxieties and mollifying their inner fears, the agents could create new identities for themselves, separate from their former selves, a kind of informer “I,” who in their minds would not entirely displace their former, ethical selves. This was made a bit easier by the use of a code-name, which would allow an informer to perform his or her tasks as a member of the network of the security services almost as if in secret from him or herself. From this perspective, the fact that, as of the 1950s, agents were not designated with numbers or letters, but rather with actual code-names was of tremendous significance. We cannot know whether this was one of the purposes of this change, but it unquestionably made it easier for the people involved to accept roles as informers and regard their informing selves as separate identities. We also cannot know whether it was thanks to this psychological strategy or not, but whatever the explanation, in time the agents managed to get over their initial concerns and at least by the time they were recording their recollections the conflict between the person referred to by the code-name and the citizen designated by his or her actual name did not seem to cause any problem. The doubts and ethical concerns they initially had had were distant memories, which they could recall, but which, by the time they were writing them down, clearly

no longer bothered them too terribly. Instead, they felt that their “normal” lives came into conflict with the roles they played when they went by their actual names, which they did in the interests of being able to perform tasks as part of the state security services. In other words, the principal problem for the agents was not the activities in which they had engaged as denouncers, but rather the fact that—in order to perform these activities—they had had to appear to be enemies of the system.

The author of the report dated May 28, 1958 complained that he had to show two faces to the world: “One was the face presented to the bosses at the offices, whose complete trust I had to have in order to be able to do my work properly. They regard me as an individual with a progressive spirit. But there is another layer at the establishment whose ‘favor’ I cannot lose, because they will spread the rumor that one must be suspicious of me, because I am a communist who has gone wild. This fraternization, however, must be superficial. I must make them think that because of my position I fear and avoid committing any and all unguarded statements or acts. Then I can count on their well-intentioned sympathies.” This duplicity caused problems in the informers’ private lives as well: “My wife was very perturbed when an enemy element came to the apartment and, right in front of her, alas, what a flavorful reactionary speech I held, how fiery my ‘counter-revolutionary’ mood was! And then, again among colleagues, on another occasion I resembled a good, honest, conscientious worker.” T. M. complained at length to his “dear friend” of how, because of his work as an agent, he again had to become part of a social life that had already dispersed: “I had to learn about the interests of many people and understand the spirit of their thoughts, which at times were obsessive, so that we would be able to converse coherently and in a manner that was interesting to me.” Similarly, “Koroknai” only met, whether regularly or sporadically, with former associates from the Independent Smallholders’ Party and people with whom they shared a similar mentality when it was in the interests of the work he did in the defense of the state. After 1956, the only change that took place was that he was able to represent the politics of the Communist Party openly and was not compelled to dissemble (“I found myself in a political stance in which there was no chance of misunderstanding between my official work and my tasks in the defense of the state,” as he wrote).

Complaints about tedious socializing or having to play the part of an enemy of the system can be also understood as tools with which the people in question freed themselves of moral reservations. The authors of these narratives seem to

have striven to distance the target individuals from them: clearly it was much easier for them to perform their tasks if they observed not normal, honest people (as they fancied themselves), but rather the enemy. This stance was necessary if they were not going to regard the work they were performing for the state as snooping or denunciation, in short as betrayal. After all, one can only betray people with whom one shares an allegiance, people with whom one forms an “us,” but as far as the agents were concerned, the people they had observed or informed against were not part of this “us,” but rather were members of a “them.” This attitude was common among agents, as indeed the case of László Borsányi also shows. One of Borsányi’s principal tasks as an agent who later became a successful ethnographer and anthropologist was to keep the participants in the “Indian camps” under observation (it is ironic that later, as a scholar, Borsányi dealt with the culture of North American Indians). Although he himself was a regular participant in the camps, in his reports he does not refer to himself as one of the camp members, but rather recreates himself as a university student of ethnography, thereby creating a kind of textual world (at least) in which he was not betraying his “own.” In his case, the agent and the camp member should not be conflated, while “the position of the agent and the role of the scholar can be reconciled—at least according to the logic of power [at the time]—and indeed the role of Indian, free of contradictions, emerges as the only possible variation to the parallel life of the scholar and the agent.”¹⁸

One could reformulate this more explicitly by saying that the authors of the recollections did not regard themselves as snoops or denouncers, but rather as spies. What is the difference? According to Karol Sauerland, the denouncer is someone who passes on information about someone to an institution of power and in doing so may well bring grief to the person on whom he or she informs. The denouncer may act out of personal motives or in response to an assignment. Among the latter one finds those who worked as part of the network employed by the state security (for whom a number of colloquial terms were invented, such as snoop or brick). The reports they submitted, of course, were only cases of “denunciation” if they caused injury or harm to others. In contrast, the spy arrives as an outsider among people who represent the enemy in order to gather information that is important to the people with whom he shares an allegiance. In order to infiltrate this group, he must wear a figural mask. He must pretend to be one of “them,” and this requires considerable preparation and

18 Kata Horváth, “A Borsányi név. A politikai és a tudományos megfigyelés határai,” *anBlok* 3 (2009): 37.

involves significant risk. While the terms denouncer and snoop bear negative connotations, in general the spy is presented and regarded a figure worthy of admiration, even a genuine hero. According to Sauerland, the person who was member of the network of the state security can hardly be considered a spy, for even if he did wear a guise, he did not arrive from the outside, but, on the contrary, moved from the inside towards the outside, and however much he may identify with those who give him his tasks, he will never become a stranger who was accepted from the outside.¹⁹ Of course, from the perspective of the agents who were looking back on their careers, this last contention is irrelevant, since the question of how outsiders regarded the work of the people who had been part of the network was not the issue. The question, rather, was how the agents looked back on the work they had performed. It is not hard to understand that they preferred to regard themselves as spies who had been exposed to manifold dangers among the enemy instead of snoops who had skulked around in the wake of their friends and acquaintances in search of secrets.

There are innumerable signs in the recollections indicating which “side” the narrators put themselves on and the perspective from which they interpreted their lives as informers. For instance, in the report of May 27, 1958 one finds the following remark: “I regard the current tasks as good. Accomplishable, the details can also be thoroughly elucidated, because the active enemy stands opposite *us*.” The author of the report dated May 28 made a list of people who spoke in a striking manner of “denouncers” and “snoops,” noting, “I found that in almost 100 percent of the cases anyone who spoke like this was one of *our agents!*” T. M. wrote the following to the addressee of his letter: “I trust you to decide how much you make use of it, how much you use in the interests of attaining *our common goals*.” Elsewhere, he wrote, “I am not a genius, but perhaps I can determine whether someone whom I have known for more than ten years and an essay that I heard and read are useful *to us* or not.” While in the previous citations, the emphasis is mine, in this case the agent himself felt that it was important to underline the word “*nekünk*” (to us), thereby drawing emphasis to his perception that he was one of the people who worked in the defense of the state. “Koroknai” referred to the example set by two journalists in order to demonstrate that the motivations for the people who worked as part of the network were at times very different. For one of them, secret collaboration was

¹⁹ Karol Sauerland, *Harminc ezüst: Beszűgások és árulások*, trans. Péter Várnai (Budapest: Helikon, 2001), 249–58.

just a tool, the price he had to pay, as it were, in order to be able to travel abroad and work as a reporter in the West. The other, in contrast, genuinely devoted himself to the defense of the state (and the system in general). The first “works for us,” “Koroknai” wrote, while the second “is our man.”

Thus, the people who worked as part of the network saw themselves as devoted followers of the socialist system who had become close to the communist party independently of their recruitment. This is perhaps the most striking in the case of “Koroknai.” For him, recruitment was only a stage on his path to the Communist Party, a path he had set out on of his own free will. Though he had been one of the local leaders of the Smallholders’ Party, he had approached the secretary of the Hungarian Workers’ Party in Debrecen at his own initiative, informed him that he wanted to work together with the party, and sought his assistance. It was not important to him how or where he would serve. If, for instance, he were asked to work as an informer, in the service of the secret police, then so be it. He did not even go into detail concerning the process of recruitment. His description suggests that it was little more than a simple conversation with the political police, who had asked him whether he wanted to work for them, and he had replied yes. Whether this description is accurate or not we cannot know. We can only be certain that after having worked as member of the network for some ten or twenty years, “Koroknai” and his associates saw themselves, the work they had performed, and the people on whom they had informed according to the outlines sketched above. When we conjure our past, we do so in a manner that ensures that it will be consistent with our knowledge, sentiments, attitudes, etc. at the moment of recollection, and this helps sooth and even extinguish the sense of discomfort (what is referred to as cognitive dissonance) that we may feel because of the conflict or tension between thoughts or ideas we may once have had and thoughts or ideas we have now. In simple terms, we have a tendency, when looking back on the past, to think of ourselves as having always had ideas and views similar to the ideas and views we have at the retrospective moment. This is not necessarily a deliberate form of dishonesty so much as it is a mental effort that helps us interpret our lives as a coherent whole.²⁰

In the texts under discussion, in any case, one finds many indications that existence as an informer helped the narrators deepen and strengthen their

20 Daniel L. Schacter, *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers* (Boston–New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 138–49.

commitment to the system. The author of the report dated May 27, 1958 writes expressly of his development in the ten years that he spent working for the state security, in the course of which, “coming from the borderlands of a worldview with a different direction,” he came so close to “the socialist ideology” that he was willing to put the needs of the party before the interests of family. (In 1954, for instance, because of his work as agent he left his family for three months. As he noted, he would not have been willing to do this in 1949.) One does not find the same kind of continuity in T. M.’s narrative, but according to the methodological introduction added as an afterthought, the narrative provided a good “mirror of the thoughts and feelings that arise in someone in the wake of our work. It is also proof of how, in the maintenance of the network, proper guidance can bring the agent—mistakes he has committed notwithstanding—closer politically, and in the end the agent becomes one of the enduring supporters of our people’s democratic system.”

This comment calls our attention to an essential fact, namely that the network was not merely a tool with which information was gathered, it was also a tool with which people were indoctrinated, since the conversion, as it were, in the course of his work as an informer (or even as a consequence of this work) of someone who was regarded as an enemy of the system into someone who supported the system was a significant achievement. According to the internal affairs commands regarding the network, the case officer was supposed to indoctrinate the agent.²¹ The officer was charged not simply with the tasks of training and guiding the agent, but also with his or her political indoctrination. According to one study written for state security officers in the case of an agent who hailed from enemy circles and against whom compromising or incriminating evidence had been used in order to leave him or her little choice but to enlist, “the ultimate goal was to change their worldview and make them understand and accept Marxist-Leninist ideology.” This of course was the most ambitious goal, but the officer at the very least had to manage to make the informer grasp that “the people’s democracy is the only system and the dictatorship of the proletariat the only just form of social life that ensures the welfare of the majority. One

21 ÁBTL 1.11.5. 2-3/6/1955. A belügyminiszter 6. sz. parancsa az államvédelmi szervek ügynöki munkájának alapelvei című instrukció kiadásáról, February 9, 1955; ÁBTL 1.5. 2-10/94/1956. A belügyminiszter 94. sz. parancsa az államvédelmi szervek ügynöki munkájának alapelvei című okmány kiadásáról, October 8, 1956; ÁBTL 4.2. 10-21/33/1958. A belügyminiszter 33. sz. parancsa az államvédelmi szervek ügynöki munkájának alapelvei című okmány kiadásáról, December 5, 1958; ÁBTL 4.2. 10-21/5/1972. A belügyminiszter 005. sz. parancsa az állambiztonsági szervek hálózati munkájának alapelvet tartalmazó szabályzat kiadásáról, April 5, 1972.

must nurture love of the socialist homeland in him, which is the most elevated and most righteous form of patriotism.”²²

Me and Us

As is apparent, for the people who were recalling their lives as agents, the fact that they had had to inform on people was not a source of displeasure. Rather, it was the fact that their bosses had not regarded them as people who were on their side and therefore had not trusted them. The author of the report dated May 27, 1958 was very upset when at a meeting his case officer’s superior said the following about the information he had provided: “This is something. Get information like this, then we’ll be alright. But if you don’t get information like this, then you can lie down at our feet and swear that you are our man, but we won’t believe you.” “Koroknai” also complained a great deal about how for a long time the case officers treated him as an enemy, “like someone who had been accused, though the accusation remained unspoken.” This explains in part why he was also displeased by the warning he was given by the member of the secret police who recruited him: “do not let anyone learn of your conspiring, for it would bring great shame on you if people were to know of our relationship.” The agent envisioned the development of a “principled” relationship, since he regarded himself as someone who stood on the side of the defense of the state, while the officer saw him as an enemy who had been compelled to serve as an informer. Yet, as he put it, “by the time the counter-revolution broke out I looked on the authorities like Endre Ady looked on God: my concern is your concern...”²³ He regarded his private life and the work he did in the service of the state security as a unified whole: “The nature of my work so closely resembled the nature of my secret tasks, they intersected at so many points that I was able to understand the whole thing as a single unified progression. I likened myself to streams part of which flows underground, as some subterranean streams do.”

The signs suggest that this was a general problem, and in time the internal affairs leadership noticed this too. According to a 1968 summary on the agent

22 ÁBTL 4.1. A-3087. József Muzslai and Ottó Szélpál, *Az ügynökség vezetésének és nevelésének alapelvei és módszerei* (Budapest: BM Tanulmányi és Módszertani Osztály, 1957), 37.

23 The citation is from the last stanza of a poem by twentieth-century Hungarian poet Endre Ady entitled *A kimerák Istenéhez*, or “To the God of Chimeras”: “My concern is your concern / For if you do not keep your faithful / no one will believe in you in time: / God, Secret, draw your sword!” *Ady Endre összes versei* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1967), 375.

network of the state security services, “in general it can be stated that we do not know well enough the people who are among the first whom we expect to uncover and bring an end to enemy activities. In practice, this means, for instance, that often we entertain doubts in our assessments of the reliability and trustworthiness of the agents who maintain direct relationships with the enemy.”²⁴ We do not know how much the situation changed after this.

The use of terminology by the narrators also clearly indicates that they saw themselves as soldiers who served in defense of the system, since they referred to themselves not as “members of the network” or “agents,” but rather as *secret* (in some cases *external*) employee. As of 1972, the term “secret employee” („*titkos munkatárs*”) served as a designation for one of the categories of people who were active as part of the network, though all of the texts in question here were written well before this, thus clearly the authors were not using the term in this sense. Towards the end of the 1960s, the suggestion was made to use the term secret colleague instead of network member, since the relationship of the agents to the state security services “was decisively founded on patriotic conviction.”²⁵ It is perhaps not coincidental that in 1968 (i.e. at roughly the same time) the state security of the German Democratic Republic also changed the official term that was used for informers from “Geheimer Informator” (secret informer) and “Geheimer Mitarbeiter” (secret colleague) to “Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter,” or unofficial colleague. This change was motivated by the realization that people did not like to identify themselves as denouncers, but they were able to interpret cooperation in the defense of the state and the social order as responsible and respectable work. Also, the term “colleague” implied that the officers and the informers worked together as (almost) equal partners.²⁶ Clearly, the members of the state security services in Hungary also would have like to have thought this.

The narrators of the retrospectives regularly referred to the state security employees designated in the official phraseology as case officers as their (higher) associates, or contacts. Presumably, the operatives did not use the expression case officer in front of the agents, since the term in Hungarian (“*tartótiszt*”) would have been associated with keeping animals, and the agents would have

24 ÁBTL 1.11.10. A Belügyminisztérium III. Főcsoportfőnöksége ügynöki hálózata, a hálózati munka fejlődése és feladatai, December 11, 1968 (II. sorozat, 60. doboz).

25 ÁBTL 1.11.10. Jelentés. A BM állambiztonsági szervek hálózata, a hálózati munka feladatai, July 12, 1968 (II. sorozat, 60. doboz).

26 David Childs and Richard Popplewell, *The Stasi: The East German Intelligence and Security Service*, (Basingstoke–London: Macmillan, 1996), 83. Jens Giesecke, *The History of the Stasi: East Germany's Secret Police, 1945–1990* (New York–Oxford: Berghahn, 2014), 79–80.

found this less than flattering. (One can imagine how unflattering they would have found it had they learned that the officers often used the term “gopher” to refer to them.)²⁷

Essentially, the agents regarded the state security officers as colleagues (T. M. referred to them as colleagues many times in his letter). The only difference between them, according to the agents, was that the officers openly served the state, while the agents did so undercover. This, however, did not mean that the relationship between them was always harmonious. Almost all of the agents complained that the case officers did not obey the basic rules of conspiratorial work. Clearly the agents were more sensitive to this because they were the ones at risk. The principal source of potential danger was the arrangement of meetings, especially if a meeting was held in a public place and not a private apartment. In the case of the latter, if the superior did not arrive in time this could be a source of trouble. “Many times I waited for hours, and it was particularly difficult not to draw attention to myself and watch and wait for the possible arrival of my contact,” writes the author of the report dated May 28, 1958. He added, “I had to take the stairs around our apartments many times before the contact arrived. In particular, before October 23, 1956 almost every apartment was on the fourth or fifth floor.” Reading the agents’ dossiers, one realizes how little one appreciates the trials and tribulations endured by the informers...

In the case of T. M., it is particularly clear that he regarded himself as significantly more important and more intelligent than the people who had engineered his recruitment and his later contacts. (Even the person to whom he addressed his letter was not an exception.) This occasionally gave rise to comic contradictions in his recollections. For instance, before 1953 he had still been angered by the fact that he had to deal with insignificant trivialities, but after 1953 he was angry because the case officers had warned him not to insist on grappling with so many things at once. Before 1953, he was grieved by the fact that he had to write reports on the public mood, whereas in 1956 it bothered him that his superiors did not heed his reports on the general mood. But T. M. was not the only agent who from many perspectives was more Catholic than the pope (or more communist than Lenin, as it were). All of the retrospective narratives contain episodes in which the agents allegedly knew better than their superiors what they should do and how they should do it. In the report dated

27 ÁBTIL 1.11.10. Jelentés. A BM állambiztonsági szervek hálózata, a hálózati munka feladatai, July 12, 1968 (II. sorozat, 60. doboz).

May 28, 1958, for instance, one finds the following contention: “sometimes, in unusual cases I had to work according to a preplanned method. If something didn’t go according to the plan, my contact was always angry at me. When I told him that if he was going to get so angry when things didn’t go according to plan it would be more expedient to familiarize the enemy with the plan and hold a rehearsal, well, he delivered such a strident philippic that for some time I could hardly stand on my own two feet. And I lost my critical ‘bravery.’”

The agents drew a distinction between themselves and their contacts on the basis of how they had held their ground during the 1956 Revolution, as well. As T. M. wrote when reflecting on how he had seen the man who had recruited him on a bus during the tumultuous days of the uprising, “outside all kinds of kids armed with pistols were taking the law into their own hands, but I still had to be at my post, indeed then more so than ever, but there were no tanks protecting me, nor did I have the sense of security created by knowing you have the possibility of retreat.” In other words, he was superior to the members of the secret police, who fled and left him on his own with no instructions or guidance. As he noted, “after 23 October no one with whom I could have spoken rationally or answered my telephone calls [...] in 1952 it was easy to give orders, but in the fall of 1956 at least they should have given some information regarding the circumstances. They didn’t.” The members of the secret police took flight, while he had to stay, the difficult circumstances notwithstanding, to save what could be salvaged. It is quite clear who he was thinking of when he asked the question, “and 1956. Who stood their ground better?”

“Koroknai’s” narrative also reveals that even in the most trying times he continued to submit reports, though for him this represented the community of fate and common stance he shared with the officers. According to his account, though he did not know exactly where they were, he maintained continuous contact with his connections, speaking with them three times a day on the phone. “I also knew that the leaders had fled. I knew that they too were afraid, though we never spoke of this.” In other words, even surrounded by danger, the agents knew their duties and saw to their tasks, which made their leaders look even worse for having fled. The differences between the two narratives notwithstanding, “Koroknai” and T. M.’s accounts of 1956 were based on a similar model: in both narratives, “we” (in the case of “Koroknai,” the secret agents and their contacts, in the case of T. M., only the agents) referred to the people who had stood their ground, and the significance of this act was augmented by the fact that “they” (the leaders of the state security services, or in

the case of T. M.'s recollections the officers of the secret police in general) had not braved the dangers, but rather had fled.

The authors of the recollections preferred to perceive the relationship between agent and case officer as something more than a simple official relationship.²⁸ The author of the May 27, 1958 report envisioned the ideal contact as someone who would be like a stern but understanding father, who would insist on the proper execution of the tasks and methodically indoctrinate the agent, but who at the same time who takes an interest in the agent's family life, for instance. (This father figure soon gave the agent—who was struggling with serious financial problems—a significant amount of money, he was able to get a ticket to the Hungarian-English soccer match, or he took the agent to visit his mother in a car owned by the office.) One finds traces of this in the report of May 28. The case officers were not always just or consistent (in comparison with one another), but they loved their “children,” i.e. the agents who could have learned from them: “One was never on time, the other always nervous, a third was angry because I had gone to the meeting in spite of the fact that I was sick, while another did not accept my illness as an excuse. There was one who urged me to get the person under observation to drink so that I could learn more from him, and another who thought it was disrespectful of me if I was tipsy after having completed a task. I was also disparaged for going to the bathroom on the occasion of a meeting. Nonetheless, *I learned a great deal* from each contact, and I sense that *they were fond of me*. I also think back on all of them with a *warm heart*” (my emphasis).

“Koroknai” sensed the solicitude behind the scolding: “looking back on the criticisms [made by the contacts], I think that I badly needed them, especially because neither the people around me nor my superiors have regularly shown value for my work or my conduct.” In other words, it was important to him to have someone pay attention to what he was doing, and the assessments helped him become a better person. However, he preferred to see the case officer not as a father-figure, but as a friend. On one occasion he wrote the following: “a long time ago, sixteen years ago, a political officer came looking for me in my apartment. I was not at home. When I returned home, my wife used the following phrasing to ensure that our little boy would not understand: a friend of yours was here. At the time, this was a code-word. Over the course of the years it acquired meaning and no longer had to be used in quotations marks.”

28 This was true of the informers for the *Stasi* as well: Betts, *Within Walls*, 46–47.

On the basis of his narrative, in order for this to happen it was necessary for the state security officers to become uncertain as a consequence of 1953, the dissolution of the independent secret police, and the political changes that took place following Stalin's death. The agent could only sense that the contacts were no longer working according to prefabricated schemes, but rather were brooding, which altered the nature of the meetings as well. No longer did they resemble interrogations in which the agent had to provide an official account, rather they were more as if "two people were conversing in a room." This changed the agent's relationship to the case officer: "I felt as if I were working not only in the service of a political view, but was also personally helping the people who maintained a relationship with me in their work. And I used all my abilities to help them. I remember, once I had a contact who was old and too slow in the head to understand what was going on around us at the time. I have never been as attentive in preparing my reports as I was with him. I wanted him to be able to hold his ground as well as he possibly could in front of his superiors. I think of him with respect and fondness to this day." T. M. had similar sentiments. At the beginning of his letter he makes the following impassioned complaint: "During those ten years—oh, how many times did I speak about this to deaf ears—I missed friendship more than anything else. I worked together with antipathetic colleagues, indifferent colleagues, and congenial colleagues, but I was always missing a friend." This is why he was so joyful and satisfied to be able to refer to his contact at the time, the addressee of his letter, as his friend.

This all draws attention to one very important factor. It is quite clear that the authors of the retrospective narratives did not regard themselves merely as parts of a network, but rather considered themselves colleagues—external, working in secret—of the state security services. However, apart from the declarations they made when they were recruited (the legal weight of which was debatable), the only thing that tied them to the machinery of the state security (which for them was obscure and vague in its outlines) was the case officer. The relationship between them and their case officers decisively shaped the attitude of the informer towards his work and his commitment to the system. One notices a similar phenomenon in the case of the unofficial collaborators with the *Stasi*. As far as they were concerned, the contact officer essentially embodied the institution, indeed to such a degree that they referred to their contact officers as "my *Stasi*."²⁹ This suggests

29 Barbara Miller, *Narratives of Guilt and Compliance in Unified Germany: Stasi Informers and their Impact on Society* (London–New York: Routledge, 1999), 64.

that collaboration should not be understood as some abstract relationship between an individual and “the” power. This relationship had a personal side as well: from the perspectives of the collaborators, cooperating with the system or an institution of the system meant working together with someone, i.e. with another person.

One of the episodes recounted in “Koroknai’s” recollections shows that from the perspective of collaboration with the Soviet occupation forces and the communists the importance of personal relationships extended beyond the network of agents. As the editor of the journal *Debreczen*, a periodical of the Smallholders’ Party, he came into official contact with an employee of the Soviet embassy (which had its headquarters in Debrecen, which served as the temporary capital of the country) who worked as a censor. (Presumably this was Bela Ianovich Grygoriev, i.e. Béla Geiger, who had moved to the Soviet Union with his parents as an emigrant. This seems likely given that, according to the description, the conversation between them was held in Hungarian, without an interpreter.) In time, their relationship became personal and even amicable. In the course of their talks, “Koroknai” came to know a man who was cultured, wise, and always unperturbed, and he claimed that it was because of this acquaintance that as a politician and newspaper writer of the Smallholders’ Party he never made an anti-Soviet speech and never wrote an anti-Soviet article. He portrays the Soviet censor as a man of unimpeachable integrity, who he also later was able to regard as a stable point, drawing strength from his example, which strengthened his commitment to the system.

Me and Them

The recollections of the agents share many affinities, perhaps the most significant of which are the authors’ perceptions of their relationships to the state security and their attitudes towards the work they performed as agents. These similar perceptions stem fundamentally from the fact that the agents in question found themselves essentially in the same situation at the moment when they were writing their recollections. Each of them had performed tasks as part of a secret network for years, presumably to the satisfaction of their superiors, as is indicated by the fact that they were asked to write about the experiences they had gained in the course of their work. This similarity in the circumstances in which they found themselves when looking back on their careers led them to adopt similar perspectives in their recollections and offer similar portrayals of the state security network. It is not clear, however, whether

or not the stances that emerge in these writings can be considered average, typical, or prevalent. Of course, this can perhaps never be determined with any degree of precision. In my view, however, the value of these recollections lies not in their statistical relevance. They are interesting and valuable as texts, thus the “scope” of the conclusions one can draw on the basis of them could perhaps best be determined by comparing them with the recollections written at the same time (in the Kádár era) by agents who found themselves in different positions. No such “control group” exists, however, as it is difficult to imagine that the authorities would have had someone write down his experiences who only reluctantly had agreed to serve as an informer, had quickly shunned the work because of moral scruples or for some other reason, or for whatever cause had proven useless as an agent. In the end, one cannot entirely exclude the possibility that the experiences of a reluctant or ineffective agent would have been useful to the state security services, but it seems unlikely that someone who was not eager to cultivate the best relationship with the political police would have accepted this task. Whatever the case, however useful they would be as additional methodological sources, to my knowledge no other recollections of former agents similar to those discussed above survived.

The situation, however, is not entirely hopeless. The narratives can be compared with a text that was written under the injunction of the political police, if perhaps under entirely different circumstances. The document in question is a confession written on March 22, 1957 by J. P., a man who was put on trial after 1956.³⁰ Proceedings were brought against the man primarily because of acts he had committed in the course of the events of the uprising, but he was also accused of having revealed his ties to the state security to others. The circumstances under which the document was written demonstrate that at the moment of composition J. P. was in an entirely different relationship with the organs of state security than the other four agents. He was not a respected agent who was considered useful, but rather a suspect accused of treason. (Given the nature of the text, it was not anonymous, but I will not include the name of the author here, since it would not contribute in any meaningful way to its significance in this context.)

The story begins with a description of his recruitment. In this description, the soon-to-be agent plays no role whatsoever as initiator. On the basis of the account, he agreed to cooperate only under pressure from the officers of the

30 ÁBTIL 3.1.9. V-145842. 33–37. P. J. önvallomása, March 22, 1957.

secret police: “I was very afraid [...] that my family ties could cause me grief. So in order to prove that I thought differently, I agreed to follow their instructions.” (The principal goal of recruiting J. P. was to establish contact with his cousin, who had been sentenced to eight years in prison for having participated in underground organizational efforts in 1952, but who had escaped from a coal mine, where he had been serving time, in June 1955 and fled to the West. The agent was supposed to lure his cousin back to Hungary.)

In spite of the fact that the documents were written under very different circumstances, the confession bears many similarities to the recollections of the less reluctant agents. After having been recruited, J. P. was also troubled by moral misgivings for having accepted the role of a denouncer. His contacts attempted to dispel these anxieties by insisting that he was not serving as a denouncer, but rather was only providing characterizations. It is not clear, on the basis of the text, whether this explanation provided him with any solace or not. It is revealing, however, that he almost compulsively emphasized that by submitting “characterizations,” he did not wish to malign anyone. He strove to say good things about the people he was asked to inform on. But he also emphasized that he did not intend to mislead the secret police either. His remarks suggest uncertainty, which stems from the fact that he sought to meet a variety of divergent expectations at once, but he did not know how to present himself in the best colors to the people to whom his confession was addressed. This tension is palpable in his relationship to the primary target, his cousin who had escaped to the West. On the one hand, he was not willing to attempt to persuade his cousin to return to Hungary and thereby betray him, while on the other he held his cousin responsible for the position in which he found himself.

J. P. also emphasized that he established and maintained relationships with the people he kept under observation only because he had been ordered to do so by the secret police. He was noticeably pleased if his superiors praised him or expressed satisfaction with his work, and he was also bothered when the case officers did not follow the most basic rules of conspiratorial work. Clearly as an agent, he did not know specifically what these rules were, but a bit of commonsense was enough for him to realize that if he received telephone calls from the police station and the meetings were being held at his place of work, those around him might well realize that he was in the service of the state security. As he said in connection with the letter that he was supposed to send to his cousin (which was dictated to him by one of the officers), such steps were not productive, since the addressee would be suspicious. And indeed he was

probably correct, his cousin probably was suspicious, for he never replied to the letter and never wrote to J. P. again.

In J. P.'s account, 1956 understandably could not be portrayed as a period of committed moral integrity in the face of armed opposition (as it had been described by T. M.), if for no other reason than simply because he had been arrested specifically for the acts he had committed during the revolution, but also because it was at this time that what the agent had feared the most had come to pass: more and more people had informed him that they knew about his ties to the state security. From a certain perspective, however, his situation nonetheless bore affinities with the situation of the other four agents. First, even after the revolution had broken out, he continued to “work,” though in his case this meant little more than routine execution of his responsibilities for a time (on October 24 he discussed a letter that he was supposed to send with his case officer). Second, and this is considerably more significant, he had a chance to experience abandonment: the county secret police fled the country and left him behind. Thus, he had to face the emerging threats and the possibility of being exposed on his own. His solution to the situation was to expose himself as someone who had worked for the secret police and try to win the goodwill of the revolutionaries.

J. P. did not use the expressions agent or case officer either, though he also did not refer to himself as a colleague of the officers, nor did he call the officers contacts. The position in which he found himself at the time of retrospection did not make it possible for him to regard the officers of the state security services as colleagues. In my view, this was not because in the eyes of his “colleagues” (or more precisely their colleagues) he was a man suspected of having committed counter-revolutionary acts. According to all signs, he did not even see a link between the state security that had been dissolved in 1956 and the people who were interrogating him, for even after his arrest, he was convinced that he had been detained because he had worked for the discredited secret police. The explanation, in my view, lies rather in the fact that J. P. conjured his memories under circumstances and at a time that did not make it possible for him to make his agent self an integral part of his identity. He could not proudly admit to having worked in the service of the state security, nor could he interpret the deeds he had committed as acts of spying on the enemy. Unlike the other four agents, the circumstances did not enable him to regard himself as anything other than a denouncer. While for the other four narrators the tension between their dual roles did not lead to a split in their psychological lives (at least not a lasting

split), for J. P., who found himself in far less auspicious circumstances, his work as an agent clearly caused serious inner crisis and suffering.

Conclusions

The retrospective narratives under discussion here offer illuminating illustrations of the fact that the state security network was the shared product of “power” and “society”: in its organization, the secret police took the initiative, but in order for it to come into being they needed the cooperation of members of the citizenry who had been selected as candidates for recruitment. Research on ideological dictatorships has shown that among the motivations of these informers one finds notions of patriotism or ideological commitment, but most of the people involved were influenced by personal interest.³¹ The informers and their superiors thus used one another, and also depended on one another. From the perspective of power, this meant that the informers contributed to the maintenance and functioning of the system and also that the need for the information they provided made the system dependent to some extent on them. This realization may have played a role, for instance, in the fact that—unlike the *Gestapo*—the *Stasi* strove to rely on the organized network of informers.³² The institutionalization of informing, however, did not mean that personal, material or other considerations were not among the motivations of the unofficial coworkers of the East German secret police.³³

The texts under discussion here paint a picture according to which the authors accepted the role of informer out of loyalty to the system and commitment to ideology. (Clearly, the authors did not consider it tactful to mention personal motives in narratives intended for their superiors.) This is the most apparent in “Koroknai’s” recollections. He had already offered his services to the Communist Party when he was recruited. However, this gesture could suggest another kind of motive. Perhaps as he bore witness to the creation of the one-party system, the Smallholder politician realized that if he wanted to remain politically active he would have to find new opportunities and new spaces

31 Fitzpatrick and Gellately, “Introduction”, 751; Gellately, “Denunciation as a Subject,” 23–24.

32 Idem, “Denunciation in Twentieth-Century Germany,” 956–59; Betts, *Within Walls*, 44–45.

33 Alon Confino demonstrates this in an excellent case study: “The Travels of Bettina Humpel: One Stasi File and Narratives of State and Self in East Germany,” in *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, ed. Katherine Pence and Paul Betts (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008), 133–54. Also see Betts, *Within Walls*, 46–47.

for action. The dictatorship offered him the role of informer, and he accepted it. His case suggests that, for the people who were part of it, the network of informers could serve as a tool for political participation in regimes in which there were few other such opportunities.³⁴ (In the Soviet Union under Stalin, for instance, letters in which people were denounced served as a tool with which control was exercised, nominally at least by common members of the citizenry, over people in power, a practice the roots of which went back to the time of the czars.)³⁵

In my view, we may be better able to break from the moralizing narrative mode if we regard the acts of agents or “denouncers” as “a kind of citizen activity in their own right, one of the few powerful forms of agency available to them.”³⁶ Thus the network used by the state security services can be regarded as one of the tools of dialogue between power and society, of course a tool that power offered certain members of society, who either rejected this “opportunity” or made use of it, out of fear, compulsion, possible advantages in the future, etc. Whatever the case, we can examine the work performed by the informers as a social practice, as one of the forms of collaboration with the dictatorship (using the term collaborator to refer not only to people who cooperated with the forces of Soviet occupation, but more generally with the dictatorial system). Indeed, we can study it as an unusual form of collaboration, in part because an agent could be regarded as a collaborator in a legal sense, since his or her recruitment was an act of (admittedly precarious) legal weight, and in part because, given the essential nature of this form of collaboration, it had to remain a secret and thus obliged the agent to lead a double-life, at least for a time. Of course, this approach does not entirely exclude the possibility of passing ethical judgment, but it creates an appropriate foundation for a nuanced study of the state security network of the Bolshevik dictatorships.³⁷

Nonetheless—and this is essential—the agents never referred to or thought of themselves as collaborators. They did not contextualize the services they

34 Fitzpatrick and Gellately, “Introduction”, 752; Gellately, “Denunciation as a Subject,” 25.

35 Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Signals from Below: Soviet Letters of Denunciation of the 1930s,” *The Journal of Modern History* 68 (1996): 845–49; Vladimir A. Kozlov, “Denunciation and Its Functions in Soviet Governance: A Study of Denunciations and Their Bureaucratic Handling from Soviet Police Archives, 1944–1953,” *The Journal of Modern History* 68 (1996): 867–98.

36 Betts, *Within Walls*, 49.

37 See Sándor Horváth, “»Apa nem volt komcsi« – a mindennapi kollaboráció és az ügynökkérdés határai”, in *Az ügynök arcai. Mindennapi kollaboráció és ügynökkérdés*, ed. Sándor Horváth (Budapest: Libri, 2014), 7–37.

had provided in the complex relationship between power and society. Indeed, they draw no such clear distinction between the two in their narratives. They characterize their work and in general the work of the secret police as having been entirely in harmony with the society around them, or at least the society of honest workers, and something that was done in the interests of this society. In addition, they regarded the circles of the employees of the state security, whether people who worked openly for the state (the officers) or people who worked in secret (the agents), and the work they performed as a unified whole. One could say that they effaced entirely the border between “power” and “society,” and in doing so also effaced the border between officer and agent.

With the exception of the numerically small group of people who actively opposed the regime, everyone was compelled to cooperate with the communist system to some extent or to flee the country. Everyday life was shaped by various ways of relating to the regime. Perhaps, instead of speaking of collaboration, which implies a sharp dichotomy, it would be more productive to speak of various (and possibly diverging) degrees and forms of cooperation with the system.

Archival Sources

Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára [Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security], Budapest.

ÁBTL 1.5. 2-3/6/1955. A belügyminiszter 6. sz. parancsa az államvédelmi szervek ügynöki munkájának alapelvei című instrukció kiadásáról, 1955. február 9. [Order number 6 of the Minister of Internal Affairs on the issuing of the instructions entitled Basic Principles of the Agent Work of the Organs of State Security. February 9, 1955].

ÁBTL 1.5. 2-10/94/1956. A belügyminiszter 94. sz. parancsa az államvédelmi szervek ügynöki munkájának alapelvei című okmány kiadásáról, 1956. október 8. [Order number 94 of the Minister of Internal Affairs on the issuing of the certificate entitled Basic Principles of the Agent Work of the Organs of State Security. October 8, 1956].

ÁBTL 1.11.10. A Belügyminisztérium III. Főcsoportfőnöksége ügynöki hálózata, a hálózati munka fejlődése és feladatai, 1968. december 11. (II. sorozat, 60. doboz.) [The agent network of the III. Chief Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the development of the network and its tasks, December 11, 1968 (Series II, box 60)].

- ÁBTL 1.11.10. Jelentés. A BM állambiztonsági szervek hálózata, a hálózati munka feladatai, 1968. július 12. (II. sorozat, 60. doboz.) [The network of the organs of state security of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the tasks of the network, July 12, 1968. (Series II, box 60)].
- ÁBTL 3.1.9. V-145842. 33–37. P. J. önvallomása, 1957. március 22. [Confession of J. P., March 22, 1957].
- ÁBTL 4.1. A-2103. *Így láttam. Névtelen jegyzetek egy elhagyott lakásból.* 1970. [How I saw it. Anonymous notes from an abandoned apartment. 1970].
- ÁBTL 4.1. A-3087. Muzslai József and Szélpál Ottó: *Az ügynökség vezetésének és nevelésének alapelvei és módszerei.* Budapest: BM Tanulmányi és Módszertani Osztály, 1957. [Fundamental principles and methods of the leadership and indoctrination of the agency. Budapest: Research and Methodological Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1957].
- ÁBTL 4.1. A-3253. *Hálózati személy visszaemlékezése saját titkos munkájára.* Jelentés, 1958. május 27., Jelentés, 1958. május 28. [A network man's recollections of his own secret work, May 27, 1958. Report, May 28, 1958].
- ÁBTL 4.1. A-3783. *Kedves Barátom! Egy ügynök visszaemlékezései. Segédanyag a Politikai Nyomozó Tanszék részére.* [Budapest:] BM Tanulmányi és Módszertani Osztály, é. n. [Dear Friend! The recollections of an agent. Auxiliary material for the Department of Political Inquiry. [Budapest:] Research and Methodological Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, n.d.].
- ÁBTL 4.2. 10-21/33/1958. A belügyminiszter 33. sz. parancsa az államvédelmi szervek ügynöki munkájának alapelvei című okmány kiadásáról, 1958. december 5. [Order number 33 of the Minister of Internal Affairs on the issuing of the certificate entitled Basic Principles of the Agent Work of the Organs of State Security, December 5, 1958].
- ÁBTL 4.2. 10-21/5/1972. A belügyminiszter 005. sz. parancsa az állambiztonsági szervek hálózati munkájának alapelveit tartalmazó szabályzat kiadásáról, 1972. április 5. [Order number 005 of the Minister of Internal Affairs on the issuing of the regulations containing the basic principles of the Agent Work of the Organs of State Security, April 5, 1972].

Bibliography

Ady Endre összes versei [The Complete Poems of Endre Ady]. Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1967.

- Berkovits, Balázs. “Erkölcstelen besúgók, tehetséges áldozatok, áldozatos erkölcsbírók” [Immoral Denouncers, Talented Victims, Self-sacrificing Moralists]. *anBlok* 3 (2009): 6–14.
- Betts, Paul. *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Bruner, Jerome. *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge–London: Harvard University Press, 1986.
- Childs, David, and Richard Popplewell. *The Stasi: The East German Intelligence and Security Service*. Basingstoke–London: Macmillan, 1996.
- Confino, Alon. “The Travels of Bettina Humpel: One Stasi File and Narratives of State and Self in East Germany.” In *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, edited by Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, 133–54. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008.
- Dobos, István. *Autobiographical Reading*. Spectrum Hungarologicum. Vol. 3. Jyväskylä–Pécs: University of Jyväskylä, 2010.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. “Signals from Below: Soviet Letters of Denunciation of the 1930s.” *The Journal of Modern History* 68 (1996): 831–66.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila, and Gellately, Robert. “Introduction to the Practices of Denunciation in Modern European History.” *The Journal of Modern History*, 68 (1996): 747–67.
- Gellately, Robert. “Denunciation in Twentieth-Century Germany: Aspects of Self-Policing in the Third Reich and the German Democratic Republic.” *The Journal of Modern History*, 68 (1996): 931–67.
- Gellately, Robert. “Denunciation as a Subject of Historical Research.” *Historical Social Research*, 26, no. 2 (2001): 16–29.
- Gieseke, Jens. “Staatssicherheit und Gesellschaft – Plädoyer für einen Brückenschlag.” [State Security and Society – Arguments in Support of the Necessity of a Simultaneous Study] In *Staatssicherheit und Gesellschaft Studien zum Herrschaftsalltag in der DDR* [State Security and Social Studies to Everyday Oppression in the GDR], edited by Jens Gieseke, 7–22. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011.
- Gieseke, Jens. *The History of the Stasi: East Germany’s Secret Police, 1945–1990*. Translated by David Burnett. New York–Oxford: Berghahn, 2014.
- Gyáni, Gábor. “Kollaboráció és a hatalom titka” [Collaboration and the Secret of Power]. In *Az ügynök arcai. Mindennapi kollaboráció és ügynökkérdés* [The Faces of the Agent. Everyday Collaboration and the Agent Question], edited by Sándor Horváth, 41–52. Budapest: Libri, 2014.
- Horváth, Sándor. “‘Apa nem volt komcsi’ – a mindennapi kollaboráció és az ügynökkérdés határai” [“Dad was not a Communist.” Borders of Everyday Collaboration and the

- Agent Question]. In *Az ügynök arcai. Mindennapi kollaboráció és ügynökkérdés* [The Faces of the Agent. Everyday Collaboration and the Agent Question], edited by Sándor Horváth, 7–37. Budapest: Libri, 2014.
- Horváth, Kata. “A Borsányi név. A politikai és a tudományos megfigyelés határai” [The Name Borsányi. Borders of Political and Scholarly Surveillance]. *anBlok* 3 (2009): 30–38.
- Kozlov, Vladimir A. “Denunciation and Its Functions in Soviet Governance: A Study of Denunciations and Their Bureaucratic Handling from Soviet Police Archives, 1944–1953.” *The Journal of Modern History* 68 (1996): 867–98.
- Miller, Barbara. *Narratives of Guilt and Compliance in Unified Germany: Stasi Informers and Their Impact On Society*. London–New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Ross, Corey. *The East German Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR*. London: Arnold, 2012.
- Sauerland, Karol. *Harminc ezüst. Besúgások és árulások* [Thirty Pieces of Silver. Denunciations and Betrayals]. Translated by Péter Várnai. Budapest: Helikon, 2001.
- Schacter, Daniel L. *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers*. Boston–New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002.
- Takács, Tibor. *Besúgó a besúgásról. Ügynök-visszaemlékezések a Kádár-korszakból* [Denouncers on Denouncing. Recollections of Agents from the Kádár Era]. Budapest: L’Harmattan, 2013.
- Vann, Richard T. “Historians and Moral Evaluations.” *History and Theory*, Theme Issue 43 (2004): 3–30.



Caterina Preda

Forms of Collaboration of Visual Artists in Communist Romania of the 1970s–1980s

Little attention has been given in political science analyses of communist-era Romania to the relationships between visual artists and the secret police. In this article, I attempt to address this lacuna in our understanding of the interactions between the state and artists by presenting two forms of collaboration of visual artists during the last two decades of Romanian communism: the artists' involvement in the ideological project of the communist party and their "collaboration" with the secret police. In addition, I also examine the ways in which artists have contributed *a posteriori* to our understandings of the communist experience with their artworks. I offer detailed examinations of the cases of three visual artists. The approach I have adopted includes analyses of interviews with two artists who represent two opposing cases and examinations of the files that were kept on them by state surveillance organs, so as to provide a new, multifaceted perspective on the relationships between artists and the communist regime. I contend that the study of artistic artifacts can supplement traditional sources for political science analyses of the communist past and provide a more nuanced perspective on the period. The article shows that imposing artistic dogmas is not simply a top-down process, but one resulting from complex interactions between different institutional and individual actors.

Keywords: visual artists, secret police (Securitate), Romania, communism, collaboration.

Introduction

In this article, I introduce two understandings of collaboration among artists with the communist regime in Romania: collaboration as part of an artistic project of the regime and the cooperation of individual artists with the secret police. I also examine *a posteriori* contributions of artists to our understandings of the communist regime as another perspective on the ways in which life under the dictatorship is remembered. The collaboration of artists with the communist regime is a topic that remains highly divisive in Romanian society given the political uses to which the archives of the former regime, which were only recently made accessible to the public, have been put to.

Before 1989, artists had to pursue their creative activity in conformity with the ideological principles of the state. Thus, they were compelled to collaborate in the consolidation of the myth of communist society, or the “multi-laterally developed,” society as it came to be called towards the end of the regime. At the same time, most artists developed “another art,” alongside their work in compliance with official requests to depict the mandatory ideology. Some of these artistic productions can help us construct a history that differs from the officially sanctioned one and remains distinct from the narrative of the so-called “democratic opposition,” which emphasized victimhood and repression, which are not necessarily part of a shared memory for all citizens. In this sense, artistic artifacts can supplement traditional sources for political science analyses of the communist past. This different point of view on this history is in accordance with Jacques Rancière’s concept of dissensus. Both politics and art provoke a *dissensus* and impose operations of reconfiguration of the sensible; thus art can help us see what was unseen or see differently what was regarded from a unique perspective.¹ The artist is also a collector of signs. He or she is an archivist, and thus what artists register may convey meanings in everyday objects, such as a banal photograph or a mundane event, that at first escape our glance.²

In this article, I discuss the experiences of three Romanian visual artists, Sabin Bălașa, Ion Grigorescu and Rudolf Bone, and their interaction with the *Securitate*,³ as well as their perceptions of these experiences. Although my discussion does not offer a comprehensive overview of these interactions or the relationships on which they were based, the experiences of these artists are evocative of the control exerted by the secret police on the artistic world. I also attempted to learn more about the point of view of the former *Securitate* on this topic and requested any files archived by the Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (CNSAS). For Ion Grigorescu, I found no surveillance or collaboration files; the artist is briefly mentioned in surveillance files that were kept on other artists. In the case of Rudolf Bone, there was a surveillance file that I use in order to compare the contents of the file with the information given by the artist in the interview. There is a microfilm file

1 Jacques Rancière, *Le spectateur émancipé* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2008), 70, 72.

2 Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image* (London–New York: Verso, 2006), 26.

3 “Securitate,” the name by which the secret police in communist Romania has come to be known, is in fact a kind of shorthand. The actual name of the institution was General Direction for State Security (D.G.S.P) in 1948. In 1968, it became the Council for State Security.

on Bălașa that documents his collaboration with the *Securitate*. The three artists represent distinct and opposing cases. While Bălașa is considered to have been one of the “painters of Ceaușescu” (i.e. he painted several famous paintings of the couple), Grigorescu was marginal during the communist era and Bone was a dissenter. Two other informal interviews with Romanian art critics (Pavel Țușară and Aurelia Mocanu) accompany the secondary sources used for this investigation. The artistic examples include Ion Grigorescu’s depiction of the “spontaneous organization” by the secret police of a manifestation of support for the communist leaders, Rudolf Bone’s description of his inability to act, and Ion Dumitriu’s documentation of the lives of the people who were and still are excluded from official portrayals of life under communism.

This investigation covers the last two decades of the communist regime in Romania, the 1970s and the 1980s, starting with the recalibration of the Romanian cultural sphere after the so-called “1971 July theses” by Nicolae Ceaușescu, in which the dictator demanded that artists deal more often with socialist topics.⁴ The focus of this research is on visual artists (or artists in the plastic arts, as they were called by the communist regime), including painting, sculpture, ceramics, etc.,⁵ as well as their forms of representation, such as the Union of Plastic Artists (UAP).

Little attention has been given in political science analyses of communist-era Romania to the relationships between visual artists and the secret police. Some information is provided in studies that analyze the relationships between artists and the *Securitate* in the volumes of collected documents edited by Dan Cătănuș, such as *Intelectuali români în arhivele comunismului* [Romanian Intellectuals in Communist Archives] (2006), which includes several references to artists who were arrested, etc. One could also mention the volumes edited by Silviu Moldovan, *Arhivele Securității* vols I & II (2006), which contain files from the *Securitate* archives that have references to artists. A further useful reference is the analyses of the Romanian cultural sphere during communism. In addition to my doctoral dissertation, in which I compared the Romanian experience to

4 As Verdery recalls, 1971 was also an important year because it bore witness to a change in the approach of the *Securitate*. It was the year in which a “new Law on the Defense of the State secret made the entire society responsible for protecting secrets.” Katherine Verdery, *Secrets And Truths: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania’s Secret Police* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2014), 130.

5 The people involved in the cases in question are painters, but because they used other media (film, photographs, body art) I use the term visual artists. My research here does not include filmmaking.

the Chilean one,⁶ works by other authors have delved into this topic. In two volumes, *Literatura și artele în România comunistă 1948–1953* [Literature and the Arts in Communist Romania, 1948–1953] (2010) and *Politicile culturale comuniste în timpul regimului Gheorghiu-Dej* [The Communist Cultural Policies during the regime of Gheorghiu-Dej] (2011), Cristian Vasile concentrates on a description of the structures of the communist regime and the decisions made by these institutions that affected artists and artworks. Additional information is provided by Magda Cârnecki's analysis of the visual arts during the communist regime in *Artele plastice în România 1945–1989* [Fine Arts in Romania 1945–1989] (2000), in which Magda Cârnecki identifies several periods within the long period of communist rule and examines artistic trends and specific artists. Diaries kept by those involved in the artistic sphere, either as art critics or as employees of a museum department (Petre Oprea) or a Union of Plastic Arts' department (Samuil Rosei), represent another important kind of source that offers insights into the Romanian artistic world during the communist period. I use each of these sources as complements to the interviews mentioned above.

My article deals with the collaboration of Romanian visual artists with the Securitate, although there were other forms of collaboration that could be investigated, such as the relationships they established within the UAP. I chose not to focus on this, however, as it has been already discussed in the studies of Alice Mocănescu, for example, much as the question of collaboration between artists and organizations of the PCR (Partidul Comunist Român [Romanian Communist Party]) has been touched on in the studies of Cristian Vasile. A focus on their relationship with the Securitate offers another perspective from which to consider the complexity of the links between artists and the communist regime, as well the different meanings of adhering to the official line or contradicting it and the types of artistic freedoms artists had.

In what follows, after a presentation of the Securitate and its relationships with the artists of Romania, I offer an analysis of the collaboration of Romanian artists with the ideological project imposed by the communist regime (with a focus on the last two decades). I then discuss specific forms of collaboration by visual artists and their relationships with the secret police in Romania. Finally, I present examples of works of art that contribute to our current understanding of the communist past.

6 Caterina Preda, “*Dictators and Dictatorships: Artistic Expressions of the Political in Romania and Chile (1970s–1989) No paso nada...?*” (PhD diss., University of Bucharest, 2009).

The Securitate Surveillance: Perception And Reality

The communist regime was based on ideological control and the establishment of the illusion of perfect surveillance. More often than not, people censored themselves on their own, without any outside stimuli (i.e. real secret police surveillance). This fear of the other was gradually internalized by Romanian citizens during the communist regime and became the norm in the 1980s. For example, this awareness of being followed was evoked by the art critic, Samuil Rosei who wrote the following in his diary in 1971: “I don’t know if that day I observed I was followed. The ‘guys’ were on my trail for almost a year. I saw them in the morning in the window of the attic across the street, happy that finally I was leaving home and giving them a chance to take a walk. I counted around 16 or 17 of them, the people who chased me ‘from the shadow’.”⁷

The actual number of secret police keeping members of the population under observation was not as high as the people in question believed, but the extent of the surveillance network remains impressive. The number of informers at the outbreak of the December 1989 Revolution was “450,000, of whom some 130,000 were active.”⁸ Other figures are more striking. According to Anisescu, “approximately 7,000,000 people, or one-third of the adult population appeared in the registers of the Securitate in 1965. Writers and artists were chosen generally as subjects for surveillance files.⁹ Along with the people who were collaborating with the secret police, we should also mention those who were working for the Securitate. The Securitate employed only 3,973 people in 1948, but by 1969 this

7 Samuil Rosei worked for the exhibition department of the Union of Plastic Artists (UAP). See his two-volume diary, which recounts his daily routines and the life of artists at the time. The note quoted is from February 18, 1971, Samuil Rosei, *Jurnal întărziat*, 2 volumes (Bucharest: Ed. Anastasia, 2011), 75.

8 Denis Deletant, “Romania,” in *A Handbook of the Communist Security Apparatus in East Central Europe 1944–1989*, ed. Krzysztof Persak and Lukasz Kaminski (Warsaw: Institute of National Remembrance, 2005), 314. Katherine Verdery gives a different number: “486,000 informers assisting 39,000 full-time employees,” the numbers being those given by the Romanian Service of Information (SRI) after 1990. Katherine Verdery, *Secrets and Truths: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania’s Secret Police* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2014), 207.

9 Cristina Anisescu, “Evidențele și arhivele Securității,” in “Partiturile” *Securității: Directive, ordine, instrucțiuni (1941–1981)*, ed. idem et al. (Bucharest: Nemira, 2007), 52 quoted by Cristina Vădulescu, *Police Aesthetics Literature, Film & Secret Police in Soviet Times* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 6.

number had risen to 5,966, and¹⁰ by 1989 it had ballooned to more than 20,000 (39,000 according to Verdery).¹¹

Compliance was guaranteed through different techniques: blackmail, menace, surveillance or inducements, as well as surveillance that included “the use of informers, visual surveillance, and wire-tapping.”¹²

There were several types of collaboration with the Securitate, and several synonyms have been used in the literature on this topic. Thus, we could include here the terms collaborator, informer, popularly *turnător* (literally someone that spills it all), or source (official name). According to Deletant, “the informer network was described as being composed of informers, support personnel, residents and occupants of safe houses,” and “the informer was defined as a person who had access to information and sufficient personal attributes, someone who, under the constant guidance of a Securitate officer, actively seeks and gathers information about the people and the deeds that form the object of an investigation.”¹³ Moreover, an informer was a person who “provided information in an organized manner (preferably in writing), assumed a false name, and usually signed a “contract” called an *Angajament* [commitment].”¹⁴ There would be a further difference between “collaborator (unqualified informer), and informer (qualified, source—the name given by the Securitate),” but also with respect to the “‘informers with no traces,’ support persons in contact with an officer.”¹⁵

Specific techniques of surveillance and repression were used by the communist regime for the artistic sphere. At the beginning of the communist regime, “soft” repressive techniques were used, such as “interference in the creative process by the imposition of themes, the censoring of work, and obstacles to publication,” along with harsher approaches, such as “limiting access to education, exercising self-criticism in front of the group, public exposure, exclusion from the party,

10 Deletant, “Romania,” 302.

11 According to Virgil Măgureanu, head of the institution that inherited the organization after 1990, the Romanian Intelligence Service, quoted by Marius Oprea, “Securitatea și moștenirea sa,” in *Comunism și reprimare în România*, ed. Ruxandra Cesereanu (Iași: Polirom, 2006), 26.

12 Deletant, “Romania,” 303.

13 Ibid., 315.

14 Germina Nagăț, “Informatorul de lângă noi,” in *Viața cotidiană în comunism*, ed. Adrian Nedelcu (Iași: Polirom, 2004), 132.

15 Germina Nagăț, “Informatorul de lângă noi,” 132. Marius Oprea quotes an internal document of 1951 (The Directive for working with agents). Marius Oprea, “O privire în interiorul aparatului de Securitate,” in *De ce trebuie condamnat Comunismul? Anuarul Institutului de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului în România*, vol. I (Iași: Polirom, 2006), 103.

being compelled to work at a low income job,” and even “being deprived of personal liberty by being sent to work colonies, assigned a fixed residence, imprisoned, and, finally, recruited inside the prison to serve as an informer.”¹⁶ According to Clara Mares, the Securitate had several means of exerting influence on artists and especially writers by using “neutralizing measures,” such as positive influence or alerting the party organization, and if this did not work, the artists would be compromised, isolated or warned.¹⁷ Then, artists would be kept under surveillance, just like other citizens. Their mail was read, their houses and studios were searched, and the secret police installed listening devices. Even their friends and families were used to recruit informers.¹⁸

Having examined the files on fifteen artists and art critics held in the CNSAS, I have identified details concerning the specific ways in which visual artists were kept under surveillance. First, there was an important difference between the motives for keeping an artist under observation in the 1950s and 1960s and the motives for keeping artists under surveillance in the last two decades of communist rule, i.e. the 1970s and 1980s. In the first period of the communist regime, the main motives concerned “hostile” declarations, i.e. anti-communist sentiments and pro-American statements, while later the reasons either involved artworks (works included in an exhibition that were regarded as going against the established canon) or were connected to the artists leaving the country, as well as to their contacts with foreigners inside the country. In the latter case, artists were coopted into collaboration and pressured to inform on the employees of consulates and embassies. Once abroad, they had to contact certain persons, discuss specific topics and inform the officer upon their return of the details of their stay. I was not able to establish with certainty if going abroad automatically meant being contacted by an officer so as to be coerced into collaboration, but whether this was the case or not, it was certainly the general perception of those who recall the period.

Establishing contact with an artist in order to compel him or her to collaborate was part of the preparatory work done by the Securitate. Prior to the initial contact by the officer, other informers (through “letters of

16 Ana Maria Cătănuș, “Capitolul IV. Represiunea împotriva intelectualilor: forme și manifestări,” in *Intelectuali români în Arhivele Comunismului*, ed. Dan Cătănuș (Bucharest: Nemira, 2006), 168.

17 Clara Mares, “Represiunea Securității împotriva scriitorilor în anii 1986–1988,” in *De ce trebuie condamnat Comunismul? Anuarul Institutului de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului în România*, vol. I (Iași: Polirom, 2006), 203–04.

18 Ana Maria Cătănuș, “Capitolul IV,” 170.

recommendation”) and members of the UAP (usually the chair) would have to characterize the person in question as a potential candidate for collaboration. A very detailed report was provided by the UAP, including information about the artist’s education, his or her character, and the quality of her or his work as exemplified in the number of exhibitions in which he or she had participated. The file established by the officer in charge included information about the artist’s contacts with foreigners in Romania or Romanians who had emigrated (Bone). Before the officer arranged a meeting to determine whether or not an artist who had been identified by the Securitate as a possible collaborator would agree to collaborate, the artist would be followed and thoroughly evaluated. Thus, most files include a “plan of measures for surveillance,” such as the examination of his or her mail, eavesdropping on telephone conversations, and the installation of different instruments used in surveillance inside his or her house or studio.

Most of the artists I investigated agreed to collaborate, and some, such as Bălașa, were rewarded, while others were not. Some of the artists who collaborated were able to travel with less difficulty afterward, as is clear from their files; they received letters of recommendation from the UAP and the militia in support of their demands. Some of the artists had several names as collaborators because they were surveyed in different periods and given a new name for each new surveillance or/and collaboration file. The files are very chaotic, since, as Verdery notes, they were organized on the basis of the activities in question and not chronologically,¹⁹ but they sometimes provide information that goes well beyond the mere question of whether or not the person collaborated with the Securitate. An important detail mentioned by Verdery is also noticeable in some of the cases I investigated. As she notes, “files can make ‘informers’ out of people who staunchly deny that they ever held this role.”²⁰ Thus, the files archived by the CNSAS should be compared with other sources, as I try to do in this article by including the viewpoints and remarks of the artists who create their own narratives through the answers they give to my questions or, in the case of Bălașa, to questions raised by others.

19 Katherine Verdery, *Secrets and Truths: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania’s Secret Police* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2014), 52.

20 Ibid., 66.

Artistic Ideological Collaboration with Communist Myth Construction

An important part of the establishment and the consolidation of the communist regime in Romania was the control exerted on the cultural sphere. Some artists and intellectuals were coerced into complying with the new official dogma, others conformed voluntarily, and some opposed the regime and were punished accordingly. The punishments included imprisonment, execution, or the loss of the right to create as mandatory official creative unions were established. Those who collaborated with the regime were offered important benefits if they chose to participate in the ideological project and conform in their creative work to the new aesthetic. The regime rewarded those who agreed to collaborate by granting them prizes in the form of monetary incentives, but also recognition, privileged access to creative institutions throughout the country, and domestic and international travel.²¹

Rather quickly, at the end of the 1940s, the Romanian government acquired a monopoly on art production and distribution through the nationalization of cinematographs, printing facilities, museums, etc. and the centralization of educational institutions. Moreover, artists became ideological workers in the service of the party. Their endeavors were organized by the state-structured artistic creative unions (which included writers, visual artists, architects, musicians, and, later, people involved in theater and cinema). For Magda Cârnecki, the Union for Plastic Artists (UAP), the party (with its different structures), and the artists formed a kind of totalitarian triangle. I would add to this triangle another type of collaboration by artists with the regime, which involved the influence exerted by artists on their colleagues or acquaintances through their cooperation with the Securitate.

A unique style was imposed on creators: Socialist Realism imported from the Soviet Union, where it had become the norm in the mid-1930s. Relaxed after 1956 in the Soviet Union and other East European countries, it remained the norm in Romania, and it even gathered strength in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1971, Nicolae Ceaușescu issued his infamous “July Theses,” which reinvigorated the socialist orientation of artistic endeavors through a 17-point program to be followed by artists. Thus, “through different forms and varied styles of expression, art must serve the people, the fatherland, the socialist society,” and art had to illustrate

21 Alexandru Murad-Mironov, “Capitolul V. Beneficii, privilegiu și recompense sau prețu intelectualității din RPR,” in *Intelectuali români în Arhivele Comunismului*, ed. Dan Cătănuș (Bucharest: Nemira, 2006), 457–73.

socialist realities, understood as the life of the working people.²² This translated into the promotion of what Magda Cârnelci has called “state kitsch,” which was centered first and foremost on the image of Ceaușescu himself, but also on his close family, his wife Elena and his sons and daughter. Then, having decided that in his view artists had not followed the official guidelines, in 1983 Ceaușescu reiterated his call for artists to produce socialist inspired art through what is known as the “Mangalia Theses.”²³ Art was considered merely an ideological tool that served political purposes and had no autonomy of subject or method. This official art was demanded from artists for regional, municipal, and local exhibitions, which were organized throughout the year, as well as for the rest of the celebrations, which became ever more numerous in the last years of the Ceaușescu regime.

At the same time, the communist panorama of artistic creation is much more complicated and diversified or stratified. As Ion Grigorescu stated, “there were many ways to collaborate, in the sense of working together.”²⁴ The types of collaboration with power included being a member of the Communist Party, being a member of the union (which was mandatory for any artist), working for the different intermediate or local party agencies that acted as patrons of the arts in the free world and ordered artworks (for instance, the Union of Communist Youth, UTC, etc.), having connections with the “Gospodăria de Partid” (a section of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party in charge of administrative internal affairs) or the BTT (Bureau of Youth Travel), or, finally, working for the Ministry of Internal Affairs (for these individuals artistic creation was a luxury).²⁵

For Ion Grigorescu, who in recent years has been characterized as one of the representatives of the Romanian neo-vanguard for his artworks in which he mixes photography, video, performance art, etc., his choices were also more complex, as he recounts in the interview.²⁶ His evolution as an artist was molded during the communist regime and his options were imprinted with the different realities that obliged artists to create:

22 Nicolae Ceaușescu, “Proposals of measures for the improvement of the political-ideological, Marxist–Leninist education of Party members, of all working people,” July 6, 1971.

23 Idem, “Speech by Nicolae Ceaușescu at the Working Meeting on Organizational and Political-Educational Activities of Labor” (Mangalia, August 4, 1983).

24 Email interview with Ion Grigorescu, September 15, 2013. My translation from Romanian.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

I.G.: I began to exhibit visual art in 1969. I found the following [written] in my diary entry from March 11, 1976, “during the night, passing next to the steam from the cement-crushing mill (Balta Albă): if these people are building socialism, so should I.”

(...) My childhood coincided with the evolution of the socialist society, I benefited from the permanent actualization of the social and political problematic. I felt it was a new world that was being built on the basis of equality, of the honor of being a revolutionary fighter, of the principle that life was an honor. These ideas shaped me in the sense of the continuous fight for them, of the personal example. As my family, my neighbors were having a difficult time in the first years of the 1950s, we all believed we were equally poor, in the work full of perspectives. I was very fond of the newspaper *Scântea* [the official newspaper], of its graphics and its information, and I had this representation of an ‘us,’ a block of people of the same social will, the bad coming always from outside. I found out in time that the social structure was much more complicated. I depart from the hardest work for which I have a deep love and respect. I like to listen to people of all sectors of life, the image of their lives is formed out of words; I’d like to try to follow a worker with my camera for twenty-four hours. Of paintings, I don’t make ethical debates, I don’t want to give ratings, in fact I don’t have such a rigid position anymore, I suggest they be analyzed, I give way to discussions, to reactions in many mediums. I would like to make inquiries.²⁷

I have painted several paintings, such as “The reconstitution of the furnace in the studio,” “Uncamarades,” “Accomplishing the plan resides in the power of the collective,” “Rapid Club.” I made the photographic collage of the TVR broadcast entitled “The great manifestation of August 23, 1974” (with *Scântea* texts) and two portraits of president Ceaușescu. ...I wasn’t a party member, and I preserved my position of presenting reality without commentary as long as I could.

On the basis of my experiences, the [ideological] principles kept evolving, and sometimes they contradicted themselves and were even criticized in time, and artists followed them sometime without knowing what they really meant.²⁸

The artist and art critic Magda Cârneli divides artists of the 1970s and 1980s into three groups according to their relationship to power: “conformists, fake

27 In the interview, the artist quotes a text he had published in the magazine *Arta* 6, no 12 (1973) about the “Realist artist.”

28 Email interview with Ion Grigorescu, September 15, 2013. All subsequent quotes are from the same source.

non-conformists (or fake conformists) and non-conformists,” a groups which, she says, would equal Sorin Alexandrescu’s classification into “mercenaries, merchants and monks (...) or committed, neutral and opponents”.²⁹ Conformists still created according to the official aesthetic, while fake conformists/fake non-conformists or neutrals mediated between the two categories, “paying their tribute to power” by engaging in the creation of the kinds of artworks demanded by the regime and in parallel creating “an autonomous art”; finally, non-conformists detached themselves completely from the social advantages enjoyed by those in the previous category. For Cârnelci, the difference between them was essentially an existential one.³⁰

According to art critic Pavel Țușară, there were three categories of artists who collaborated with the regime: those who were part of the system and participated in the Cântarea României Festival; those who were neutral, neither good or bad, “they minded their own business”; and the vanguard artists, who were further subdivided into two types, those who used vanguard means and instruments (Andrei Cădere, Ion Grigorescu, etc.) and those who were subversive ideologically, in the spiritual, religious sense (for example the Prologue Group). For Țușară, the latter had “liberty inside the birdcage.”³¹ Art critics were also collaborators, as the most rudimentary among them gave a “good to exhibit” kind of stamp, which were subtle guarantees and had maximum credibility. Some artists collaborated voluntarily; some—victims themselves—made others victims, while others were forced into collaboration. Țușară himself was called upon at the Securitate after any artists’ meeting had taken place, and often because he was denounced for listening to Radio Free Europe. Along with this suspicion, those that had contacts with the secret police inside an artistic branch were well known by artists and art critics, but all accusation remains under the register of rumors, suspicions, in the absence of a documented proof (for instance, the general public only has access to someone’s Securitate files if the person in question was appointed to a public position³²). If some people were well-known for their roles, others were suspected of serving as high-ranking, well-placed officers or more because of their ability to travel and return without

29 Magda Cârnelci, *Artele plastice în România 1945–1989* (Bucharest: Meridiane, 2001), 107–08.

30 Ibid., 108–09.

31 Informal interview with Pavel Țușară, August 23, 2013. All the following quotes of Țușară have the same source.

32 See the website of the CNSAS, accessed April 7, 2015, <http://www.cnsas.ro/index.html>.

punishment (this was also possible for artists who had important family ties with party members or *Securitate* officials).

Sabin Bălașa is a very good example of a fake conformist, a painter who paid tribute to power while continuing to create art that did not follow the official aesthetic. Bălașa even bragged that he was paid a large sum of money for his paintings depicting the Ceaușescu couple, which he represented according to his own style, not in accordance with the official aesthetic:

I don't refuse an order. When I needed the money, and I did, because I have two children, and they came and ordered me to paint a work depicting Ceaușescu from me, I accepted gladly. But only with the condition that I do it my way! (...) I liked commissions that were made during the Ceaușescu regime. But I painted him as I wished (...) Since great artists always followed orders, only amateurs do what they like. (...) The orders did not come from the Ceaușescu family, I received them from completely different people. I know, I heard that they liked my painting, but this was not special, everyone likes my painting. I've only met them once, very late, in a strictly official setting. The orders came from people who to this day are very rich, people whom I again thank for giving them to me. (...) I didn't do politics and nobody told me what to do. Because I did not do politics and did not create any fuss, the Securitate did not treat me badly. Why complain? I stayed away from dissidence, from complaining, because dissidence is a sort of complaining.³³

Bălașa characterizes himself, much as well as the critics of the period did,³⁴ as an opportunist, an artist who did not care for ideological principles or art for that matter, but rather only for his own career. In fact, after 1990 the painter continued to create works of art for the wealthy people of the day and to construct his image as an artist of genius, an opinion that was not shared by his

33 Alice Năstase Buciuta, "Sabin Bălașa: am avut și simțul creației și al procreației," *Marea Dragoste/Tango*, July 8, 2012. My translation from Romanian of Bălașa's answers to an interview published in a women's magazine. Because Bălașa died in 2008, I could not use his answers to my questions.

34 See for example the television show "Mysteries and Conspiracies" by Florin Iaru on Romanian Television, TVR2 with three art critics, Tudor Octavian, Pavel Șușară and Ruxandra Garofeanu "About Sabin Bălașa." Available at (accessed April 7, 2015) http://tvr2.tvr.ro/despre-sabin-balasa-sambata-la-mistere-si-conspiratii_8675.html (November 8, 2014). In this show, the art critics estimate that Bălașa received 200,000 lei for his paintings depicting Ceaușescu.

colleagues. Bălașa was, as we shall see in what follows, a collaborator with the Securitate who was paid for his services.³⁵

*The Relationship of Romanian Artists to the Securitate:
between Surveillance and Collaboration*

In order to investigate how the relationship to the Securitate was established, I used three contrasting cases: those of artists Sabin Bălașa, Ion Grigorescu, and Rudolf Bone. Grigorescu had no problems with the Securitate and even affirms the contradictions that have arisen since the fall of communism with regards to his work; although nowadays he is included in exhibitions that show his disrespectful artistic gestures toward the communist regime, he underlines how much more complex his artistic endeavors were, since he knew when to show respect for the official canon and when simply to “keep quiet.” As he says,

In two films, I used the image of the President (sic), if I would have called many people to show [the films] to them, they would have taken them from me as propaganda against the establishment and I would have been in a bad position. In my notebooks I had the texts of the movies and other commentaries on the political education. They remained in the drawer. If I would have willfully tried to exhibit abroad or to have contacts there, I would have probably been followed.³⁶

Bone, on the other hand, was openly against the communists and was followed by the Securitate as a consequence of his artistic gestures.

Why was an artist followed by the Securitate? Reasons having to do with style (for instance, shows of disrespect for the official norm) were significant, and factors that made someone prone to blackmail were exploited, such as sexual orientation (homosexuality was forbidden and punished during communism).³⁷ Artists themselves viewed their relationships with the Securitate differently, as

35 File of the CNSAS: M.R. Buc. 142480/roll 1469.

36 Email interview with Ion Grigorescu, September 15, 2013.

37 See for example the study by Sinziana Cârstocea, “La Roumanie - du placard à la libération. Éléments pour une histoire socio-politique des revendications homosexuelles dans une société postcommuniste” (PhD Diss., Faculté des sciences sociales, politiques et économiques Département de Science politique, Université Libre de Bruxelles, 2010).

can be seen from the answers they gave to my questions. As Ion Grigorescu recounts:

Preda: What was your relationship with the Securitate before 1989?

Grigorescu: I would say I had no relationship [with the Securitate]. In 1977, after the earthquake, I was able to leave for Paris and Zurich, during the spring holiday, as I was a professor. (...)

C.P.: Do you have any information about a colleague or friend who was contacted by the Securitate? What was his relationship with them?

I.G.: No. In 1974, I met Paul Goma in the studio a colleague of mine with whom I exhibited that year, Ion Condiescu. I have no ‘information,’ the world was full of rumors and reticence.

C.P.: What were artists reproached for by the Securitate? [and a broader question: What kind of political control was exercised over an exhibition or a commission?]

I.G.: I don’t know what artists were reproached for by the Securitate. I assisted with a small number of censorships of exhibitions because usually the censor avoided the artist so as not to be obliged to give unpleasant explanations. In 1972, they removed a painting of mine with a depiction of a girl who had been hanged. In 1974, a painting by Matei Lăzărescu with a depiction of a freezer including meat and money was removed. The censor asked, “what does it want to say? That it is expensive?” Around 1980, I was given a commission to paint a portrait of president Ceaușescu (sic.). The head of the service for exhibitions of the UAP told me to erase two of the three characters, which I did, then they told me it’s too realistic, that the character had a swollen, soft hand. The censor did not tell the truth when he rejected a work because he [the censor] was either afraid to say the truth, which would have meant to partake, or he didn’t want to become involved.³⁸

Since the main preoccupation of artists (and the majority of Romanians) was how to escape, how to get away, how to leave the country, getting a passport was quite important. Thus, one of the issues that concerned possible interaction between Romanian artists and the secret police was that of obtaining the right to travel abroad. Romanians did not have passports; a Romanian citizen could only obtain a passport submitting an explicit request and providing adequate explanation. Deletant quotes an official document of the Securitate that made “the issue of a passport conditional on collaboration with the organ of state

38 Email interview with Ion Grigorescu, September 15, 2013.

security,” and as he notes, “the award of a passport to a Romanian citizen was a privilege not a right, and was in the case of ‘service’ (i.e. issued for travel or official business) opposed to ‘tourist’ passports often conditional upon the bearer fulfilling an extra task for an organ of the Securitate.”³⁹ At the same time, Deletant recognizes that it was not possible that all the people who traveled abroad had actually collaborated with the Securitate: “all those who were granted passports were adjudged to have made concessions to the Securitate, either in the form of accepting a *misiume* in the form of reporting on the activities of Romanian relatives and friends abroad or of informing on them at home, for which the favor of a passport was the reward. This is certainly the case with many Romanians who were allowed to travel in the communist era but it is unlikely to be true of all. The *Securitate* and the DIE were selective in their interest in Romanians wanting to travel abroad and it is doubtful whether they had the resources to charge every traveler with a mission.”⁴⁰

Ion Grigorescu recounts the story of his travels abroad during the communist era:

I.G.: How did I obtain my passport? The summer before [the spring of 1977 when he travelled to Paris and Zurich] I had asked for one on the basis of an invitation to the international engraving exhibition. The exhibition passed with no reply. After almost a year, I found out that the man who issued passports, colonel Budecă, had left a telephone number at the UAP for artists who had contacts with foreigners. I called him, he replied that he did not deal with passports, but a week later I was contacted by post to pick up my passport. I left, I came back and filled the file with information regarding where I had been and the people with whom I had spoken, together with the chief of personnel of the UAP, the stoker Turlacu, the one who gave me and immediately took my passport. The same happened after I returned from Macedonia in 1979.⁴¹

If for Ion Grigorescu there is no surveillance file in spite of the fact that he traveled abroad on several occasions,⁴² for his brother, the painter Octav Grigorescu, there is a surveillance file that was kept following his trips to Italy and

39 Denis Deletant, “Romania,” 285, 297.

40 Ibid., 313.

41 Email interview with Ion Grigorescu, September 15, 2013.

42 He traveled to Budapest, Zurich, Basel, Paris and Karlsruhe in 1977, to Macedonia in 1979 and to the USSR in 1981.

his expression of his desire to remain in Italy. Ion Grigorescu is not mentioned at all in any of these files.⁴³

For Rudolf Bone, the experience he had with the Securitate was more direct, as he noted in the interview. He was under surveillance by the Securitate, and this directly affected him.

C. Preda: What was your relationship with the Securitate before 1989?

Rudolf Bone: As far as what concerns me, my relationship with the Securitate was that of someone being followed, intercepted [my phone was tapped], and listened to. I suspected this at the time, and it was later confirmed [that] I had a file as someone who was being followed. It is not a big file, because I was followed only as of 1988. I think they followed me because, following the summoning of all sculptors from Oradea to a meeting of the county party cabinet, and although I was not a member of p.c.r. (sic.) they were trying to convince us to accept to work on the building site of the House of the People, I was the only person who openly refused, and I immediately left the meeting room in spite of the threats that were being made by the person who was leading the meeting. In consequence, I was discharged as a teacher at the primary school where I was teaching and was transferred to the Artisans' cooperative, which was supposed to assign me to the building site of the House of the People, where I was supposed to carve decorative motifs into marble. And the worst thing was that I was the only sculptor from Oradea in this situation! I managed to avoid the trap with the help of medical certificates provided by some doctor friends of mine.

C.P.: Were you ever contacted by an agent?

R.B.: For the first time around 1978–89, when a young lady visited me at the high school where I was teaching; I met her in the high school, and all I knew about her was that she had graduated from the Economics Institute of Cluj. I didn't know she was working for the Ministry of Interior. I found out from her she was sub-lieutenant and that she was responsible for the artistic sphere, the art collections, the museum. Back then, all art collectors had something to do with the regime. My father had in his collection works of local artists, but also some compositions from the Baia Mare School. You couldn't sell or buy anything without THEM (sic!) knowing. My father sold without letting anybody know. The young lady tried a little blackmail, letting me know she knew something. I think they only suspected, otherwise they wouldn't have been so discreet. She proposed that I collaborate

43 Files of Grigorescu Octav at the CNSAS: SIE 4045; I 454430/ 2 vols.

with her for the expertise of some paintings of the Baia Mare School. I refused politely saying I was no painter and so I wasn't qualified to help her. She stopped looking for me, she even avoids me today. We don't say hello. The second time was in September 1989, one day before I left for Bucharest for the exhibition I was about to do with [Dan] Perjovschi at the Orizont Gallery on Victoria Boulevard. Obviously they knew and thought I would soften. On the phone, a comrade major Marian or something like that tried to call me at the Securitate headquarters, which was close to my home. I told him rudely that I was not going anywhere because I had an exhibition in Bucharest and I had to pack my works. He replied that he knew about my business and that they were coming to my place. In seven minutes the lieutenant major arrived, fortunately alone. After some stupid questions, such as 'comrade Bone, why are you doing such pessimistic work?' and after having let me know that they had a video of my artistic actions in Sibiu in April 1989, when I had had some rather firm and nonconformist ideological attitudes, he asked me how I had ever come to exhibit a bronze sculpture in Ravenna in 1983. I replied that the answer was simple, I had sent it through the UAP, and a commissar of the union had traveled with the works selected by the Ravenna jury on the basis of some photos. Then he asked me the trick question, namely, would I want, from now on, to take my works abroad myself? Me, who couldn't even travel to the socialist neighbor and friendly country of Hungary because they refused my passport demands! I replied that they should send sculptor K., who left any time he wanted to, traveling to Italy and anywhere in the West with no obstacles. As a close to our talk, he told me in a slightly threatening manner to be careful what I exhibit in Bucharest, and he put a white piece of paper in front me on which I was to write that I wouldn't tell anybody about our talk, and then I was supposed to sign it. I refused, saying that they found out everything anyway, so there would be no point in me signing. He insisted and I said clearly that I wouldn't sign any paper. In my mind, I was thinking that I wouldn't sign any agreement with Satan, no matter what they did to me! He left by saying, 'we'll meet again!' We only met after the events of 1989, passing on the street, when I confronted him without telling him anything.⁴⁴

At the CNSAS, I discovered that the *Securitate* followed Rudolf Bone, assigning him the code name "Rudi" in a surveillance file (I 329979) in 1987–1989. His file includes five documents. The first one is a "Note for tasks to

44 Email interview with the artist Rudolf Bone, August 28, 2013.

be accomplished” concerning Bone, who was known for having contacts with foreign countries through the mail and who intended to participate in the VII Venice Biennial (1988). The officer asked for approval for surveillance “in order to prevent crimes from taking place” and so as to discover the artist’s connections with foreigners by studying his mail and eavesdropping on his telephone conversations. The second document is a report in which Bone is characterized as a serious person with no vices, and as someone who had many contacts in foreign countries. The third document is a report about Bone’s desire to participate with a work of art in an exhibition organized in Italy. According to this report, the artist was to be contacted after he had asked for a passport in order to establish his position and his contacts. The fourth document is a report that suggests that Bone should be followed in order to be contacted and that he should be enlisted to collaborate, depending on his attitude. Finally, the last document in Bone’s file is a report regarding the contacts that were established with him by the secret agent in November 1989. According to the report, the artist discussed his participation in the exhibition in Sibiu, the possibility of sending artworks to foreign exhibitions without ever traveling abroad, and his former colleagues who had immigrated to West Germany; at the same time, the agent notes that Bone was instructed how to speak with foreigners and that he agreed to respect these norms.

The Sibiu event at which the Securitate was called on to interrupt an artistic action also included Bone, who presented his intervention, entitled *Ritual* (1989). It depicted the artist “sacrificing” a papier-mâché figure that he had made, and all this to a soundtrack of “blah-blah” recorded by his fellow artists participating in the action.⁴⁵ “‘The Ritual’ was consumed practically without an audience, although those looking gathered at the windows of the gallery, recalling the atmosphere that dominated the year 1989 of generalized fear of the other (that the artist mocks), as well as eluding censorship that would have had to give its approval for such an action.”⁴⁶ *Chestnut self-portrait* (1983), the work by Bone of which I have included a digital reproduction below, is a depiction of his incapacity to speak freely at the time. The face and head of the artist are perforated with small colored pieces of wood, while the artist stares at us, as if wishing to communicate something important (Pintilie).

45 Ileana Pintilie, *Acciónismul în România în timpul comunismului* (Cluj: Idea, 2000), 68.

46 Ibid., 68–69.



Rudolf Bone, *Chestnut Self-portrait*, 1983, reproduced with the consent of the artist.

Being given permission to travel abroad was considered one of the clearest indicators of collaboration with the *Securitate*. The study of the visual artists' files shows that in many cases artists were followed when abroad by secret agents who had infiltrated the exiled community, and some were invited to a “discussion” with an officer upon their return, in the course of which they had to recount whom they had met, what they had discussed, whether or not they had been contacted by people active inside exile communities, who might have tried to convince them to stay abroad.

Finally, the case of Sabin Bălașa (1931–2008) is interesting for the sake of contrast, because the painter had a collaboration file with the *Securitate*.⁴⁷ He was also followed by the secret police, but as his file is missing most of its pages, we do not have access to the documents. The file of Bălașa is only available on microfilm and is incomplete. It includes a report for a proposal of recruitment (1967), a report on how recruitment went, a signed “commitment” to collaborate (1971), a background report on his wife Alexandra from the UAP, a background report from the UAP from the head of personnel and signed by the president Ion Pacea that confirms that Bălașa was not a member of the Romanian Communist Party, two reports from two sources, and two receipts for money and a bottle of

47 Bălașa's file at the CNSAS: M.R. Buc. 142480, roll 1469.

whiskey (1986).⁴⁸ Although Bălașa's signed agreement to collaborate dates from 1971, his file states that he collaborated with the officers as of 1967.

Bălașa's signed commitment states:

Conscious that defending the country, the security of the state, constitutes a sacred debt of any citizen of this country, a patriotic obligation of the whole people and also an important contribution I am called upon to make as a citizen of RSR, I pledge to support secretly, actively and in an organized manner the organs of security in the activity they accomplish to prevent, discover, and liquidate the crimes committed against the security of the state. I commit to fight with consistency, to respect the law, to act with promptitude so as to prevent the imminent dangers to the security of the state. To manifest vigilance toward the enemy of the fatherland, to be honest with the security organs and not disclose to anyone my connection to them. I commit to respect this commitment, conscious that disrespecting it can bring damage to the security of the state. September 9, 1971 (sic).

In the plan to recruit Bălașa, which dates back to 1967, the officer states that he had been contacted because of his connections abroad, especially in Italy, and in order to provide information concerning Romanians who had emigrated, as well as Italians active in the emigration circles of Romanians. In one of his recommendations, he is shown appreciation because when he was sent abroad he did not stay in any of the countries visited and thus showed his patriotism. His collaborator name was "Sorin Olteanu," and the people who compiled his file appreciated his efforts, which helped solve several "problems."

*Artistic Contributions to a New Understanding of the Past:
the Art of Memorialization*

I suggest adding to the perspectives on the communist past and its aftermath by including artistic points of view in which symbolic languages are used or direct citations of the period figure. Thus, I acknowledge the distinct perspective of a privileged category of citizens, visual artists.

48 The receipt for the bottle of whiskey dates from 1986 and is for the collaborator BRUNO, although his collaborator name was different in 1967. I assume another file was opened at a later date and what was kept on microfilm (selected information) was only preserved in order to prove, if necessary, that he had indeed served as a collaborator. Bălașa's file at the CNSAS: M.R. Buc. 142480, roll 1469.

Another perspective from which to consider the question of the relationship between the artist and the regime involves depictions of those who surveyed. The best example of this is Ion Grigorescu's image reproduced below. Part of his series of photographs entitled *Electoral meeting* of 1975, this image presents a Securitate officer supervising the organization of a "spontaneous" manifestation of support for the official leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu, and the Romanian Communist Party. The other 28 photographs show people being taken to the event, but the images also reveal the people's boredom and disinterest. They are holding smiling portraits of Ceaușescu and enthusiastic slogans, but they don't seem at all animated. Officially, such events were not organized, but rather took place spontaneously, thus Grigorescu demystifies the perspective of the communist regime with material proof. The series of photographs offers a point of view that differs strikingly from the official one. Moreover, Grigorescu manages to safeguard this telling image of a secret police officer holding his walkie-talkie, preoccupied by the need to surveil the participants continuously. The person doing the surveilling was also being watched. This image contains nothing important. Nothing extraordinary is happening, but its mere trace is important today for our comprehension of the ways in which the communist regime functioned.



Ion Grigorescu, *Electoral meeting*, 1975, reproduced with the consent of the artist.

Moreover, Ion Grigorescu's images of the desolate communist daily landscape contradict the official depictions of an idealized reality as it was supposed to be presented by artists through the ideological lenses. For example, in his photographs *Queue for meat* (1975), *Waiting for Propane tanks* and *Getting on*

the bus from 1984, we see real everyday life under the Ceaușescu regime, time spent waiting to acquire products that were scarce, trying to find one's way to work by using the overcrowded public transportation system. Many other artists indulged in this chronicling of the daily routines as a manifestation of their ordeals, which were denied or at least hidden by the regime. These unimportant details of everyday life can help us reconstruct today the reality of communism in Romania as it was experienced by large parts of society. In his videos entitled *Beloved Bucharest* (1977) and *Balta Albă* (1979), Grigorescu was also able to record the periphery of the socialist urban dream life as testimony “to the failure of socialism: the poverty, the dreary living conditions, the new construction projects, which gave rise to alienating and low-quality living environments.”⁴⁹ The artist reminds us that his fellow citizens shared his point of view:

I think everybody was aware of that [social reality]. Everybody knew that the propaganda was hiding a distinct and unpleasant reality in working conditions: people were working, but could take no pleasure in their work whatsoever. At least this is my conclusion. But when I exhibited such works, the only thing they could say was: ‘We won’t accept this, since it is ugly.’ They couldn’t just condemn the work directly, unless they were prepared to recognize the truth.”⁵⁰



Ion Dumitriu, *Groapa de Gunoi, Diapoziție*, 1975–1978, reproduced with the consent of the Foundation Ion Dumitriu.

49 Magda Radu, Catalogue of the exhibition *Geta Brătescu și Ion Grigorescu. Resources. Works from the collection of MNAC Bucharest* (Bucharest: MNAC, 2007), 17.

50 “Ion Grigorescu in discussion with Magda Radu,” in *Romanian Cultural Revolution*, ed. Alexandru Niculescu and Adrian Bojoiu (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2011), 221.

Equally interesting in this sense are Ion Dumitriu's series of slides, *Groapa de gunoi* [Landfill site] (1975), which document the activities of people on the outskirts of Bucharest, showing a side of the communist reality that officially was not supposed to exist and much less be recorded or immortalized in art. The artist concentrates not on the successes of the socialist program, but rather focuses on those that failed to "be integrated" and that lived their lives on the margins of the official narrative of the glories of socialism.

Conclusions

This concise investigation into the relationships between artists and the communist regime in Romania used three types of possible interconnections between the two to discuss the complexities of living under a dictatorial regime. Artists collaborated with the communist regime ideologically by creating art that conformed to the official aesthetic. As Romanian art critics remind us, things were not so simple at the time, and thus many artists had a double art, one that fit the public mandatory aesthetic and one that was true to their own aesthetic values. Finally, some opposed the regime completely and sometimes suffered the consequences, as in the case of Bone. Interaction with the Securitate was motivated either by a desire to travel outside of the country, which meant artists were contacted by representatives of the secret police before and after their travels in order to receive a passport and to recount their journey and provide information regarding the people with whom they met, etc. Artists were also observed and contacted by the Securitate because, in the view of the authorities, they had shown disrespect for socialist creative principles, as both Grigorescu (who says he did not go beyond the limits he knew) and Bone (contacted by an agent at the end of the communist regime) acknowledge.

Because of the specific character of the visual arts, which address a smaller public (when not using the propaganda of Socialist Realism), the work of visual artists, after self-censorship, was observed in order to ensure that it did not violate the limits by the UAP and the other departments of party or state institutions before coming under the scrutiny of the Securitate. The three cases discussed above allow us to conclude that, contrary to popular belief, traveling abroad did not automatically entail a proposal for collaboration, nor did it necessarily prompt the authorities (the Securitate) to open a surveillance file on the person in question. The study of supplementary artists' files shows, nonetheless, that this happened in other cases, and that the reasons varied across the decades of

Romanian communism: from the need to survey those in the exiled communities to the government's desire to examine prior links with foreigners inside Romania.

In keeping with Rancière's perspective on the artistic gesture that can provide a new understanding or a novel point of view, the Romanian examples discussed above show how these artistic endeavors help bring forth a new perspective on life during communism, far from the official line. We saw how the artistic gesture of registering reality captures another side of this reality that helps our *a posteriori* conceptualizations of dictatorships with the addition of a perspective that otherwise is not available. Artists register not only the secret police, as Grigorescu does in Romania, they also register details of the daily misery that don't exist in the official propaganda and that today can balance this official perspective on reality. Moreover, artists also capture feelings, and they symbolically give expression to the sentiments of the majority of Romanian citizens in the last years of the Ceaușescu regime: trapped, incapable of moving or talking, desperate.

Archival Sources

Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (CNSAS) [National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives] files:

Bălașa Sabin – M.R. Buc. 142480/roll. 1469.

Bone Sigismund Rudolf – I 329979.

Grigorescu Octav – SIE 4045; I 454430/ 2 vols.

Bibliography

Cârnelci, Magda. *Artele plastice în România 1945–1989* [Fine Arts in Romania, 1945–1989]. Bucharest: Meridiane, 2000.

Cătănuș, Dan, ed. *Intellectuali români în Arhivele Comunismului* [Romanian Intellectuals in the Communist Archives]. Bucharest: Nemira, 2006.

Deletant, Dennis. "Romania". In *A Handbook of the Communist Security Apparatus in East Central Europe 1944–1989*, edited by Krzysztof Persak and Lukasz Kaminski, 285–328. Warsaw: Institute of National Remembrance, 2005.

Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului în România, ed. *De ce trebuie condamnat Comunismul? Anuarul Institutului de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului în România*

- [Why Should Communism Be Condemned? The Yearbook of the Institute of Investigation of Communist Crimes in Romania]. Vol. 1. Iași: Polirom, 2006.
- Mănescu, Eugen. *Între linii* [Between the Lines]. Bucharest: Editura Rao, 2011.
- Nedelcu, Adrian, ed. *Viața cotidiană în communism* [Daily Life during Communism]. Iași: Polirom, 2004.
- Oprea, Marius. *Bastionul cruzimii O istorie a Securității 1948–1964* [The Bastion of Cruelty. A History of the Securitate, 1948–1964]. Iași: Polirom, 2008.
- Oprea, Marius. “Securitatea și moștenirea sa” [The Securitate and Its Legacy]. In *Comunism și reprimare în România* [Communism and Repression in Romania], edited by Ruxandra Cesereanu, 23–38. Iași: Polirom, 2006.
- Oprea, Petre. *Jurnalul anilor 1971–1975* [Diary of the Years 1971–1975]. Bucharest, Ed. Maiko, 2004.
- Pintilie, Ileana. *Accionismul în România în timpul comunismului* [Actionism in Romania during Communism]. Cluj: Idea, 2000.
- Preda, Caterina. *Dictators and Dictatorships: Artistic Expressions of the Political in Romania and Chile (1970s–1989). No paso nada...?* PhD Dissertation available on demand. University of Bucharest, 2009.
- Preda, Caterina. “Sub supraveghere (artistică). Relația artiștilor cu Securitatea” [Under (Artistic) Surveillance. The Relationship of Artists to the Securitate]. *Studia Politica Romanian Political Science Review* 13, no. 1 (2013): 159–72.
- Rancière, Jacques. *Le spectateur émancipé*. Paris: La Fabrique, 2008.
- Rancière, Jacques. *The Future of the Image*. London–New York: Verso, 2006.
- Rosei, Samuil. *Jurnal întârziat, vols 1–2* [The Belated Diary, vols 1–2]. Bucharest: Ed. Anastasia, 2009.
- Vasile, Cristian. *Literatura și artele în România comunistă 1948–1953* [Literature and the Arts in Communist Romania, 1948–1953]. Bucharest: Humanitas, 2010.
- Vasile, Cristian. *Politicile culturale comuniste în timpul regimului Gheorghiu-Dej* [The Cultural Communist Policies under the Regime of Gheorghiu-Dej]. Bucharest: Humanitas, 2011.
- Vădulescu, Cristina. *Police Aesthetics Literature, Film & Secret Police in Soviet Times*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.
- Verdery, Katherine. *Secrets and Truths: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania’s Secret Police*. Budapest: CEU Press, 2014.



BOOK REVIEWS

Legacies of Violence. Eastern Europe's First World War. Edited by Jochen Böhler–Włodzimierz Borodziej–Joachim von Puttkamer. Munich: Oldenbourg, 2014. 334 pp.

This collection of studies, which analyze the phenomenon of violence as a consequence of World War I from various perspectives, is a welcome addition to the current efforts to broaden geographically the scope of the research on the first global conflict of the twentieth century. Whereas in the past the field has been dominated by studies focusing on Western Europe and the German empire, in recent years there has been a strong tendency to broaden the scholarship and include other geographical areas as well.¹ Similarly, the study of physical violence as one of the determining phenomena of twentieth-century history, which has its roots in the catastrophic experiences of World War I, has drawn more attention in recent decades in connection with renewed interest in Central Europe and battlefields in eastern and southeastern Europe.²

The editors of the collection have divided the studies into four main groups that reflect the main trends in the current research on the connection between World War I and physical violence. The first group tackles the longer view on the war, focusing on trends and phenomena in the late nineteenth century that already foreshadowed the conflict and also on some of its lasting repercussions. Joachim von Puttkamer recapitulates the political and cultural development of Eastern

1 The literature on World War I is overwhelming. The most recent titles include: Jörn Leonhard, *Die Büchse der Pandora. Geschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2014); Jay Winter, ed., *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Herfried Münkler, *Der Große Krieg. Die Welt 1914–1918* (Berlin: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2013); Alan Kramer, *The Dynamics of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

2 On warfare and occupation on the Eastern front, see most recently: Bernhard Bachinger and Wolfram Dornik, ed., *Jenseits des Schützengrabens. Der Erste Weltkrieg im Osten. Erfahrung – Wahrnehmung – Kontext* (Innsbruck–Vienna–Bozen: Studien Verlag, 2013); Alfred Eisfeld and Dietmar Neutatz, eds., *Besetzt, interniert, deportiert. Der Erste Weltkrieg und die deutsche, jüdische, polnische und ukrainische Zivilbevölkerung im östlichen Europa* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2013); Stephen Velychenko, *State Building in Revolutionary Ukraine. A Comparative Study of Governments and Bureaucrats, 1917–1922* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Michael Neiberg–David Jordan, *The Eastern Front 1914–1920* (London: Amber Books, 2011); Alexander V. Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland. War, Ethnicity, and Anti-Jewish Violence in East Galicia, 1914–1920* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005); Vejas G. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front. Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Europe just before World War I, which he defines as those parts of Europe that were governed by the Habsburg, Hohenzollern and Romanov Empires. He concludes that the wartime conflict in this part of the world signaled the total erosion and collapse of the prevailing order and the subsequent establishment of a new order. Thus, according to him, the global conflict was a clear break with the prewar era, and revolutionary Russia in his view should be understood as a case that calls for further comparisons, rather than as a unique event heralding the beginning of a new era.

Mark Biondich examines the problematic “shatter zones” of the European continent, in other words the areas that were on the borders of the old European empires. Drawing on the example of the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, he shows how these border zones became the first experimental area on which some European powers tested new concepts of ethnic cleansing, forced mass migration or, in some cases, even ethnic extermination. Biondich thus interprets the Balkan conflicts of 1912–13 as a prelude to the so-called Great War, a prelude which foreshadowed the radical transformation of warfare in the twentieth century, targeting large ethnic or religious groups and often blurring the lines between combatants and non-combatants.

In the last contribution of the first group of essays, Jochen Böhrer summarizes the existing literature on wartime and immediate post-war military and paramilitary violence in Poland, Ukraine and revolutionary Russia. Essentially, he contends that already before the war the Russian empire added state administered collective violence against an entire ethnic group within its territory to the repertoire of wartime practices, and World War I was thus only a continuation of pre-war developments. This argument corresponds with the conclusion of the previous study and prompts historians to consider the extent to which one should think of World War I as a series of conflicts that began in the Balkans in 1912 and ended around 1922 with the treaty of Lausanne and the settling of another conflicts all over Europe (Ireland, Silesia etc.).

The second section is devoted to the politics of long-term military occupation as a phenomenon during World War I that became part of the standard set of modern warfare practices. In his excellent study, Jonathan Gumz tracks the development of international law and the proper definition of military occupation. Using this as his point of departure, he examines Austria-Hungary’s politics of occupation in Serbia and Germany’s and Russia’s in Poland and the Ukraine. He concludes that during the war the occupation regimes of Germany and Russia violated international norms regarding occupation with

increasing frequency, indeed to such an extent that these norms eventually ceased to function as a reference for justification of the measures they adopted with regards to the occupied population. As an occupying power, the Habsburg Empire, on the other hand, attempted to adhere to valid international norms most of the time. Stephan Lehnstaedt also arrives at the same conclusion in his analysis of the economic policies of occupation practiced by Austria–Hungary and Germany. While Germany, he argues, used the politics of coercion and mass forced labor as a standard tool of occupation, Austria–Hungary adhered to old-fashioned market incentives, which indeed proved much more effective. The section devoted to occupation is concluded by Robert L. Nelson’s study, which tackles the German plans to displace the populations in the eastern territories massively. Nelson reveals the extent to which these German fantasies were influenced by the American colonization of the West and again indicates the contrast between German plans for occupation and the much more modest Austro-Hungarian plans, which were far more rooted in the old world of the nineteenth century.

The third part of the collection covers the radicalization of the warring societies not only on the fronts and in the occupied territories, but also in the hinterland. Maciej Górny vividly depicts how scientific anthropology aided the war effort of states fighting on the eastern front. The Austro-Hungarian army’s anthropological findings on the eve of war served as the basis for interpretations that saw the war as a clash of diametrically different European races. According to Górny, World War II thus was merely the culmination of the biopolitics that took root in Europe during World War I. Piotr M. Wróbel shares this argument in his analysis of violence against Jews in Central and Eastern Europe perpetrated by state as well as non-state actors between 1914 and 1921. He concludes that the radical increase in violence occurred during the immediate post-war era and was the first symptom of the mass hatred that led to massacres twenty years later. Wróbel in particular seems to dwell on earlier literature and the idea of closed, homogenous ethno-religious groupings in East Central Europe. His focus on a mere enumeration of cases of anti-Semitic repressions and violence serves as an informed introduction to the literature on the topic. However, his approach makes it rather difficult to explain some trends that contradict the thesis of a general anti-Semitic setback in the postwar years, such as the official recognition of Jewish nationality in Czechoslovakia or the Jewish emancipation in Romania, and also to understand anti-Semitic violence as a distinct form of aggression,

with its own inner logic.³ Robert Gerwarth, in his contribution (which had already been published in another forum), also concentrates on the post-war years and the experience of defeat, which greatly influenced the militarization of the vanquished central European states, primarily Germany, Austria and Hungary.⁴ For Gerwarth, the specific paramilitary subculture of these states was not the result of general wartime brutalization, but rather a specific, regional reaction to imagined or real threats that arose at the end of the war and materialized as anti-Bolshevik, anti-Slavic and anti-Semitic waves of paramilitary violence.

The last group of contributions deals with the marks that the wartime experience left in some of the newly created Central and Eastern European states. Julia Eichenberg writes about the various successful or failed social and military demobilizations after 1918. In her assessment, the fluid transition from classical war to civil war, which occurred in many parts of Eastern and Central Europe, makes the year 1918 relevant as a turning point. Philipp Ther also argues for a new periodization. Using the example of ethnic cleansing, he points out that this concept of collective violence began to appear in Europe before 1914 and persisted in many regions until the mid 1920s.⁵ From his perspective, the traditional periodization of the war should be extended beyond the traditional years 1914–18. The section is concluded by Dietrich Beyrau's study on violence in Soviet Russia. According to Beyrau, physical violence represented a permanent phenomenon which did not decline after World War I, but in fact became one of the main tools in the maintenance of the new order. Beyrau elaborates on the common historiographic perception that the revolutionary party's rhetoric was couched in war terminology and the party elite often understood itself as a prominent army unit on the frontline of a worldwide revolution.⁶ The ever-

3 William Hagen, "The Moral Economy of Popular Violence: The Pogrom in Lwów November 1918," in *Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland*, ed. Robert Blobaum (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 124–47.

4 Robert Gerwarth, "Fighting the Reed Beast: Counter-Revolutionary Violence in the Defeated States of Central Europe," in *War in Peace. Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*, ed. Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 52–71.

5 See, for example: Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire. The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Nick Baron–Peter Gatrell, eds., *Homelands. War, Population and Statehood in Eastern Europe and Russia 1918–1924* (London: Anthem Press, 2004); Onur Yildirim, *Diplomacy and Displacement. Reconsidering the Turco-Greek Exchange of Populations, 1922–1934* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

6 See, for example: Peter Holquist, "State Violence as Technique: The Logic of Violence in Soviet Totalitarianism," in *Stalinism*, ed. David L. Hoffmann (Malden–Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 129–56.

present symbolism of war and violence then spread from party self-identification to the whole society and influenced early twentieth-century Russian history. The book concludes with Jörn Leonhard's short essay, which situates the topics in a wider comparative framework with the western part of Europe.

This collection of essays is a welcome addition to the current debates about new ways of conceptualizing World War I. Some of the essays review existing secondary literature and will serve as an introduction to the vast panorama of East Central European history immediately after the war. Other texts are based on original research and will enrich our understanding of state and non-state violent practices in the multiethnic, religiously diverse regions. The structure of the book and the historiographical overviews that accompany many of the chapters will make it useful not only for researchers, but also for university teachers. Many studies implicitly share the same arguments and persuasively show how the war in the East often meant something different than the war in the West. Individual arguments for a new periodization and the inclusion of transnational spaces as a basic analytical framework are convincing and will certainly enrich the current scholarship on the course and consequences of World War I, beyond the traditional narratives about the West, which tend to stress a distinct beginning and end of the war in 1914 and 1918 respectively, trench warfare, and allegedly more or less successful post-war reconstruction.

Rudolf Kučera

Nép, nemzet, zsidó [Folk, Nation, Jew]. By Gábor Gyáni.
Pozsony: Kalligram, 2013. 280 pp.

In tandem with the changing thematic priorities of international historiography, the interests of Hungarian historian Gábor Gyáni have gradually shifted from social historical topics to explorations in cultural and intellectual history.¹ In the 1980s and 1990s, Gyáni established his reputation with the publication of seminal social and urban historical monographs.² He proved instrumental in making social history arguably *the* key field of innovative historical work in early post-communist Hungary,³ for instance as one of the co-authors of what is probably the most important overview of the modern social history of the country to have been published after 1989.⁴

Since around the turn of the millennium, however, Gyáni's main scholarly preoccupations seem to have changed. As five of his collected volumes released over the course of the past decade and a half demonstrate,⁵ Gyáni has devoted sustained attention to the history of historiography, questions of history and memory, nationalism and the so-called “Jewish question,” as well as key issues in contemporary historical theory, above all, those related to the postmodernist challenge. His prolific output on these topics has established him as an important

1 For more details on the unfolding of this process in Hungary, see Ferenc Laczó and Máté Zombory, “Between Transnational Embeddedness and Relative Isolation. The Moderate Rise of Memory Studies in Hungary,” in *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 106 (2012): 99–125.

2 Gábor Gyáni, *Család, háztartás és a városi cselédség* (Budapest: Magvető, 1983); Idem, *Bérkaszárnya és nyomortelep. A budapesti munkáslakás múltja* (Budapest: Magvető, 1992); Idem, *Hétköznap Budapest. Nagyvárosi élet a századfordulón* (Budapest: Városháza, 1995); Idem, *Az utca és a szalon. A társadalmi tér használata Budapesten 1870–1940* (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 1998).

3 On this, see Balázs Trencsényi and Péter Apor, “Fine-tuning the Polyphonic Past: Hungarian Historical Writing in the 1990s,” in *Narratives Unbound: Historical Studies in post-Communist Eastern Europe*, ed. Sorin Antohi, Balázs Trencsényi, and Péter Apor (Budapest: CEU Press, 2007). It ought to be noted that *társadalomtörténet* (social history) has a peculiar and peculiarly inclusive meaning in Hungarian. Around 1989, many Hungarian social historians understood their scholarship as an alternative to political history writing in particular, and their scholarly practices were at times also linked to various forms of social activism.

4 Gábor Gyáni and György Kövér, *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a reformkortól a második világháborúig* (Budapest: Osiris, 1998); Gábor Gyáni, György Kövér, and Tibor Valuch, *Social History of Hungary from the Reform Era to the End of the Twentieth Century* (Boulder, Col.: Social Science Monographs, 2004).

5 Gábor Gyáni, *Emlékezés, emlékezet és a történelem elbeszélése* (Budapest: Napvilág, 2000); Idem, *Történelemszűzdiskurzusok* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2002); Idem, *Posztmodern kánon* (Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 2003); Idem, *Relatív történelem* (Budapest: Typotex, 2007); Idem, *Az elvesztett múlt. A tapasztalat mint emlékezet és történelem* (Budapest: Nyitott Könyvműhely, 2010).

mediator of recent international scholarly trends to the scholarly community in Hungary and also as someone who has repeatedly articulated explicit criticisms of professional shortcomings in his native land.⁶

The newest collection of his writings, *Nép, nemzet, zsidó* (Folk, Nation, Jew), offers samples of Gyáni's recent publications. With a single exception, the twelve studies assembled here have already been published in Hungarian-language journals or edited volumes, with two-thirds of them originally released between 2010 and 2012.⁷ The introduction promises metahistorical explorations and, more concretely, conceptual and discursive analyses (p.9). One of Gyáni's declared aims, by focusing on the concepts in the volume's title (which also serve as the main subjects of the volume's three sections), is to show how widely pluralistic and historically unstable the semantics of key concepts can be.

Nép, nemzet, zsidó begins with "A nép a maga valójában" [The Folk as It Truly Is], a critical examination of a foundational concept in ethnography. Gyáni is interested here, above all, in how the concept of *nép* (folk) has been used in the social historical parts of a recent Hungarian-language ethnography handbook and, more generally, what the recurrent tendency to identify the *nép* with the peasantry has implied for the discipline.⁸ Beyond questioning some of the social historical narratives offered by Hungarian ethnographers, the study articulates a critique of the homogenous and essentialized image painted of the peasantry as representative of the folk in particular. Gyáni concludes that this manner of categorization may be crucial to the professional legitimation of the discipline of ethnography, but it is in fact closely intertwined with the history of nationalism and political myth-making (p.27).

In addition to offering such polemical interventions, Gyáni provides differentiated and balanced treatments of various subjects. The nuanced approach characterizing much of the volume is perhaps best illustrated by the studies on Ferenc Erdei and István Bibó. Whereas Gyáni, the social historian, has striven to falsify Erdei's influential image—colloquially known as the theory of the dual

6 See, among others, Gábor Gyáni, "Helyünk a holokauszt történetírásában," in *Kommentár* 3, no 3 (2008): 13–23. See also Idem, "A hazai történetírás nemzetközi beágyazottsága. Egykor és most," *Aetas* 25, no. 4 (2010): 15–27.

7 However, Gyáni occasionally provides explicit links between his studies here, treating them as interlinked chapters (see 27, 41).

8 Attila Paládi-Kovács, ed., *Magyar néprajz VIII. Társadalom* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 2000).

structure—of interwar Hungarian society,⁹ here he opposes attempts to discredit Erdei's scholarly contributions by noting the—supposedly non-scholarly—confessional tone of his writings and their explicit political-ideological aims. In response to such critiques, Gyáni argues that Erdei approached and mediated his experiences as a Hungarian peasant by employing various viewpoints, including conceptual ones foreign to the peasantry, and asserts that the partly analytical, partly personal articulation of his experiences may in fact be qualified as the most intriguing and valuable elements of Erdei's writings on the peasantry (pp.56–57). Thus in the chapter entitled “A paraszti individualizáció Erdei Ferenc felfogásában” [Ferenc Erdei's Conception of Peasant Individualization], Gyáni ultimately maintains that, unlike many of his *népi* (populist) contemporaries, Erdei largely succeeded at conveying his intimate knowledge of peasant agency and its social contexts without painting an essentialized image of peasants (pp.58–59).¹⁰

If the analysis of Erdei offered a generous defense of an author towards whose image of society Gyáni is otherwise critically disposed, his essay on István Bibó's reflections on Jewish identities and assimilation in Hungary, entitled “Az asszimilációkritika Bibó István gondolkodásában” [The Critique of Assimilation in the Thought of István Bibó], does exactly the reverse. Here Gyáni explores the controversial aspects of a contribution to Hungarian historiography that he explicitly recognizes as seminal, even uniquely important. More particularly, the article aims to show that the manner in which Bibó depicted Hungarian Jewry and the history of assimilation in his 1948 essay “The Jewish Question in Hungary after 1944” in several respects reproduced his views from the late 1930s, the years of anti-Semitic legal discrimination, which Bibó, like Erdei, was unprepared to condemn. Examining Bibó's personal and intellectual milieu in some detail, Gyáni asserts that his conception was markedly influenced by László Németh's controversial views expressed in *Kisebbségben* (In the Minority) in particular (p.254).¹¹

Gyáni concludes that in the late 1940s Bibó still believed that Hungarians and Jews, two supposedly utterly separate “communities of fate” (to attempt to

9 On Erdei's theory as interpreted by Gyáni in English, see Gábor Gyáni, “Image and Reality of a Splitting Country: The Case of Hungary,” in *Mastery and Lost Illusions. Space and Time in the Modernization of Eastern and Central Europe*, ed. Włodzimierz Borodziej, Stanislav Holubec, and Joachim von Puttkamer (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014).

10 On a rather similar assessment of Ferenc Erdei, see István Papp, *A magyar népi mozgalom története, 1920–1990* (Budapest: Jaffa, 2012).

11 For Gyáni's elaborate argument to the same effect, see his “Bibó István kiegyezés-kritikája” [István Bibó's Critique of the Compromise] in the volume, esp. 126–30.

render in English the term *sorsközösség*), displayed similarly strong opposition to their social integration, and this made Jewish assimilation in Hungary an entirely hopeless undertaking. Such an assessment indeed seems to resemble closely that of László Németh, but—as Gyáni is quick to add—Bibó partly reinterpreted Németh in order to avoid putting the chief part of the blame on the Jews. Gyáni reasons that Bibó thereby articulated a narrative of Hungarian social development that largely coincided with that of Ferenc Erdei on the dual structure of society. In Gyáni's assessment, Bibó's "The Jewish Question in Hungary after 1944" thus amounted to a rather curious amalgam that courageously explored the causes of the moral bankruptcy of non-Jewish Hungarian society, but which at the very same time aimed to discuss Jewish and non-Jewish shortcomings and failures in a symmetrical fashion, even after the annihilation of the majority of Hungary's Jews.

The chapter entitled "Identitás versus imázs: asszimiláció és diszkrimináció a magyar zsidóság életében" ("Identity versus Image: Assimilation and Discrimination in the Life of Hungarian Jewry") presents Gyáni's broader and more theoretical reflections on closely related questions. This important contribution argues that the two most powerful Hungarian discourses—the assimilationist one and the one focused on the history of anti-Semitism—both fail to offer an adequate representation of the actual historical experiences of assimilated Jews (pp.217–18). Gyáni maintains that both of these discourses are based on an untenable premise according to which images create social realities, and they both fail to study the complex interaction between such dominant images and personal identities over time (p.219). Gyáni argues that processes of social integration deepened over time and produced what he calls a "co-constituted nation." However, the gap between the image of Hungarian Jews and their identity only widened (p.225). By pointing to such a dual process, the study offers an explanation of how "the relative alterity" of the Jews kept on being reproduced in modern Hungary, in spite of the fact that—according to Gyáni—Jews no longer constituted a separate ethnic group.

Similarly to these more theoretical reflections, Gyáni's review of Katalin Fenyves' recent monograph on generational patterns and inter-generational change of intellectuals born Jewish in Hungary leads him to highlight the hybridization of identity.¹² This elaborate review also provides him with an opportunity to critique a historiographical perspective, articulated notably by

12 Katalin Fenyves, *Képzelt asszimiláció? Négy zsidó értelmiségi nemzedék önképe* (Budapest: Corvina, 2010).

the late Péter Hanák, which affirmed the success of Jewish acculturation by presenting the major roles played by Jewish intellectuals in modern Hungary. According to Gyáni's assessment, the binary of Hungarian *versus* Jewish proves inadequate when attempting to characterize intellectuals who were neither religiously Jewish nor Magyars in the way in which ethnic nationalists understood the notion (p.251).

The section on nation begins with a somewhat sketchy essay on “Nemzetelméletek és a történetírás” (Theories of the Nation and History Writing). Reproduced from a volume originally published by the Hungarian National Gallery, the chapter contains Gyáni's discussion of classics of nationalism studies. It covers several key debates, such as the one on the modernity of nations and the usefulness and limits of distinguishing between political (or civic) and cultural (or ethnic) nationalisms. However, it adds little in the way of original insights. Gyáni's introduction to the field of nationalism studies nonetheless finishes on a rather polemical note with the author elaborating on what he sees as strong parallels between mythical and historical ways of thinking. Pointing to what he perceives as the “fatal” connection between history writing and nationalism in particular, Gyáni ultimately suggests that more profound reflections on collective memories combined with more thorough intertextual and interdisciplinary examinations may help us overcome the dangers of mythicization.

The chapter entitled “A nacionalizmus és az Európa-kép változásai Magyarországon a 19–20. században” (Nationalism and the Changing Image of Europe in Hungary of the 19th and 20th Centuries), a key contribution on the theme of the nation, draws an insightful sketch of major developments in the relationship between the two subjects referenced in its title to show that the local contest over Europe tended to acquire considerable additional importance in moments of crisis (p.131). Gyáni explains that in the Hungary of the early decades of nineteenth-century, Europe still served as a model to be emulated, whereas subsequently Europeanness was incorporated into the official state ideology and was increasingly connected to exclusivist forms of Hungarian nationalism. As Gyáni emphasizes, the strength of anti-European ideas was greatly enhanced by the Trianon Peace Treaty and its local interpretations. He also discusses how leading communist-era historians maintained that the country diverged from Western European patterns in order to highlight what was supposedly a deep historical tradition of Eastern Europeanness. As Gyáni notes, confederative and Pan-European proposals may have played a notable role

in public discussions and may even have provided certain groups of intellectuals with a sense of mission, but they remained rather marginal in the overall scheme of things (p.145).

The study on the changing image of Europe in Hungary reveals with special force what I see as a shortcoming of this otherwise excellent volume: the relative marginality of the ambition to situate Hungary in its broader regional and continental contexts.¹³ The volume undoubtedly draws on a wide international variety of methodological examples, and the debates on the peculiar features of Hungarian modernization and the special social and cultural roles of Jewish Hungarians in it also have strong parallels in numerous other countries, including—probably most famously—Germany. However, the central ambition of Gábor Gyáni seems to be to reshape local debates by bringing in new international perspectives: his agenda concerns the rethinking—and certainly not the “unthinking”—of the national canon. The extent to which such attempts to convert local idioms of research and debate into the language of contemporary international academia can succeed remains to be seen, as does the extent to which their eminent national stakes will be recognized amidst the contemporary vogue for transnational and global history.

In sum, Gábor Gyáni’s essays in *Nép, nemzet, zsidó* mediate a rich variety of scholarly literature and occasionally draw on in-depth philological investigations to discuss a host of significant themes in social and cultural history, particularly in the study of the nation and nationalism and the related discourses concerning Jewish themes. Although Gyáni’s collection does not offer a systematic analysis of the connection between the latter two subjects and refrains from theorizing the place and role of “Jewish questions” in Hungarian discussions of modern social development and cultural peculiarities, in addition to offering nuanced polemics with previous interpretations, the volume also makes numerous valuable suggestions as to how this immensely complicated and no less controversial subject could be approached in the future.

Ferenc Laczó

13 On the intellectual discourses of Europe in a great number of national contexts, though without the case of Hungary, see Justine Lacroix and Kalypso Nicolaïdis, eds., *European Stories. Intellectual Debates on Europe in National Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Propaganda State in Crisis: Soviet Ideology, Indoctrination, and Terror under Stalin, 1927–1941. By David Brandenberger. New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2011. 357 pp.

Paradoxically enough, the study of Soviet propaganda almost fell victim to historiographical debates during the Cold War. This partly had to do with the importance the totalitarian paradigm ascribed to political indoctrination and mobilizational campaigns in the sustenance of communist rule. Marxist ideology was considered the source of terror, and the practice of disseminating its tenets—i.e. propaganda—was generally interpreted as an attempt to cover up the “true” nature of the Soviet regime and create a society of subservient citizens and atomized individuals. The revisionist response to the claims of scholars advocating the idea of an all-powerful state left the essentialist image of Soviet propaganda largely intact. The focus of revisionist historians was on society and social responses to Stalinist policies, and not so much on the state’s techniques of mass mobilization. In other words, the totalitarian emphasis on the role of propaganda in ensuring loyalty to the state triggered the marginalization of the topic of mass persuasion in revisionist historiography.

David Brandenberger’s book, *Propaganda State in Crisis*, is the first attempt since the Cold War to bring the subject of Stalinist propaganda back into the limelight. While aspects of political indoctrination—political discourse, newspapers, visual propaganda, and so on—have been addressed by historians before, Brandenberger is the first scholar to offer a comprehensive overview of mass persuasion in the Stalinist 1930s. To an extent, the book is a sequel to Peter Kenez’s classical analysis of the emergence of what the Hungarian–American historian famously called “the propaganda state” during the first decade of Bolshevik rule in Soviet Russia.¹ Although published in 1985, Kenez’s book is still remarkably accurate, and many of its claims remain valid despite the fact that the author had no access to archival sources at the time. Brandenberger continues the story from where Kenez left off: *Propaganda State in Crisis* starts in the late 1920s and provides a vivid description of Stalinist propaganda up until the outbreak of World War II. Brandenberger’s narrative is supported by a

1 Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917–1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

plethora of diverse primary material, ranging from archival sources to products of Soviet mass culture.

The originality of the book, however, does not lie merely in the fact that it is based on new archival findings. The volume, in general, offers a fresh perspective on the functioning and the efficacy of propaganda in totalitarian regimes. Brandenberger understands propaganda as a complex process, and he analyses political indoctrination at three different levels. First, he looks at how propaganda was constructed by the ideological establishment and who the key individuals were behind the formation of strategies of mass persuasion. Second, he analyses the process of disseminating propaganda messages to the wider population by focusing on the activity of the regime's activists, mostly in the context of party schools and study circles. Finally, he addresses the problem of the popular reception of the party's indoctrination efforts and offers a discussion of the overall impact of Stalinist propaganda on Soviet society. It is this multifocal, yet finely balanced, analysis of construction, dissemination and reception that makes the volume an original scholarly endeavor.

The term 'propaganda state' evokes images of an omnipotent polity—with a vast and smoothly run propaganda machine—the sole purpose of which is to indoctrinate the population along ideological lines. The story Brandenberger tells us, however, is not the story of strength and success, but one of weakness and failure. The Stalinist Soviet Union, he argues, ultimately failed to construct and inculcate a conception of identity that was coherent and distinctively "Soviet" at the same time. The book demonstrates that communist propaganda in the 1930s was far from being a carefully planned and efficiently managed enterprise. It was, in fact, characterized by spontaneity, improvisation, and spectacular inefficiency. Brandenberger offers a fascinating account of the trajectory of a deepening crisis in the attempts of the state to mobilize the masses in the name of ideology and the often hasty and ad hoc responses that the party-state conjured up to overcome the problems it faced on the ideological front. The lack of a centrally devised master plan and the scarcity of competent cadres to implement the party's improvised—and sometimes contradictory—policies exacerbated the crisis and paralyzed the regime's propaganda machine by the end of the decade. Therefore, if viewed through the prism of political indoctrination, the Soviet Union in the 1930s does not appear to have been all-powerful at all; rather it resembled a failing state.

The author's emphasis on system malfunction reflects a recent trend in historical studies of Soviet-type regimes. There is a growing interest in the

role of agency in the functioning of such states and the ways in which the representatives of the system shaped the outcomes and popular reception of the party's policies. Historians addressing this particular aspect of Soviet rule focus not so much on how certain decisions are made, but on how they are implemented and how they are perceived by the population. The narratives that emerged as a result further erode the idea of a monolithic state exercising total control over identity formation.² Incompetence, it seems, was a systemic feature of communism. It contributed to the overall failure of the Bolsheviks to nurture enthusiasm for their utopian goals and aspirations, resulting in widespread popular indifference to the propaganda messages of the party.³ For example, in his recent book on Stalinist Hungary György Gyarmati argues that the general incompetence of the party's cadres almost incapacitated the state in the early 1950s.⁴ While Brandenberger's argument also revolves around the theme of a chaotically managed state on the verge of paralysis, it offers one of the most detailed analyses of the topic so far.

The book is not merely a story of incompetence and failure, however. Some of the chapters in the volume, in fact, present a case of unexpected success: the emergence of a populist version of communist propaganda, dominated by the tropes of heroism and patriotism. While this campaign seems to have struck a chord with society, it did not actually originate in the party headquarters. Although it enjoyed the support of the leadership, the new line did not come from prominent party functionaries and ideologues; it came from the "sidelines," and was most actively advocated and shaped by the intelligentsia, and key figures of the Soviet cultural propaganda machine (Maksim Gorky, for example).

2 While the revisionist school has criticized the notion of the monolithic (totalitarian) state extensively, especially in works that revolve around the concept of "resistance," the efficiency of party propaganda has not been in the limelight of historical research. "Classic" works on popular resistance include, for example, Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village After Collectivization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), and Lynne Viola, *Contending with Stalinism: Soviet Power and Popular Resistance in the 1930s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002). Historical discussions that address—among other things—the efficiency of party cadres in implementing the regime's symbolic policies include Karen Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin* (Bloomington–Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000) and David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931–1956* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

3 For an analysis of the relationship between the incompetence of party agitators and popular indifference see Balázs Apor, "‘Ignorance is bliss’: Cult-Reception and Popular Indifference in Communist Hungary (1947–1956)," in *Der Führer im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Benno Ennker and Heidi Hein-Kirchner (Marburg: Herder Institut, 2010), 90–107.

4 György Gyarmati, *A Rákosi-korszak. Rendszerváltó fordulatok évtizede Magyarországon, 1945–1956* (Budapest: ÁBTL–Rubicon, 2011), 215–19.

Thus, somewhat unexpectedly, one of the most successful projects of Stalinist propaganda did not come from the party's headquarters, but from the margins of the institutional hierarchy. Brandenberger shows that the popularity of the new line was more the unintended consequence of a spontaneous and populist response to a mobilization crisis than it was the result of the implementation of a carefully crafted master plan. Despite this remarkable success, however, the Stalinist leadership decided to—quite literally—terminate the culture of heroes in the late 1930s. The Great Terror and the last few years of the 1930s bore witness to the symbolic and the physical elimination of “heroes” in Soviet political culture and the return in the propaganda of the abstract and inaccessible concepts of dialectical materialism. The book, thus, tells us a story of sudden, unpredictable, and even contradictory zig-zags in the official line, which were largely responsible for the failure of the state to mobilize its citizens to labor for the realization of a communist utopia in the mid to late 1930s.

The book consists of eleven chapters, but it could be divided chronologically, as well as thematically, into four parts. The first three chapters discuss the mobilizational crisis that crippled the Soviet state in the late 1920s and early 1930s and analyze some of the strategies the Bolsheviks implemented to tackle the problems of propaganda. Brandenberger shows how the failure of the party to popularize the key concepts of its ideology in the 1920s triggered the intensification of indoctrination efforts during the first five-year plan and how it contributed to the renewal of attempts to create a credible historical narrative. Although the leadership was very much aware of the crisis, the policies they implemented lacked coordination and were ad hoc in nature. Therefore, they generally remained unable to mobilize Soviet citizens for the cause. Historians had struggled to produce an accessible text on party history that could be used for propaganda purposes, and the quest for the official biography of Stalin was also aborted, after a sequence of events that the author merely describes as “a comedy of errors.”

Where party historians and leading ideologues failed, less influential members of the creative intelligentsia (writers, journalists, film directors, etc.) succeeded. In an attempt to offer a more accessible master narrative to Soviet citizens, newspapers and the Soviet cultural propaganda machine (literature, cinema, etc.) took the lead in promoting new themes—heroism and patriotism—that instantly gained popularity in Soviet society. In chapters 4, 5, and 6, Brandenberger offers a detailed discussion of the emergence of Soviet patriotism and the Stalinist culture of heroes in the 1930s, highlighting the role of key members of the

intelligentsia (such as Gorky) in the process and paying equal attention to the construction of both “real” (members of the Cheliuskin expedition, military commanders, shock workers and Stakhanovites) and fictional (Chapaev or Pavel Korchagin) heroes. The author argues that the shift from the promotion of abstract ideological principles towards more concrete, and even populist, themes fell on fertile ground and was received positively by the population. Whereas the tenets of dialectical materialism had failed to provoke enthusiastic responses in Soviet society before, the tropes of patriotism and heroism were successful in advancing Soviet mass mobilization. These themes contributed to the formation of an accessible historical narrative that was populated by lively heroic figures struggling for the construction of a new world or fighting for the motherland.

While the early 1930s spawned a wide variety of heroes, the end of the decade witnessed their brutal decimation. The purging of the party elite during the years of the Great Terror, in general, had a dramatic effect on communist propaganda. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 analyze the damaging impact of the violent events on indoctrination and mass mobilization. The fall of prominent individuals, including party historians Vil’gel’m G. Knorin and Nikolay N. Popov, put an end to the proliferation of heroes and triggered a drastic readjustment of propaganda material in the midst of a chaotic and traumatic upheaval. Heroes were turned into criminals overnight, textbooks, novels and film scripts were rewritten, and books were removed from shops and libraries as their authors disappeared in NKVD prisons or Gulag camps. While the impact of the terror on Soviet society has been assessed and analyzed by numerous historians before, Brandenberger claims that the extent of the purges in the ideological sphere was far greater than is normally acknowledged. The elimination of the most successful component of communist propaganda—or “the murder of the usable past” to use the author’s phrase—brought communist mobilization to a standstill and provoked an atmosphere of confusion, anxiety, and doubt.

As the last chapters of the book demonstrate, Soviet propaganda was unable to recover from the desolation caused by the terror before the onset of the war in 1941. The mobilization crisis continued despite the party’s efforts to reinvigorate the campaign for ideological indoctrination. Due to Stalin’s personal intervention, a new textbook on party history was published—the (in)famous *Short Course*—which enjoyed the support of the leadership and quickly became the primary material used in party education. The crystallization of a new historical narrative, after more than a decade of failed attempts, was complemented by the publication of an official biography of Stalin in 1939. Despite the successful

realization of these long overdue projects, the new line generally failed to revive popular enthusiasm for the cause. As Brandenberger shows, the new Bolshevik master narrative remained excessively complex, inaccessible and impersonal. Apart from the theme of patriotism, there was very little in the party propaganda that inspired Soviet citizens. The new heroes were stock figures that lacked any depth, and the *Short Course*, with its abstract, theoretical narrative, caused more frustration than intellectual excitement for the students (and teachers) in communist study circles. The elevation of complex, depersonalized texts to the center of propaganda, argues Brandenberger, led to the “ossification” of the official line “into a gray amalgam of stultifying theory, cultish hagiography, and dogmatic catechism” (p.215). Whereas the fabrication of the Soviet “usable past” had failed to produce the results expected by the regime, the war effort certainly provoked a remarkable degree of enthusiasm for the state.⁵ However, it was the patriotic (“national Bolshevik”) aspects of communist propaganda that struck a chord with the population, whereas the uniquely utopian claims of “Soviet” ideology were generally ignored. Although Bolshevik mass mobilization regained some of its momentum after 1945 through the integration of the Great Patriotic War into Stalinist mythology, abstract dogmatism—symbolized by the *Short Course*—continued to characterize Soviet propaganda until the collapse of the state in 1991.

Although the volume offers a detailed analysis of the functioning of the propaganda machine in the Stalinist Soviet Union, the heavy focus of the narrative on individual historians and the production of certain texts may seem somewhat daunting for the non-specialist. In a similar way, the lengthy descriptive paragraphs recounting the plots of Soviet feature films are somewhat excessive. The book would have benefitted from an attempt to balance the dominance of textual and cinematic propaganda with reflections on other visual means of mass persuasion—posters, paintings, etc.—even if there is already a substantial body of scholarly work on the visual aspects of Soviet indoctrination campaigns. A more elaborate engagement with historiographical and theoretical debates on the key concepts discussed in the book (propaganda, agency, reception, state, etc.) would also have contributed to the emergence of a more sophisticated narrative. While the author’s analysis of the malfunctioning state is illuminating, the story needs

5 The turn towards nationalist themes in Communist propaganda has been analysed by the same author in his previous monograph. See Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*. See also Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of the War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

to be interpreted in the broader context of (Russian) traditions of dysfunctional state-building. Chaotically managed states can exist for long periods of time and even demonstrate a certain degree of stability, despite inefficient bureaucracies and failed propaganda campaigns. To what extent was the chaotic administration of the Stalinist state unique in Russian history? Are there any historical parallels that would help us better understand the nature of failing states? However, these objections and unanswered questions notwithstanding, David Brandenberger's book, *Propaganda State in Crisis* will no doubt remain one of the seminal volumes on Soviet propaganda in the years to come.

Balázs Apor

A magyar népi mozgalom története: 1920–1990

[History of the Hungarian Populist Movement: 1920–1990].

By István Papp. Budapest: Jaffa, 2012. 282 pp.*

The so-called “populist movement” (“népi mozgalom”) was one of the most distinctive and important political, social and cultural movements in Hungary in the twentieth century. While one might be hard pressed to find something analogous in the other countries of Europe at the time, several of the strains of the movement nonetheless invite comparisons with tendencies involving groups in Eastern Europe, Southern Europe, and even the United States. The movement in Hungary, which was brought into being in the 1930s primarily by writers and people passionately interested in social issues, sought to bring an end to the economic and cultural stagnation of village societies, as well as their political and social exclusion. The programs devised by the group were intended to help the peasantry (much of which lived in the eastern part of the country in poverty or even squalor) acquire land, secure a reliable livelihood, and have equal access to education and schooling. The leaders of the movement also saw economic dependence—which was perpetuated primarily by owners of large estates and large industrialists—as something that could be alleviated and indeed eliminated, and this in turn, it was hoped, would have helped further the assertion of the rights of the peasantry. The Hungarian populist movement, which was fundamentally cultural in its origins, in a wider sense strove to address the problems surrounding the modernization of essentially agrarian societies on the periphery of the capitalist global economy, societies that either had fallen behind in or never really undergone the process of industrialization.

Although many writers who were part of the populist movement worked together in various ways with the communist authorities, because of their ambivalent attitudes towards the programs of the communist government and communist politicians and also the roles they played in the 1956 Revolution, until the 1980s the ideas of the movement were rarely part of public discussion in Hungary. Even following the change of regimes in 1989, the intellectual milieu that emerged did not really allow for a politically unbiased critical study of the

* An earlier version of this paper was published in *Múltunk* 58, no. 1 (2013): 283–90. This research was supported by the European Union and the State of Hungary, co-financed by the European Social Fund, within the framework of TÁMOP-4.2.4.A/ 2-11/1-2012-0001 “National Excellence Program.”

movement as part of intellectual and cultural history. In recent years, however, the apparent lack of interest in the populist movement—a lack of interest which has been characteristic of the community of historians in Hungary since the publication of the recently deceased Gyula Borbándi’s seminal work almost three decades ago—seems to be giving way. In 2012, two relevant volumes were published on the subject in Hungarian: a monograph by Bulcsu Bognár entitled *A népies irányzat a két háború között* [The Populist Tendency in the Interwar Period]¹ and the book by István Papp on which I am writing here. As he himself notes, Papp is writing for the wider reading public, but he is also attempting to “rethink and reinterpret the history of the populist movement for the discipline [of history] as well” (p.11). Has he in fact achieved this goal?

The quite lovely pop-art cover of the hardback book aptly symbolizes the variegated nature of the populist movement. The book is divided into eight chapters on the writers of the movement, beginning with the Treaty of Trianon in 1920 and concluding with the first free elections, which were held in 1990. Although the use of 1920 as a starting point instead of 1928 (the year which has come to be accepted as the starting point of the movement in the secondary literature, in part because it bore witness to the publication of two important essays by László Németh) is justified more on political grounds than it is on any considerations concerning the movement itself, it nonetheless provides a good bookend, as it were, for the discussion. The title of the first chapter, however, “A magyar populisták” (“The Hungarian Populists”), is a bit harder to explain, since the chapter deals primarily with historical antecedents and similar trends and movements in the United States, Argentina, Finland, and Russia. More important than the title is the fact that in the pre-history of the movement, the elements that were common in analogous trends across the globe were less emphatic, though clearly regulated markets or plans for the creation of cooperatives were hardly Hungarian inventions. Indeed populisms abroad and the populist movement in Hungary shared numerous shortcomings. Yet however praiseworthy an attempt to situate the Hungarian phenomenon in an international context may be, grouping the movement among (agrarian) populisms (p.34) is debatable at best. The international secondary literature on populism, at least, does not deal with the Hungarian movement at all.²

1 Bognár Bulcsu, *A népies irányzat a két háború között*. Erdei Ferenc és a harmadik út képviselői [The Populist Tendency in the Interwar Period] (Budapest, Loisir, 2012).

2 See, for instance, Ionescu, Ghiță, Gellner, and Ernest, eds., *Populism. Its Meaning and National Characteristics* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969); Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (London: n.p., 1981), Pierre-André

Papp often adopts a retrospective glance, and he is prudent to do so. I.E. the chronology of the account is a bit loose, and this makes it more easily readable than it might otherwise have been, but this does not compromise the scholarly nature of the account. The third chapter, “Az alvó népek zörgetése” [“The Rattling of the Sleeping Peoples”], contains significant (if not always accurate) data. The following claim, for instance, is hardly persuasive, at least not in light of recent research: “10 cadastral acres were by no means adequate to ensure a livelihood for a family with three children” (p.64).³ While Papp makes mention several times of the flawed value judgments of the “older” secondary literature, he accepts without qualification the generalization so often made before 1989, according to which, “the elite of the Horthy era (...) showed little interest in the efficient husbandry of manorial estates either.”⁴ However, Papp makes persuasive use of the terminology of political science, clearly demonstrating the capacity of the movement to establish broad coalitions, which also meant the desire and ability to create dialogue with the prevailing authorities.

The fourth chapter, “Néma forradalmárok” [“Mute Revolutionaries”], in which Papp presents the sociographical wave of the mid-1930s, sheds the biases and habits of earlier accounts and offers a genuinely balanced examination of the meeting points of the institutions and figures of power and the populist writers. Papp does not hide behind tired clichés. Rather he dares to utter his views on sensitive questions that for a long time have been glossed over, for instance the work of writer József Darvas (p.109), who joined the communists in the 1950s, or (later) the reputation of László Németh (p.132), who has been accused of anti-Semitism. It is characteristic that while Papp considers Imre Kovács, who was forced to emigrate by the communists after the war, the prototype of the

Taguieff, “Political Science Confronts Populism: From a Conceptual Mirage to a Real Problem,” *Telos* 27, no. 2 (1995): 9–43; Margaret Canovan, “Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy,” *Political Studies* 47 (1999): 2–16; Yves Meny and Yves Surel, eds., *Democracies and Populist Challenge*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Francisco Panizza, *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, (N.P.: Verso, 2005); Koen Ants and Stefan Rummens, “Populism versus Democracy,” *Political Studies* 55, no. 2 (2007): 405–24. Christa Deiwiks, “Populism,” *Living Reviews in Democracy* 1, no. 1 (2009): 1–9. David Van Reybrouck, *A populizmus védelmében* [In Defense of Populism] (Budapest: Gondolat, 2010); Ernesto Laclau, *A populista ész* [The Populist Mind] (Budapest: Noran Libro, 2011); Marco d’Eramo, “Populism and the New Oligarchy,” *New Left Review* 53, no. 4 (2013): 5–28.

3 See Gábor Gyáni and György Kövér, *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a reformkortól a második világháborúig* [The Social History of Hungary from the Reform Era to World War II] (Budapest: Osiris, 2006), 307.

4 See Levente Püski, *Főúri identitás a két világháború közötti Magyarországon: Esterházy Pál herceg = Generációk a történelemben* [Aristocratic Identity in the Interwar Period in Hungary: Prince Pál Esterházy = Generations in History], ed. Gábor Gyáni and Magdolna Láczy (Nyíregyháza: NYF GTTK–HIK TTE, 2008), 167–73.

professional populist politician, he does not ignore the “nadir of his career,” when Kovács campaigned aggressively and with vulgar language in support of the expulsion from Hungary of the German-speaking members of its citizenry (pp.195–96). He also makes the important observation that because of the politicized vetting and the trials that were held by so-called people’s courts, “among the populists there was never any genuine confrontation with the events of the war years or the Holocaust” (p.182).

In the chapter entitled *Az útkeresés stációi* (“The Stations of the Search for a Path”), Papp offers a detailed discussion of one of this fundamental contentions, according to which, in contrast with the earlier concept of decline, during World War II populism began to burgeon with a “vigorous” (p.126), “heretofore unseen” (p.211) fervor, which brought with it the creation of institutions and periodicals, government measures, and polarization. Papp keeps his distance from the mythos of the various ideological systems, but he nonetheless makes bold diagnoses, not trying to hide the political orientations of the populists.

The sixth chapter provides an exemplary examination of the history of the populist movement after 1945, a history which is rife with contradictions. Papp examines the process whereby, with the turn towards a more “popular” form of rule (i.e. the ascension to power of a regime that at least in principle represented the people but which in fact was a precursor to the Stalinization of the country), the term “nép” (“people” or “folk”) both was given a kind of absolute meaning and at the same time simply lost its value and connotations as it was appropriated by the new ruling ideology. This irreparably divided the “populist” camp. Although of the prominent populists who were regarded as right-wing (József Erdélyi, Géza Féja, János Kodolányi, István Sinka), only Erdélyi was brought before the aforementioned people’s courts, the communists forcefully marginalized the group, while at the same time they put populists who were willing to cooperate with them on a pedestal (Ferenc Erdei, Péter Veres, József Darvas). The seventh chapter contains a detailed account of the fate of the populists under the socialist regime, though according to Papp “we cannot really speak of a movement” (p.212) under the dictatorship of Mátyás Rákosi. One gets a sense from the book of how a certain group mentality survived among the populists, even if, given the circumstances, life led them down very different paths. This mentality found manifestation in the help they provided for those who were labeled right-wing. At the end of the chapter, Papp offers an interpretation of 1956 as a historical moment at which a third road would have been possible. He then examines the “insights” and “dealings” that followed

the suppression of the uprising. Essentially, this brings his discussion of the history of the populist writers to a close. In his epilogue, Papp characterizes the populist-nationalist movement merely as the “bearer of the populist tradition” (p.245). He faults the successors to the Kádár era first and foremost for their lack of “positive vision” (p.270), since the reformers who gathered around Imre Pozsgay and later won widespread support at Lakitelek (a village to the southeast of Budapest, Lakitelek was the site of several meetings of the emerging opposition parties in the years leading up to the change of regimes in Hungary) were hardly driven by the fervent opposition to the system that had been characteristic of the 1930s.

In the end, Papp essentially achieves the two goals he sets for himself in his prologue. His book, which has been written in a refreshingly effortless style (the complexity of the topic notwithstanding), bears ample testimony to the breadth of his reading and research. He offers balanced assessments, and he does not allow his respect for the populists (which he admits from the outset) to lead him astray. However, since he also intended the book to serve as a contribution to the smaller community of scholars, one cannot pass over without comment the frustratingly short and unstructured bibliography, not to mention the insufficient and sometimes haphazardly-looking footnotes, which are more striking than the occasional typos. It would have been worthwhile to have included an index of names similar to the one found in the work of Borbándi. At the same time, it is worth emphasizing that Papp repeatedly uses the Historical Archives of the State Security Services. Thus the reports of the organs of state security provide a great deal of interesting data on the relationship between the populists and the government after 1945. Furthermore, one cannot stress enough the relevance and importance of Papp’s value judgements, which are both moderate and firm. Perhaps in the long-term, such assessments will further the widespread acceptance of a healthier view of the past less encumbered by bias.

Ákos Bartha

Magyar idők a Felvidéken 1938–1945. Az első bécsi döntés és következményei [Hungarian Times in the Upper Lands, 1938–1945. The First Vienna Award and Its Consequences]. By Attila Simon. Budapest: Jaffa Kiadó, 2014. 247 pp.

On November 2, 1938, as a consequence of German and Italian arbitration, a strip of territory in what today is the southern part of Slovakia was awarded to Hungary. The majority of the population of this territory was Hungarian by mother tongue at the time, and indeed many communities of the region have significant Hungarian communities to this day. For Slovak national consciousness, this decision represented a crime committed against the Slovak nation, which had fallen victim to a dictate enforced by foreign powers. According to public opinion in Hungary, in contrast, the decision represented a just revision of one of the provisions of the Treaty of Trianon, which had been concluded in the wake of World War I. With his new monograph on the subject, Attila Simon attempts to add a third perspective to this discourse on the First Vienna Award. The book, *Magyar idők a Felvidéken 1938–1945. Az első bécsi döntés és következményei* [Hungarian Times in the Upper Lands, 1938–1945. The First Vienna Award and Its Consequences], examines the reintegration of the region into Hungary from the perspective of the Hungarian community of the territory itself, which at the time of the change of rule had lived for some two decades as a linguistic minority within the Czechoslovak state. Simon's book is the most recent work in the historiographical series edited by Balázs Ablonczy and published by Jaffa Publishing House. The series constitutes an attempt to present the history of Hungary and the Hungarian minority communities of Central Europe in the twentieth century in a style that will appeal to a broad readership. It was launched a few years back with the publication of two volumes by Ablonczy,¹ and since then many works by well-established Hungarian historians have been published as part of the series. Simon's newest book should be understood as part of this larger endeavor. Indeed, while working on the manuscript, he was inspired in part by a book by Ablonczy entitled *A visszatért Erdély 1940–1944* [Transylvania Returned, 1940–1944].

1 Balázs Ablonczy, *Trianon-legendák* [Trianon Legends] (Budapest: Jaffa Kiadó, 2010); Idem, *A visszatért Erdély 1940–1944* [Transylvania Returned, 1940–1944] (Budapest: Jaffa Kiadó, 2011).

The choice of titles (the reference to “Hungarian times”) indicates the focus of the inquiry and should not be misunderstood as an expression of any kind of nostalgia for a time when what was (and sometimes still is) referred to in Hungarian as “Felvidék” (meaning northern lands and often translated into English as Upper Hungary) was part of Hungary. The brief year between the Vienna Award and the outbreak of World War II and the years of the war itself (during which the territory in question remained part of Hungary) are known in the historical memory of the Hungarian community of Slovakia as the “Hungarian times,” in contrast with the period between 1918 and 1938 or the period after 1945, which are remembered as the Czechoslovak eras. The author’s subjective stance with regard to the subject adds emphasis to this approach. Simon himself is a member of the Hungarian community of Slovakia, and he serves as the director of the Forum Minority Research Institute. This, in part, is why he has striven, as a member of a minority community, to examine an important period in the history of this community.

However, the subjective nature of his perspective in no way detracts from the credibility or seriousness of his inquiry. His attempt to arrive at an understanding of perspectives on the past is not tinged with personal sentiment, nor does it have any shades of victimhood or nostalgia. On the contrary, he has set an important goal as a historian, which indeed he has reached: he draws attention to the failure among historians to devote significant study to the subject and (in no small part a consequence of this) the failure of society to come to foster open discussion of this period of its history. The “Hungarian times” of southern Slovakia have remained undiscussed. As Simon notes in the preface to the book, “even my parents never spoke of it” (p.10). And indeed not only was it not made an openly discussed topic of public memory, it has even been neglected by Slovak and Hungarian historians. Only a few studies have been published on the topic, and to this day no monograph or collection of primary sources has been published dealing with the everyday lives of the Hungarian community of Czechoslovakia in the period following the First Vienna Award. Simon’s book is significant for this reason alone, given that interest in the history of Czechoslovakia in the international community of scholars has tended to focus on the territory that is now the independent Czech Republic and, for instance, the centralist politics of Prague,² the so-called German question in the case of Czechoslovakia, or most

2 Andrea Orzoff, *The Battle for the Castle. The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914–1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

recently the question of the loyalties of the Jewish communities of Slovakia.³ Essentially, Leslie M. Waters is the only international scholar to have addressed the issues pertaining to the Hungarian communities of the region in the period under examination.⁴

With this book, Simon also makes an important contribution to general cultural history. This crucial moment in the history of the Hungarian communities of Slovakia, which now stretches back almost a century, are presented not only through discussions of figures who will be familiar to the Hungarian readership, such as internationally celebrated author Sándor Márai, or the propaganda slogans about “Upper Hungary returned,” as for instance Gyula Popély does in his often cited work on the period.⁵ Some of the chapters of the book deal with figures of the Czechoslovak milieu. Lajos Jócsik, for example, who had been a prominent member of the Sick Movement is one of the important figures of reference, as are Pál Szvatkó, an important publicist of the interwar period, László Mécs, a priest and poet, and Endre Kovács, who later became a literary historian. Similarly, the book also includes discussion of Tamás Weis, a young Jewish boy of Párkány (today Štúrovo in Slovakia), who was deported to Auschwitz in 1944 and who, after his return from the concentration camp, changed his name to Tomáš Radil and, as a member of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science, wrote a Holocaust novel which has since been translated into Hungarian.⁶

Perhaps not surprisingly, the preface begins with a few remarks of Sándor Márai, who has become an emblematic figure of the city of Košice, in which Márai gives voice to the joy he felt at the “return” of the city to Hungary.⁷ Simon is quick to note, however, that years after the Vienna Award Márai gave an assessment of the meeting between the Hungarian community of what had been the southern strip of Czechoslovakia and the prevailing system in post-

3 Rebekah Klein-Pejšová, *Mapping Jewish Loyalties in Interwar Slovakia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

4 Leslie M. Waters, “Resurrecting the Nation. Felvidék and the Hungarian Territorial Revisionist Project, 1938–1945,” (PhD diss., University of California, 2012); Idem, “Learning and Unlearning Nationality: Hungarian National Education in Reannexed Felvidék, 1938–1944,” *Hungarian Historical Review* 3 (2013): 538–65.

5 Gyula Popély, *Hazatéréstől a hazavesztésig* [From the Return to the Homeland to the Loss of the Homeland] (Bratislava: Madách-Posonium, 2006).

6 Tomáš Radil, *Az auschwitzi fiúk* [Boys of Auschwitz] (Budapest: Pesti Kalligram, 2014).

7 Sándor Márai, *Ajándék a végzettől* [Gift of Fate] (Budapest: Helikon, 2004).

Trianon Hungary that was far more critical than his response immediately after the change.⁸

The second part of the book, which is entitled “Borderline Case,” offers a summary and assessment of the events that led to the First Vienna Award and its later repeal. Simon strives to trace the threads of the events, from the Peace Treaty of Trianon and the domestic policies of the first Czechoslovak Republic to Germany’s foreign policy in the wake of the Munich Agreement, the transformation of the Slovak–Hungarian relationship, and finally the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty in 1947. This task is relatively simple, given that there is already a significant body of secondary literature on the diplomatic history and foreign policy implications of the First Vienna Award.⁹

It is worth taking a moment to mention again the problem of terminology that inevitably arises in discussions of the fate of the territory in question. Should one refer to it as “Felvidék” or “Upper Hungary,” as was done in the Hungarian propaganda at time and indeed is sometimes still done to this day? Or should one simply refer to it as Slovakia, its name today? Can these terms be used as synonyms? And is the phrase “southern Upper Hungary” useful, or “southern Slovakia”? This question is complicated by the fact that in the secondary literature in Slovak the phrase “territory ceded by the First Vienna Arbitration to Hungary” (in Slovak *arbitrážne územie*) is frequently used.

Simon tends to use the two terms interchangeably, as indeed he has done in earlier works.¹⁰ He refers most often, however, to “southern Slovakia,” as if this were ever some kind of independent, clearly demarcated region.¹¹ In my view, this term may be a bit confusing to a reader less familiar with the topic, who is reading about a period in which the southern slice of what today is Slovakia was indeed made part of Hungary, but at the same time, the independent state of Slovakia (the territory of which was essentially contiguous with the northern half of Slovakia today) was not created until March of 1939. Thus I find the term “southern Slovakia” a bit anachronistic in this context.

Simon offers not a synthesis of the topic, but rather a kind of catalogue of issues. Thus in the ten chapters that follow the preface (in which Simon

8 Sándor Márai, *Hallgatni akartam* [I Wished to Remain Silent] (Budapest: Helikon, 2013).

9 See for instance Gergely Sallai, *Az első bécsi döntés* [The First Vienna Award] (Budapest: Osiris, 2002).

10 For instance, Attila Simon, *Egy rövid esztendő krónikája. A szlovákiai magyarok 1938-ban* [The Chronicle of a Short Year. The Hungarians of Slovakia in 1938] (Šamorín: Fórum Kisebbségkutató Intézet, 2010).

11 For more on the term Southern Slovakia, see Elena Mannová, “Southern Slovakia as an Imagined Territory,” in *Frontiers, Religions and Identities in Europe*, ed. Steven G. Ellis and Raingard Eßer with Jean-François Berdah and Miloš Rezník (Pisa: Plus–Pisa University Press, 2009), 185–204.

sketches the outlines of his inquiry) and the second part of the book (in which he summarizes the historical events), Simon addresses the most important issues pertaining to the reintegration of the Hungarian community from the perspectives of political, economic, social, cultural, mentality and even sports and educational history, though naturally not always in equal proportions. He very clearly devotes more attention to political and social history, and he often draws on much of his earlier scholarship. Thus the fourth chapter, which examines the diversity of the party politics of the Hungarian minority communities before 1938 and the ways in which this diversity dwindled after 1938, and the seventh chapter, which deals with the Czech settlement policies in the interwar period, contain the most thorough analyses in the book. Simon gives scant emphasis, however, to the question of economic factors, which are presented in a matter of a few pages in the third chapter (pp.44–50), and the everyday lives of the populations of the region that changed hands. Furthermore, he devotes only a single chapter (the tenth) to the question of sports in the region, which he discusses alongside the transformation of educational and cultural life after 1938, either of which would have merited a separate chapter in and of themselves.

Simon's essay-like anecdotes more than compensate for these shortcomings, however. They make the book more enjoyable and the period under examination more vivid and personal. For instance, in the fifth chapter, which deals with the mechanics of the political screenings, Simon writes about the case of János Kozma, a school principal who before 1938 was both a respected figure of his community and also an active part of local Hungarian cultural life. Nonetheless, following the First Vienna Award, because of baseless accusations and a good bit of human spitefulness, he did not make it past the screenings (pp.93–94). The book also acquaints the reader with the case of Štefan Bolda, a Slovak employee of the Hungarian state railway. He was allegedly more polite, when conducting his job, with Slovak train passengers, so he was reported and then moved from Košice to a place where he would have little chance of coming across Slovaks (pp.140–41). These kinds of anecdotes offer vivid illustrations of the ways in which the policies of the Hungarian state following the First Vienna Award affected the everyday lives of the people living in the territory that had been ceded to Hungary.

Simon identifies the differing forms of socialization in the Hungarian and Czechoslovak communities as the principle source of the grievances of the one-time minority Hungarian community. In 1938, the Czechoslovak Hungarians went from living in a more democratic state that was more developed from

the perspective of social welfare and more tolerant in its nationalities policy to the deeply hierarchical, autocratic Hungary under the rule of Miklós Horthy, where they were often (mostly in government offices) derisively referred to as “Upper Hungary communists.” In the administrative and economic spheres, the Hungarian state demanded immediate transformation. The question of loyalty to the nation, which in the nation-state mentality of Central Europe meant loyalty to the state, was of utmost importance. Even in the more democratic first Czechoslovak Republic this loyalty had been a significant issue. The Hungarian population of the territory that had again come under Hungarian rule thus had to prove its “faithfulness to the nation,” or more precisely that during the twenty some years of “Czechoslovak occupation” it had conducted itself in a manner that was faithful to the traditions and culture of the Hungarian nationality.

The manner in which the population of the territory in question was expected to demonstrate its “fidelity” to the Hungarian nation fundamentally influenced the image of Hungary among the elites of the minority society following the First Vienna Award. In the fifth chapter of the book, Simon offers a vivid portrayal of the frame of mind that characterized the majority of the “Upper Lands middle class” towards the end of 1938 and the beginning of 1939. Members of this community, who for twenty years had not been able, as citizens of Czechoslovakia who belonged to a national minority, to count on positions in state administration, were confident that the change would open the gates to new opportunities for them and that they would receive some kind of compensation from the Hungarian state as if in exchange for the decades of neglect they had suffered. Simon clearly regards the work of the screening committees as having been a miscarriage of justice, since they “put the entire official staff of the region on the accused’s bench” (p.95) and did not provide them with employment after the First Vienna Award. He notes, however, that in the future historians should be cautious to modify the view according to which, instead of members of the Hungarian community from the region, only Hungarians arriving from within the borders of post-Trianon Hungary (referred to in the parlance of the time as “anyások,” i.e. Hungarians from the mother country, or as Paul Robert Magocsi writes, Hungarians who were “pampered and tied to the motherland’s apron strings”)¹² were given positions in government administration in the re-annexed territory.

12 Paul Robert Magocsi, “Magyars and Carpatho-Rusyns. On the Seventieth Anniversary of the Founding of Czechoslovakia,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 14, no. 3/4 (1990): 427–60.

The foundations for this part are laid in large part by the sixth chapter, which deals with one of the distinctive cultural-history aspects of the integration of the minority Hungarian community of the region, a community that had undergone processes of socialization different from those in Hungary, or what was referred to in the contemporary discourses as the so-called “spirit of the Upper Lands.” Simon draws a contrast between the “neo-Baroque Hungary” of Horthy and the “social idea of the Upper Lands.” This mentality, however, was more an idealized self-image of the Hungarians of the region than it was a regional identity that might bear comparison with the regional identity of Transylvania, for instance. While the Czechoslovak Hungarian communities never had any kind of regional traditions or regional sense of identity before 1918 (since the southern slice of the state of Czechoslovakia, stretching from Bratislava in the west to the sub-Carpathian region in the east, earlier had been an integral part of historical Hungary), Transylvania had been a distinctive and separate region not only from the perspective of geography, but also from the perspective of several centuries of constitutional law. Thus it was hardly a coincidence that after 1938 the notion of a “spirit of the Upper Lands” soon became a concept exploited by politicians, since politicians of every leaning, from social democrats to members of the Arrow Cross party, were able to mold the term as they sought fit. Simon concludes that any such simplistic division of the two societies rests on too many generalizations to remain plausible. The narrowing of the history of the “Hungarian times” to this problem is misleading, since it bears the personal and collective grievances of the minority community. The elite of the Hungarian communities of the region rapidly integrated into the system of the “mother country” after 1938.

This is all complemented by two indispensable chapters on the circumstances of the Slovak and Jewish communities of the territory ceded by the First Vienna Arbitration to Hungary. Slovaks regarded the Award as a kind of national tragedy. Simon clearly dismisses the stereotypical image of the “pious Slovak” and the notion, which to this day is widely accepted, according to which political activism and awareness was much lower among Slovaks at the time than it was among Hungarians. In 1938, a Slovak population that clearly had a strong sense of self-awareness and had experienced democracy in the Czechoslovak republic of the interwar period, enjoying all the advantages of a developed social system (including general and secret suffrage), found itself confronted with Hungary under Horthy. For the Hungarian government, the “Slovak question” was not regarded as an issue to be solved with forceful magyarization, but rather involved

nurturing loyalty among the Slovak communities to the Hungarian state, though it was not easy to persuade Hungarian public opinion of this at the time. In the case of the Jewry of the region, Simon makes the important observation that it would be misleading to speak of any kind of distinctive “Upper Lands” Holocaust. The events of the Holocaust in the territory, which resulted in the deportation of some 30,000 Jews, took place essentially in the same manner as they did in other parts of Hungary. The chapter entitled “Hungarian Followers of Moses” provides a thorough presentation of the processes of the disenfranchisement and persecution of the Jewry of the region.

The chapter devoted to the city of Košice addresses something of a lacuna in the secondary literature, as neither the Hungarian nor the Slovak historiography has dealt with the history of the city between 1938 and 1945.¹³ From the Middle Ages to the latter half of the 1940s, Košice was a diverse mix of ethnicities, languages, and religious denominations. And as Simon notes, the city became a kind of symbol of the struggle between Hungarians and Slovaks for control of the territory. According to official census statistics, during the time of the first Czechoslovak Republic the proportion of Hungarians in the city fell below 20 percent, while after the First Vienna Award Košice seemed to change back, from one day to the next, to a city with a Hungarian majority. Simon is therefore cautious about relying on the statistics, as indeed other authors, such as Éva Kovács, have been.¹⁴ In her examination of the national identity of the Jewry of Košice in the interwar period, Kovács persuasively demonstrates that on the basis of the results of the elections that were held in Czechoslovakia, one should be skeptical of the Czechoslovak census results. Her research has shown, for instance, that a far higher proportion of the people of Košice voted for the Hungarian political parties than the proportion of residents of the city who were, according to the census results, of Hungarian nationality. Even into the first decades of the twentieth century, Košice and the other cities of the region were inhabited by a citizenry that was multilingual and often changed its national identity, depending on the pressures of the prevailing state powers. In the case of the city of Košice, it is quite clear that some people replied differently to questions regarding nationality depending on the census

13 On the secondary literature on the topic see Tímea Verešová, “Košice v období rokov 1938–1945 – stav výskumu dejín mesta,” in *Košice a dejiny – dejiny Košíc*, ed. Štefan Šutaj (Košice: UPJŠ, 2011), 147–52.

14 Éva Kovács, *Felemás asszimiláció: a kassai zsidóság a két világháború között, 1918–1938* [Ambiguous Assimilation: The Jewry of Košice in the Interwar Period, 1918–1938] (Šamorín–Dunajská Streda: Fórum Kisebbségkutató Intézet–Lilium Aurum Könyvkiadó, 2004).

(i.e. the government in power). Simon shares Kovács' conclusion, and he offers an illustration of the phenomenon in the case of Košice by examining data concerning the political attitudes and cultural consumption (for instance reading habits) of the population. The chapter also contains a detailed presentation of the modernization of Košice in the interwar period and the transformation of the city into an administrative center.

After 1945, the “Hungarian times,” i.e. the re-annexation by Hungary of territory in the southern part of what today is Slovakia, was one of the primary justifications for the notion of the collective guilt of the Hungarians of the region, a notion that in turn was used to justify deportations, so-called “re-Slovakization,” and Slovak–Hungarian population exchanges. This remains one of the traumatic elements of the shared historical consciousness of the Hungarian communities of present-day Slovakia, and it continues to exert an indirect influence on relations between politics in Hungary and the Hungarian minority of Slovakia. The period between 1938 and 1945 also bore witness to an array of injuries and offences to the Slovaks of the region, and thus the memory of this period continues to encumber relations between Slovaks and Hungarians.

Simon had to find balance in his assessment of the internal and foreign affairs of Hungary under the government of Horthy and the functionality of the interwar Czechoslovak democracy and, within it, the social history of the minorities of Czechoslovakia, for the meanings of the history of the “Hungarian times” in Upper Hungary lie perhaps first and foremost in the meeting—or collision—of these two divergent worlds and the subsequent endeavors to put them on parallel courses towards common goals. With this book, he has made an inspiring contribution that addresses absences and shortcomings in the secondary literature while also providing a highly readable account that will be accessible to a broad readership with an interest in the history of the region.

Veronika Gayer

Imposing, Maintaining, and Tearing Open the Iron Curtain: The Cold War and East-Central Europe, 1945–1989. Edited by Mark Kramer and Vít Smetana. (The Harvard Cold War Studies Book Series.) Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014. xviii + 563 pp.

Recently, an ambitious work was published under the editorship of Mark Kramer and Vít Smetana on the history of East Central Europe in the period beginning with the end of World War II and concluding with the fall of communism in the Eastern Bloc in 1989. The volume, entitled *Imposing, Maintaining, and Tearing Open the Iron Curtain: The Cold War and East-Central Europe, 1945–1989*, consists of twenty-four essays organized into four chapters. The essays in the first chapter deal with the period of the formation of the Iron Curtain. The opening essay, which was written by Kramer, examines the goals of Moscow's politics and policies with regards to Eastern Europe between 1941 and 1948 and the role of the leading stratum of the emerging communist camp. The chapter also contains an essay on the role of the United States in Eastern Europe between 1943 and 1948. We are then offered comprehensive pictures of the various countries of the emerging "Soviet Bloc," namely Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Yugoslavia. The essays by Vít Smetana, László Borhi and Mark Kramer draw on a remarkably impressive array of sources in their analyses of the distinctive features of the time. Kramer stands out even among this superb trio of authors. He is thoroughly familiar with the primary and secondary literature that has been published in the West, but he also has a dazzling knowledge of the Russian primary sources that have been published over the course of the past two decades and the essays and monographs that deal with Soviet–Yugoslav relations. The last two essays in the first chapter analyze the roles of Austria and Germany following the war.

The second chapter contains essays dealing with the "German question" and the politics of the era within the Eastern Bloc following the death of Stalin. One essay examines how London perceived the evolution of relations between Germany and Eastern Europe during the Cold War. Another offers a discussion of the "German question" from the perspective of France. The essay by Csaba Békés, which brings the chapter to a close, attempts to summarize the coordination of the foreign policy conduct of the countries of the Eastern Bloc in the period beginning with the death of Stalin and ending in 1975.

The third chapter examines the roles that were played by Eastern Europe, the United States, and the Soviet Union in bringing the Cold War to an end. This is

perhaps the most exciting part of the book, perhaps simply because the history of the “end game” still raises innumerable questions that will challenge historians. For instance, what role did the people who were affected by the process play in the collapse of the Soviet societies? (This is a question that is the subject of debate in many circles.) In this process of collapse or transformation, which was more significant, the internal changes that took place within the Eastern Bloc, the influence of U.S. foreign policy on the Soviet Union, or the inclination of the Soviet leadership to “yield”? It is clearly not easy to give a simple answer to this question, in part simply because almost all of the terms and concepts that are used to describe the process beg interpretation themselves. For instance, what does it mean to say that the leadership under Gorbachev proved “inclined to yield”? Does it mean that Moscow deliberately presented itself as prepared to “let go of” the countries of the Soviet Bloc? Or does it mean that Russia could do little else, since after a point it would have had to have used violence in order to maintain control over the states of Eastern Europe, and this would have undermined a politics based on attempts to reach a compromise with the West? Or does it mean simply that Gorbachev inaccurately assessed the popularity of the system in the region and concluded that the countries of Eastern Europe would remain within the Soviet Bloc and would preserve their Soviet systems of governance, even if Moscow did not exert any pressure on them or threaten them with intervention? Given that Gorbachev and his immediate circle realized only very late—sometime around late 1988 and early 1989—that they might face problems when it came to the countries of the Bloc, one could conclude that Moscow regarded it as self-evident that these countries would remain committed to socialism.

In his superb essay, Alex Pravda, another one of the contributors to the volume, examines the background of this enduring “optimism.” He discusses, for instance, the talk that took place in Budapest in November 1988 between Károly Grósz, the secretary general of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, and Alexander Nikolaevich Yakovlev, a member of the political delegation of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party. This meeting merits discussion in this context, for in all likelihood it was here that Yakovlev was first confronted with the deep divisions within the Hungarian party leadership. Grósz spoke with remarkable openness in the course of their private meeting on the situation in Hungary, which was increasingly dire, as well as on the tensions within the party and the mutual mistrustfulness. Clearly this experience played a role in Yakovlev’s decision, which was made soon after his meeting with Grósz, to ask four institutes in Moscow to prepare analyses of the situations in the countries of the Soviet Bloc.

By February 1989, the Bogomolov Institute, a research institute of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR which dealt with the socialist world order, the International Division of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the KGB submitted their reports. Of these four reports, three were made public some time ago, thus we have a fairly clear idea of what the Soviet leadership thought about Eastern Europe towards the late 1980s. Of the four, the one submitted by the Institute of the Academy was unquestionably the most interesting, and it was the most critical of Soviet policies. At the beginning of the analysis, it contained an emphatic ascertainment according to which “the attempt to build socialism that was done with Soviet participation and Stalinist and neo-Stalinist methods was a dead end.” These were harsh words, but they revealed a great deal about the political mood that had emerged in Moscow in the late 1980s. Specifically, they reveal that by that time a great deal was permissible among the circles at the Academy that would have been unthinkable in earlier times. In consequence, the social sciences gradually ceased to serve the function they had earlier had of legitimizing the regime. In the spirit of this shift, the analysis left no doubt as to the fact that, in the European allies of the Soviet Union, the position of the communist parties, which earlier had maintained control over events, “had weakened significantly.” Their social support was dwindling, and indeed “in some cases one can speak of a complete lack of trust.” The report divided the countries of Eastern Europe into two groups on the basis of the nature of the crisis-processes that were underway in them. In one of these groups (Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia), “the crisis-processes have become open and intense,” while in the other (Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Bulgaria, and Romania), “for the moment the social and political conflicts are taking place in a concealed manner, but at the same time they are clearly discernible.” In spite of the fact that the analysis that was submitted by the Bogomolov Institute dispelled all doubt regarding the crisis in the region, the Soviet leadership continued to conduct affairs as if it were still in control of the situation. The shorthand text of the minutes of the summit that took place in Malta in December 1989 between the American president and the secretary general of the Soviet party demonstrates this (the text was made public a few years ago). The minutes make very clear that Gorbachev was still convinced that unless the United States and its allies forced “Western values” on the states of Eastern Europe, these states would in all likelihood vote in favor of a form of socialism that was simply more humane and more effective than the socialism to which they had become accustomed. According to the minutes of the meeting, Gorbachev did not explicitly say this, but it was nonetheless implied, for instance

by the fact that both in the meetings in private and the plenary sittings the secretary general returned to this question. In the course of the first private meeting he made the following very clear: “I am under the impression that U.S. leaders are now quite actively advancing the idea of conquering the division of Europe on the basis of ‘Western values.’ [...] At one time in the West there was anxiety that the Soviet Union was planning to export revolution. But the aim of exporting ‘Western values’ sounds similar.” It is bit surprising that the essays in this chapter essentially do not deal with the meeting between George Bush and Gorbachev in Malta, in spite of the fact that many people are firmly convinced that it was in the course of this meeting, on December 2 and 3, 1989, that the Soviet secretary general and the American president reached an agreement on the re-division of Europe. Of course, the hesitancy on their part to do this is understandable. The Malta Summit continues to be enshrouded in mystery and uncertainty. We do not even know how many times the two statesmen met in the course of these two days or within what frameworks. It is quite certain, however, that they met at least twice in private and twice for the plenary sittings.

This is all revealed in a collection of documents in Russian that was published in 2010. Numbering roughly 1,000 pages, this collection (*Отвечая на вызов времени. Внешняя политика перестройки: документальные свидетельства*, Москва, 2010) is quite justifiably considered the most important and the most comprehensive publication of primary source material on the foreign policy of the Gorbachev period. It contains the shorthand minutes of all of the four meetings (pp.234–49), though none of the four is actually complete. Nonetheless, they are remarkably edifying. They are significant in part because the meetings did not lead to the drafting of any written agreement. This is one of the reasons why so many hypotheses have been made concerning the Malta Summit. For instance, the notion that there was a top-secret fifth meeting, in addition to the four meetings the minutes of which were kept in writing, has proven quite enduring. During this fifth meeting, Gorbachev allegedly accepted all the demands of the Americans. In other words, he agreed to dissolve the Warsaw Pact, dismantle the socialist systems in the Soviet satellite countries, and allow for the reunification of Germany. There may or may not have been a fifth meeting between the two heads of state. If there was, however, it is hardly likely that Gorbachev would have been prepared to make such concessions. If we read the shorthand minutes of the meetings held at the Malta Summit attentively, they suggest, rather, that Gorbachev simply misunderstood or misperceived the situation in late 1989. He seems to have failed to notice or appreciate the pace at which the events

had accelerated. What he said to Bush on the question of German reunification in the course of their first private meeting is revealing indeed. According to Gorbachev, it was impossible to foresee whether “a unified Germany [would] be neutral, not a member of any political-military alliances, or would it be a member of NATO?” He then added that, in his view, “it is still too early to discuss either of these options. Let the process take its course without artificial acceleration.” All this clearly indicates that Gorbachev continued to believe that European and global politics would be shaped by a kind of compromise between Western and Soviet values. It does not seem to occur to him that perhaps the societies of Eastern Europe would want nothing to do with “Soviet values” if they had a chance to choose freely.

The minutes of the Malta Summit, incomplete though they may be, are nonetheless immensely interesting in part because they clearly show the extent to which the Soviet leadership misunderstood the processes that were underway in Central Europe. And, because the Soviet leaders failed to understand these processes, they never realized that they would need to follow an alternative script. It is surprising that the extremely knowledgeable contributors to this collection of essays do not seem to be familiar with the collection of documents in Russian containing these minutes. They also do not seem to be familiar with the ambitious Russian undertaking that traces the political processes that were underway in the six countries of Central and Southeastern Europe from the beginning of the 1970s up to the collapse of the Soviet-type systems. This two volume, 1,600-page collection of documents (*АНАТОМИЯ КОНФЛИКТОВ. Центральная и Юго-Восточная Европа. Документы и материалы последней трети XX века. т. 1-2. СПб. 2012–2013*) is the only serious scholarly undertaking in Russia that could be compared to this collection of essays. The Russian publication does not attempt to present the history of the last two decades of communist rule in the Soviet Union and Central Europe in essays, but rather seeks “only” to make primary sources available. It achieves this goal on an admirably ambitious scale. However, the failure on the part of the contributors to the collection edited by Kramer and Smetana does not in any way detract from its importance or merits. The international group of authors has enriched the secondary literature on the history of the Cold War with an impressive collection of essays that bears testimony to thorough research and impressive knowledge.

Translated by Thomas Cooper

Zoltán Sz. Bíró

Fabricating Authenticity in Soviet Hungary. The Afterlife of the First Hungarian Soviet Republic in the Age of State Socialism. By Péter Apor. London–New York: Anthem Press, 2014. 228 pp.

At the end of 1956, after the Hungarian revolt, János Kádár's communist leadership had to answer some crucial questions. How could his despised, de facto illegitimate government obtain legitimacy and justify itself in the eyes of the population? How could the regime deprive the 1956 revolutionaries of their identity as freedom fighters and enforce a new negative image of them as murderers, fascists and counterrevolutionaries? The answer lay partly in fabricating a new historical narrative based on the merciless struggle between progressive, revolutionary forces and forces of counterrevolution in twentieth-century Hungary. The source of this battle was found in the obscure and controversial history of the establishing and downfall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. As a result, "within the two and a half years that passed between October 1956 and March 1959, from the Communist perspective the Soviet Republic was transformed from a relatively insignificant event in the party's own history into the most important anniversary of the nation" (p.155).

Péter Apor's book meticulously analyses this process of revision, as well as the creation of a new interpretation of Hungarian history in the twentieth century. One of the primary aims during the early years of Kádár's government was to create direct continuity between the actors of 1919 and 1956 and to construct a narrative of October 1956 as an integral part of the story based on the continuous revolution and counterrevolution, which started with the White Terror that followed the fall of Soviet Republic (p.1). In this narrative, the heritage of the anti-communist persecutions of 1919–1921 played a role as important as the "progressive tradition" of Béla Kun's Soviet Republic. It allowed for the creation of the chronological sequence of violent counterrevolutionary attempts, beginning with the White Terror, then the mass murders committed by Szálasi's fascist Arrow Cross Party in 1944/45, and concluding (allegedly) with the atrocities of the 1956 revolt.

These events were presented as historical manifestations of the rule of one essentially unchanging, continuous destructive force directed against all progressive, antifascist groups, particularly the communists. According to this narrative, it was precisely the communists, the most cruelly persecuted victims of these tragic events in Hungarian history, who got the historical task

of protecting Hungarians against the perils of counterrevolution and, more importantly, against the return of its perpetrators to power.

However, as the title of the book suggests, it does not deal only with the problem of the instrumentalization of the history and the creation of the new post-Stalinist narrative. Apor is much more concerned with the following question: “What makes abstract historical interpretations authentic?” (p.1). He thus analyses the creation of a new post-Stalinist metanarrative, “a body of discourse which presents a simplified form of the ideology and which is the vehicle of communication between the regime and those who live under it,” by projecting “a conception of society that explains both past current reality and future trajectory.”¹ In order to win society’s acceptance of this metanarrative, party historians and ideologists had to offer a virtual reality comprised of myths and supported by carefully chosen symbols. The post-1956 communist regime had to introduce a meaningful symbolic politics expressed through an interconnected network of interrelated objects, texts, persons and events in order to amalgamate the various representations of the Soviet Republic into a system of cross-references, interconnectedness and self-reflection (p.23). Apor concentrates on the concept of authenticity as an essential precondition of the establishment of the success of the new memory constructions. According to Apor, historical representations have their histories, and his book “strives to describe the web that connects creative imagination and the objects of representation, as well as historical traditions mobilized by the modalities and means of representation” (p.21).

The book is divided into the five chapters (plus an introduction and epilogue), covering the changing interpretations of the First Hungarian Soviet Republic between 1949 and 1959. However, at the same time, the chapters constitute case studies dealing with distinct symbols crucial for the legitimization of the post-1956 metanarrative. Each of these five parts offers a different perspective and analyses a special aspect of the state symbolic politics. Apor’s interest includes language, visual media and orchestrated rituals, as well as judicial decisions, places of memory and of course official historiography. The broad scope of primary sources and methodological approaches utilized for their analysis constitutes the most significant positive virtue of the monograph.

The first part, “Prefiguration,” analyses the historical interpretation of the Soviet regime during the Rákosi dictatorship. It shows why the regime could

1 Graeme Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy in Soviet Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 3.

not and did not want to appeal to the traditions of the previous Soviet regime or see it as a direct predecessor of postwar communist Hungary. Although the revolutionary year 1919 officially counted as one of the progressive events of the country's history, it was at the same time a controversial topic for the Stalinist historiography of the early 1950s, and the commemorations remained unpopular events for large segments of Hungarian society. For the communist ideologists, it was therefore easier to present the Party as the heir of the 1848/49 revolution than as a descendant of the short-lived experiment, the leaders of which perished during Stalin's purges.

The second chapter, "Resurrection," deals with the creation of the historical connection between the White Terror and 1956 revolt in order to legitimize the measures that were taken by Kádár's government against the allegedly "counterrevolutionary" forces. In the narrative about the continuity of the counterrevolution, the story of the Hungarian Soviet Republic was nearly completely overshadowed by the focus on the White Terror. As Apor demonstrates by citing the example of the so-called White Books about the atrocities of 1956, the abstract connection between 1919 and 1956 was authenticated by the similarity of the two cases, especially by visualizing the use of physical violence against the communists.

The following chapter, entitled "Lives," is devoted to the trials of war criminals. The life stories of the perpetrators of the White Terror were used to strengthen the thesis of permanent counterrevolution in Hungary. In this case, the legal evidence should have authenticated the historical narrative and "populated" the existing abstract constructions. Apor states that, in the end, the Hungarian communists were unable to "demonstrate the direct tangible physical continuity between the actors of 1919 and 1956," and they had to "rely on vague implications of family relationships and blurred conceptions of blood ties," which made the whole narrative "unconvincingly abstract, ineffective and, in fact, ridiculous" (p.86). However, given the general communist obsession with "class origin" and the widespread belief that the negative traits of "bourgeois roots" are more or less hereditary (a notion the influence of which can be observed already at the beginning of the communist movement), "conceptions of blood ties" were probably not so absurd and unbelievable as the author assumes, at least not to the people involved in the construction of the metanarrative.²

2 See the words of the Chekist from 1921: "The first question you must ask is: what class does [the accused] belong to, what education, upbringing, origin, or profession does he have? These questions must

The chapter “Funeral” is devoted to the planning, building and unveiling of the very specific sepulcher, the Pantheon of the Labor Movement. In this monument, the historical continuity of revolutionaries “was crystallized around the bodies of the dead” (p.22). In this case, Apor refers to the medieval notion of the mystical body that played a crucial role in the self-construction of the party. He uses the arguments of E. H. Kantorowicz regarding the medieval royal tombs, and states that “the troubles with the search for communities in the late 1950s [...] resulted in similar ideas in diverse contexts: the idea that the mere gathering of individuals in some mystical way shaped by the power of religion, law or politics could be transformed into a thoroughly distinct quality, a genuine community” (p.137). However, one should also note dead kings and queens were buried in royal tombs in succession, regardless of their deeds. This was a means of reinforcing the legitimacy of the dynasty, and not only the current ruler. The Pantheon of the Labor Movement, which represented a formal celebration of the communist movement in general, in fact gave legitimacy only to the Kádár’s party leadership. The dead who were buried there had to be selected and approved by the current ruler, while his predecessors were explicitly excluded from the list.³

The fifth chapter, “Narration,” is dedicated to the historical scholarship, fiction and documentaries on paper, on film or as exhibitions in museums based on the newly created narrative introduced as part of the 40th anniversary of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. In contrast with the interpretation presented in 1949, ten years later the Soviet Republic was characterized not by its alleged mistakes, but by its glorious achievements. What was even more important, it provided a perfect means of clarifying “basic ideological-political issues related to the interpretation of revolution and counterrevolution, Communist revisionism, nationalism and socialist patriotism without the need to openly address the revolt in 1956” (p.168).

Apor’s work concludes that, in the end, the attempt to fabricate a new authenticity failed. The book offers enough evidence to prove this point. It was nearly impossible to link the abstract ideological statements to comprehensible

determine the accused’s fate.” Quoted in: Edward Kanterian, “Communism: The Shadows Of A Utopia,” *Baltic Worlds* 7, no. 4 (2014): 4–11, 8. See also: Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia,” *The Journal of Modern History* 65, no. 4 (1993): 745–70.

3 This was because the form of succession in the Eastern European communist parties was much closer to the byzantine (or Russian czarist) tradition of conquering the throne by defeating the predecessor than it was to the hereditary tradition of the western kingdoms.

accounts because the implied story was full of blanks, contradictions and silences, while the First Hungarian Soviet Republic remained largely lacking in credibility and appeal. This failure then resulted in the mutually accepted politics of “deliberate amnesia.” As a consequence of an unspoken compromise between the communist leadership and Hungarian society, mention simply ceased to be made of the 1956 revolt. The counterrevolutionary narrative was formally respected, but in reality lost its plausibility. But can be such a situation really defined as failure? In the light of Havel’s “The Power of the Powerless,” one may well ask, is it really necessary for people to believe as long as they act as if they believe? Does it matter whether there was any genuine widespread conviction, or is it sufficient for the rituals to be held and for the principles of the metanarrative to be observed?⁴ However, Apor makes no such inquires.

The book lacks comparative context, even if the author briefly refers to the situation in the other communist countries in the introduction. It is perhaps unfair to make this demand, since this book was not meant to be a comparative study. However, occasional reference to the international context would help the reader better understand which processes were specific to the Hungarian case and which were generic traits present elsewhere in the Eastern Bloc. The post-1968 developments in Czechoslovakia in particular would have provided ideal material for occasional comparisons.

The monograph mentions (albeit only as a side note) that the history of the First Soviet Republic had a clear nationalist undertone in the sense of a patriotic war against newly established Hungarian neighbors (p.201). This is an interesting point which would have merited further reflection and development. The communist regimes everywhere routinely relied on nationalist (patriotic) argumentation to make their narratives more acceptable.⁵ An analysis of this approach in the case of the First Hungarian Soviet Republic would bring one more interesting aspect to the problem of creating the post-1956 metanarrative.

I would venture one more minor critical remark concerning the frequent references to the early Christian and medieval politics of symbols and rituals.

4 Gill, *Symbols*, 273. See also: Michal Pullmann, “Konec experimentu.” *Přestavba a pád komunismu v Československu* [End of an Experiment. Rebuilding and Fall of Communism in Czechoslovakia] (Prague: Scriptorium, 2011).

5 See: Frank Hadler, “Drachen und Drachentöter. Das Problem der nationalgeschichtlichen Fixierung in den Historiographien Ostmitteleuropas nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg,” in *Die Nation schreiben. Geschichtswissenschaft im internationalen Vergleich*, ed. Christoph Conrad and Sebastian Conrad (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 137–64.

Apor does not always adequately explain the relevance of such comparisons with communist symbolic politics.

However, these few objections notwithstanding, Apor's book offers a fascinating, sophisticated and multifaceted analysis of the communist memory politics and politics of history in a communist regime. The scope and number of primary and secondary sources is truly admirable. It clearly demonstrates profound research and is ample testimony to the erudition of the author. In this sense, Apor's book is a valuable contribution to our understanding of communist power from the perspective of symbolic politics. It offers an admirable example of how to deconstruct the processes of fabricating history in the socialist dictatorships. As such, it is an important work on the history of communist regimes in the Central and Eastern Europe.

Adam Hudek

The Collectivization of Agriculture in Communist Eastern Europe. Comparison and Entanglements. Edited by Constantin Iordachi and Arnd Bauerkämper. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014. 557 pp.

This collection of studies is the first attempt to discuss collectivization in the former socialist countries of Europe in a single publication. The time frame applied throughout the volume is not strict, but generally does not go beyond 1965. The volume brings together some of the most established specialists of the Eastern Bloc who are also active in the international academia.¹ According to the introduction, the book limits itself to a discussion of collectivization within the context of Sovietization. It seeks to go beyond the conception of Soviet power and state socialism as a one-way violent intrusion into normalcy. Moreover, one of the editors objectives was to establish a timeline. The collection of studies achieves this by adopting a methodology that addresses the criticism that has been raised regarding comparative methods by those that practice and theorize transnational history without, however, rejecting this criticism altogether.

The book is divided into four main sections. When deciding on the way to arrange the fifteen papers, the editors opted for a mix between geographical and methodological logic. The first section deals with the Soviet Union, including republics that came under Soviet domination during World War II. The second section examines the countries that are regarded by the editors as part of Central Europe. The logic of this division is not self-evident. The case of Hungary represents the complexity of the choices that one has to make if one seeks to group a country in one of the areas under consideration in the book. Such decisions ultimately rest on a distinction between countries (and cultures) that allegedly do or do not have enough in common with a group of other countries (and cultures) to be considered “in.” In other words, these decisions represent definitions of the “other.” “German historical scholarship has no issue with the classification of Hungary as a country of Southeastern Europe.”² Hungarian

1 Namely, Lynne Viola, Nigel Swain, Melissa K. Bokovoy or Constantin Iordachi, professors working at the national level who have created schools, namely, Arnd Bauerkämper, Michail Gruet, József Ö. Kovács, Darius Jarosz and Jan Rychlik, and a younger generation of experts working in the region. In random order, they are Zsuzsanna Varga, David Feest, Dorin Dobrinu, and Jens Schöne. Örjan Sjöberg and Gregory Witkowski join this group as country specialists from Swedish and American academic circles respectively.

2 See e.g. Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy 1933–1939: The Road to World War II* (New York: Enigma, 2005).

public opinion, in contrast, resents the idea of being put together with countries of the Balkans, such as Romania and Bulgaria. However, if one studies the entangled history,³ the decision to group Romania and Hungary together may seem reasonable. To make things even more complicated, in the specific case of collectivization interaction between Bulgaria and Hungary is of importance in terms of policy design and outcome due to the expert group that was dispatched by the Hungarian leadership to Bulgaria with the explicit goal of making recommendations based on experience in the field. At any rate, Iordachi and Bauerkämper decided to group the GDR, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary under the heading “Central Europe” and Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania as “Southeastern Europe.” The fourth section of the book includes two papers that provide novel interpretative frameworks for the study of individual cases and two papers that were written with the goal of juxtaposing individual cases. Since methodologically these papers are the more adventurous of the fifteen and in this respect have a great deal in common with the introduction, they might have served the volume better had they been the opening essays.

The introduction, which is the joint effort of Iordachi and Bauerkämper, argues that there is a way to develop a methodology that uses both comparative methods and the idea of entanglement, and in fact the theme of collectivization in the Soviet sphere requires this. Following up on this thesis, in his contribution Arnd Bauerkämper argues that the manner in which Soviet collectivization was experienced and the manner in which the Third Reich was remembered influenced attitudes towards collectivization in the GDR, so they had a bearing on modes and practices of resistance against collectivization. In other words, the field of memory studies is not only relevant to the interpretation of collectivization because oral history interviews are important sources, but also because of the ways in which popular historical knowledge was changing as a result of interaction between personal memory, stories told by those who claimed to be witnesses, and propaganda. Zsuzsanna Varga also keeps the overall objective in mind when she applies a concept that political science has developed in recent decades: policy learning. She argues that collectivized agriculture became viable in Hungary because the government was capable of learning from experiences outside of Hungary and from local opposition and claims. Gregory R. Witkowski makes an effort to emphasize the aspects of collectivization that made its negotiated

3 For the term “entangled history” see Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity,” *History and Theory* 45 (2006): 30–50.

nature visible. He explicitly puts himself among revisionist historians who do not accept totalitarianism as a valid interpretative framework and emphasize the possibility of historical agency. It must be taken into account that with regards to Poland, Bulgaria and Romania, his archival material mostly comes from the US State Department, thus, events narrated were filtered through multiple lenses and translations. Moreover, authors of the reports cited were in all likelihood delighted when they came across anything that could be understood as a sign of popular resistance. In the closing essay of section IV and of the volume, Nigel Swain hits a reflective tone. He is critical of his own work published in the 1980s,⁴ in which he characterizes Hungary as a unique example within the Soviet zone in terms of deviation from the ideal type. He emphasizes that the relationship between ideal type and practice was a complex one in each country, despite the textual form of the ideal type, i.e. Stalin's Model Charter. Relying on the wealth of material and information with which contributors provided him, he points out six areas in which comparison and a study of entanglements look feasible. These are: the policy context of land reform; available resources; the concept and figure of the *kulak*; campaigning techniques; and peasant responses. The studies that make up the volume are efficient and effective in addressing each of these, with the exception of the failure to provide a clear picture of the post-war policy context in terms of the availability of food and the sustainability of pre-war structures.

The Country level case studies that make up the first three sections do not follow a uniform structure or methodology, but they are more than a series of disconnected essays with similar titles. On the one hand, each of the papers demonstrates persuasively that measures and waves to collectivize derived from decisions taken or assumed to be taken in Moscow. Contributors were unable to track this process in the documents available to them, but the similarities of the timelines serve as indirect evidence. On the other hand, the papers are written from a perspective from which the local context of violence, coercion, and contest for victory, language and meaning is visible. They attempt to answer questions about the rhythm and internal logic of collectivization, as well as the relationship between the dynamics of internal party struggle and agricultural policy. They all emphasize that post-war rural societies faced a triple burden: famine following the war and the occupation, compulsory deliveries in order to

4 Nigel Swain, *Collective Farms which Work?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

avoid famine, and collectivization, which disrupted social and economic frames and was coupled with punitive measures.

There are two cases in which collectivization did not become a major constituent of state socialism. In the case of Yugoslavia, Melissa Bokovoy does not explain away the reversal by dwelling on the Soviet-Yugoslav relationship. Instead, she writes of widespread and violent resistance that bore the potential of rekindling the culture of violence that had emerged during World War II and reviving or reinvigorating ethnic divisions, thus threatening Tito's plans for the regime. Turning to Bokovoy's assumption about the weight that Soviet relations carried in policy outcomes, one may hypothesize that Soviet leadership appreciated both the strategic importance of Poland and the extent to which the population internalized its hostility towards the Soviet Union and did not regard it as possible or prudent to indulge in any behavior that might provoke a wrathful response. In his paper, Dariusz Jarosz avoids giving a comprehensive argument about why Soviet leaders accepted that Poland definitively gave up on full scale collectivization. He emphasizes the importance and extent of the territorial changes that reshaped Poland in 1945. He argues that the cleavage between hereditary farmers and newcomers (refugees) was the most important factor in explaining why the northwestern areas were the only ones in which collectivization took place on any significant scale. However, one may argue that the so called 'Type 1b collective can hardly be regarded as a collective at all.⁵ The narrative that Iordachi and Dobrinicu establish for the case of Romania shows that internal struggle among communist leaders, violence and violent resistance do not suffice to explain outcomes in the case of collectivization. Romania experienced instances of open, if localized, revolt, as well as the longest-lasting collectivization efforts and cultural struggle concerning notions of desirable social stratification, yet the regime implemented collectivization and the transformation of rural society, as a result which the Socialist Republic was indeed born. The transformation did not bring about improvement in material conditions. On the contrary, by the 1980s Romania was one of the countries where food shortages were persistent, both in rural and urban areas.

József Ö. Kovács's study stands out, as it outlines a broader social history of the functioning of the collectivized rural world. In addition to explaining

5 Miklós Mitrovits, "A lengyel kollektivizálási kísérlet sikertelensége: okok és következmények" [Failure of the Attempt to Collectivize in Poland], in *Állami erőszak és kollektivizálás a kommunista diktatúrában* [State Violence and Collectivization in the Communist Dictatorship], ed. Sándor Horváth and József Ö. Kovács [(Budapest: MTA BTK ITI, 2015), 335–48, 337.

different phases, stressing (like most of the studies in the volume) that post-war land distribution measures were irrational in economic terms, and recounting how discriminative taxation, compulsory requisition and imprisonment were linked and served as tools with which to force people and families into cooperatives, he also includes age composition and various indices of quality of life to show the depth of the changes that occurred as a consequence of collectivization. He argues that as a result of the changes arising from collectivization, rural society experienced structural exclusion in terms of social and material capital.

Taken together, these papers address questions pertaining to the location of power and violence in a region that remained peripheral on a global scale in the time frame under consideration. If one goes beyond the notion that the communist regimes were the outcome of the presence of armies and illegal moves to take power, one starts to raise questions about what was particular and typical about the ways in which power was used and how it was related to various imageries of modernity at various levels of politics and local communities in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc. Moreover, have specific entanglements produced a specific political anthropology or responses to the presence of power? The questions of collectivization provide fertile ground for answers to such questions, since discussion of the events has to involve a narrative about economic relations and reform initiatives before 1945, long-term changes, the social imaginary within and about peasant society, the role of violence in post-war conditions, and the changing scope of state administration.

Of the authors, Lynne Viola is perhaps the most effective in explaining how collectivization was fundamental for state building in the Soviet Union. She goes so far as to state that this was indeed the meaning of all of the violence and change, and economic, political or class aspects were secondary. David Feast's paper is particularly interesting from this perspective, since the focal points of his inquiry, the Baltic countries, were at the frontier of the Soviet Union during and immediately after World War II. It was a region in which, on the one hand, state building was a necessity from the regime's point of view, but it also fell in the zone where tactics of a popular front government had been used in 1944–47. On the other hand, the frontier nature of these areas meant that population movements carried information and knowledge across political borders. As in the case of policy implementation and the politics of history, here too entanglements turn direct and emerge as one of the defining features of the former Eastern Bloc. With regards to junctures of modernity and discourse as a factor in modifying practices of repression and social and political structures,

the case studies on Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria are particularly revealing. Both countries had some tradition of collective farming and pre-war land reform. However, while Czechoslovakia was one of the most agriculturally developed countries of the region, Bulgarian farmers had extremely scanty resources. Gruev argues that collectivization in Bulgaria not only involved state violence in the form of absurd and discriminatory taxation that made life impossible and mass imprisonment and execution following uprisings and open resistance, but also triggered an avalanche of marginalization in localities that squeezed peasants to such an extent that rural culture and society disappeared within three decades. Jan Rychlík argues that due to the substantial differences that remained between Czechoslovak forms of collective farms and Soviet kolkhozes, widespread resistance never reached the level of uprising and indeed by the 1970s had won a large measure of acceptance. He also stresses the importance of the implications of the changes in ownership patterns in areas where a significant proportion of the population was German speaking.

In summary, the collection of studies fulfills the objectives stated in the introduction. They show how efficient the comparative method and *histoire croisée* are in narrating collectivization as a major political venture and cause of trauma in the former Soviet bloc. They also reach out to the local level. However, it is worth reflecting on what other agendas are possible in the field.

The papers in the volume do not address the gender dimension systematically. Such a move might have shown contours of the region both vis-a-vis other peripheries (such as post-colonial areas and the so-called “West”). Viola has done extensive research on resistance among women, but her excellent essay in the volume does not keep gender at the center of her argument. Throughout the studies, we find cases in which women actively resist and cases in which an administration arrests women as a tactical move to weaken households in emotional and economic terms. We also see how male heads of household would cite the stubbornness of the women in their lives as an explanation for not joining the party. However, the inclusion of standpoint theory as a methodological approach would have enabled a richer interpretation of work, labor, food and welfare and would have shed some light on the relationships between these aspects and the location of power during collectivization.⁶ József

6 Martha Lampland emphasizes that the drive to bring women into wage labor was fundamental for the idea of the socialist body politic and for socialist modernity, including in the rural zone. See “Unthinkable Subjects: Women and Labor in Socialist Hungary,” *East European Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1990) and Martha Lampland, *The Object of Labor: Commodification in Socialist Hungary* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995).

Ö. Kovács's broader social history, which considers gender as one of the axes, points in this direction.

Considering that Constantin Iordachi has recently edited a volume concerned with the historical and human geography of the Danube Delta, it is surprising that none of the studies consider collectivization from an environmental history perspective.⁷ The ecological impact of policies of Sovietization and related changes of the landscape are at least as under researched as collectivization. However, related monographs, such as the work of Arvid Nelson and that of David Blackburn dealing with the GDR and Germany as a whole respectively indicate how questions of ecological sustainability and practices of power related to land can be discussed in a common framework.⁸

The volume is Eurocentric to the extent that other areas of the world are hardly mentioned. Arguably, it ends up downplaying the importance of the Cold War. Varga mentions Chinese models and campaigns at the end of 1950s, but otherwise non-European experiences are confined to a few footnotes, in spite of the fact that Soviet–Chinese rivalry was one of the key aspects of the era in the years when the last vehement rounds of collectivization were launched in Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania and the GDR. There is no reference to Cuba, North Korea or Southeast Asian communist regimes, nor is there any discussion of how agriculture figured in Soviet Cold War strategies in North Africa and Western Asia. The question of institutionalized expertise and scientific knowledge does not arise simply because of the absence from the volume of ecological and global concerns.

The reader struggles to find a comprehensive terminology of collectivization and business/financial practices of collectivized farms. As the contributors to a collection of studies designed to practice comparative methods and study entanglements, the editors and contributors had to face the task of translating terminology. This question was especially salient in the case of defining types of collectives and tackling the contemporary discourse on “kulaks.” Regarding types, they opted to translate all terms into English, and this resulted in a mix of terms that at times lacks clarity. This is particularly disturbing in the case of Poland, where we do not actually see what Type 1b meant in practice or how

7 Constantin Iordachi and Kristof Van Assche, eds., *The Bio-politics of the Danube Delta. Nature, History and Policies* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015).

8 Arvid Nelson, *Cold War Ecology. Forests, Farms and People in the East German Landscape 1945–1989* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); David Blackburn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water and the Making of Modern German Landscape* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006).

distant it was from “real collectives” classed as Type 2 or Type 3. While making an effort to create a political history of collectivization as a narrative in which peasant resistance plays a central part, the authors are insensitive to the small-scale economic history of the collective farms.

Notwithstanding the number of options left unaddressed, as the first comprehensive volume adopting a regional perspective, the book achieves much. It provides comparable country-specific timelines and highlights key aspects of the political anthropology of collectivization (such as resistance, responses to the notion of the “kulak,” and differentiation between contexts of central and local party administration). It brings together experts from various academic and geographic background and demonstrates clearly that collectivization is one of the most important fields in the study of the regimes under Soviet domination.

Róbert Balogh

Secrets and Truths: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania's Secret Police. By Katherine Verdery. Budapest: CEU Press, 2014. 294 pp.

Katherine Verdery's ethnographic study of the file containing 2,780 pages kept by the Romanian Secret Police (the *Securitate*) on her activities in Romania between 1973 and 1989 is a thought-provoking analysis of this organization's approach. The American author is Julien J. Studley Faculty Scholar and Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Verdery, who has a broad understanding and personal experience of Romanian society, has authored several important volumes. Her book entitled *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (1991) was a groundbreaking analysis of the ways in which nationalism was used in the cultural sphere and of the strategies adopted by artists who were competing for limited resources and thus willingly adapted to the trends that were imposed from above.

In her analysis of her own files, Verdery makes a compelling argument that “the Communist Party tried to create a new kind of family, a political one encompassing the whole society,” and “[t]he Securitate's job was to implement this vision” (p.205). From the perspective of the scholarship on the role of the Securitate, Verdery's analysis is interesting because it affords us access to a specific case, that of the author, which is also a scholar. Thus she treats her experience like a case study and applies a scientific approach to it, which is a rarity in the discussions of these kinds of files, discussions which are usually of interest only to those directly involved. Verdery reminds us of how “the Securitate's fundamental working assumption was that *people are not who they seem*; its job [...] was to find out *who people really were*” (p.xiv).

In Romania, gaining access to the files of the former secret police, the Securitate, was not a simple task, and it only began to become easier after 2005, when Traian Băseșcu, who served as president for a decade (2004–14), allowed the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (CNSAS, established in 2000) to make more extensive use of the resources of the former surveillance institution. Katherine Verdery underlines the triple function given to archives of the secret police after 1989: political, research and personal. She also examines how they “involved potential revisions of history in the service of a transformed present” (xi-xii), as well as the revision of the truths they really encompass. In recent years, Romanian society and politics have been marked by

an instrumental use of the archives of the Securitate files, and the truth-value of these files has only rarely been questioned. For example, the latest troubling discovery at the beginning of 2015 was that Dinu Zamfirescu, honorary director of the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile (IICCMER) and a member of the directive college of CNSAS, had himself given information to the Securitate before leaving the country in the 1970s. He has been one of the leaders of the emigration, and he founded the Institute for the Memory of the Romanian Exile, which merged with the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes (IICCR) to become the IICCMER. Zamfirescu declared he feels no pressure to resign from the CNSAS or the IICCMER, as he was himself questioned by the Securitate and did not inform, although documents indicate that this is not the case. The study that Verdery has done of her own file advances some important issues and addresses significant questions related to the meaning of the work that was done by the Securitate.

The Introduction to the volume first presents Verdery's approach to the study of the Securitate files. In the second part, the author asks as a subtitle "What Was the Securitate?" She offers a history of the institution since 1948. Her goal is to study the files themselves and to see what they can tell us about the socialist system that we didn't already know (p.4). By adopting an ethnographic approach, she intends to shed light on the way her methods and those of the Securitate bear affinities. In other words, she considers how both an ethnographer and a secret police examine "everyday behaviors and interpret what they found" (p.7). The historical approach of the Securitate underlines the organization's importance as one of the largest intelligence services in the Eastern bloc in proportion to the population (p.9). The ascent of Ceaușescu to power is also acknowledged, and Verdery emphasizes how the role of the Securitate was transformed by this change, "from 'destroying the class enemy' to 'preventing infractions against state security' and 'defending fundamental national values'" (p.16). Verdery makes the very important observation that, in the last period of the socialist system, "the Securitate increasingly became a pedagogical or didactic rather than a punitive institution" (p.17). In fact, the Securitate sought to influence a large part of the population through indirect means, using more refined types of surveillance, instead of relying on the kinds of direct repressive measures that had been in pervasive use before.

The first chapter, "An archive and its fictions," describes first the resources the CNSAS has at its disposal, namely "as of 2013 (...) 1,800,000 paper files," which

would stretch twenty-four kilometers (pp.32–33). Verdery stresses an important detail. Many of the documents that were created or kept by the Securitate were destroyed, either accidentally or intentionally (p.33). The chapter contains a description of the work that was performed by the agents in the construction of a file. Verdery shares an impression I also had as a researcher at the CNSAS, namely the “extraordinary expenditure of time, money, and effort” (p.41) put into the Securitate’s activities. Moreover, “the organization of a surveillance file is not chronological but activity-based” (p.52). At the same time, Verdery’s approach is ethnographic and extends beyond the file itself. She quotes Cristina Vătulescu’s conclusion, according to which “[w]hile a personal file can mislead about the particulars of a victim’s fate, its close reading can be abundantly revealing about what the secret police understood by evidence, record, writing, human nature, and criminality” (p.40). Verdery considers that “the truth-value of what is in the file may not be the most interesting question we can entertain about it,” nor is the question of “whether [the] files tell ‘what really happened’” the most significant aspect. Rather, she is interested in “the agency of the file: what social effects does it have? What [...] does it fashion” (pp.62, 63). These questions are in the forefront of the distinct approach Verdery proposes in her study of the files, far more so than the one that dominates public discourse in Romania today, where “files can make ‘informers’ out of people who staunchly deny that they ever held this role” (p.66). Indeed, in this public discourse the files have been transformed into sources for political or moral capital because “they are seen as repositories of truth” (p.72). Verdery throws into question the truth-value with which the files have been invested, both by considering the ways in which the files were constructed by the agents and addressing the motives of the informers, “who reported under duress, out of malice, or inaccurately,” and the case officers (the officers responsible for the informers), who “made tendentious interpretations that suited their ends.” Equally important in this regard is the fact that the “destruction of files left enormous lacunae in the corpus; agents opened files on people even when their ‘recruits’ refused to cooperate; the demands of the planned economy set performance targets that compelled sloppy work; competition among officers and branches of the secret service aggravated that tendency and so forth” (pp.72–73).

In the second chapter, “The Secrets of the Secret Police,” Verdery embarks on a comparison of the Securitate with secret societies of New Guinea and Africa, taking some ideas from the anthropological literature on secrecy with the goal of “disrupt[ing] our accustomed way of thinking about it” (p.82). The

essential point, one worth repeating, is that “[f]rom the anthropology of secrecy we learn that what counts is not the content of a secret but the structure it is embedded in” (p.112). Verdery underlines the oppositions between the different institutions of the communist regime, the party and the secret police and the distinct types of secrets they handled. The author emphasizes the paradoxical condition of the Securitate and asks, “[h]ow are we to put these two things together: the sometimes chaotic view from inside the organization and the fearful view from the populace,” two groups that were always separated by secrecy (p.80). The analysis continues with a detailed examination of the content of secrets that were kept by the Securitate and Verdery’s emphasis on the nature of the organization as a “SECRET police” and not a “secret POLICE,” which was mainly preoccupied with the task of unmasking secrets (p.85). The parallel with the secret societies in Africa and New Guinea is based on an “‘Ur-secret’ representing what the community most fears” (p.88), which, in the case of communist regimes, was the “enemy within” (p.89). Examining secrecy as a social-structural and cultural system, Verdery analyzes how this functioned inside the Securitate. The initiation practices for officers and informers had in common “the signature acts of secret societies: a loyalty oath and one or more new names,” which were essential for “the fabrication of an alternative reality” (p.99).

Drawing on Gilbert Herdt’s “theory of secrecy based on an analysis of male secret societies” in the United States “as a response to major social transformations in gender and class relations” (p.107), Verdery discusses the Securitate as a secret society that had to compete with others at the time (p.110). Summarizing what the parallel with secret societies brought to the understanding of the Securitate, Verdery recalls how she showed that “secrecy in the form of conspirativity promoted inequality in the organization,” as well as how the ritual character of recruitment helped create “an exciting parallel world” (p.115). Finally, she showed how the Securitate competed with other similar organizations in a context that was favorable to the flourishing of such societies (p.115). In the subchapter of chapter 2, “The lives of agents,” Verdery sheds some light on the officers of the Securitate. Interestingly, the Securitate had only limited resources compared to other similar organizations in Eastern Europe. While it numbered only 39,000 officers, compared to the 93,000 members of the Stasi in the German Democratic Republic (p.129), the Securitate seemed omnipresent to the citizenry of Romania. As Verdery writes, “[n]o one was certain who the officers were, who was informing, how much information was being obtained,

or how it would be used” (p.150). Verdery underlines at the same time how “the ‘mask’ of secrecy – its state effect” was able to conceal from most Romanians the fact that the Romanian Party-state “was not a coherent, unified actor”, and “the field of power at the center was highly fragmented among disparate competing groups” (p.149).

The third chapter, “Knowledge Practices and the Social Relations of Surveillance,” addresses the situation of the 486,000 informers who helped the 39,000 officers of the Securitate. Verdery discusses the “practices whereby the Securitate sought to create knowledge about reality, uncovering the secrets that might prove dangerous to the government” (p.158). She argues that “their most important methods for producing knowledge were at the same time socially transformative, aiming to produce a new social landscape, with implications for creating the ‘new socialist person’ and a new society” (p.159). Verdery notes that “many people (...) became informers because they were deeply embedded in social ties” (p.176). This is important because the strategy of the Securitate developed into an approach that sought to influence larger social groups and thus targeted those who had strong social relations. At the same time, Verdery’s analysis provides important details on the different aspects of collaboration and the refusal to collaborate, as well as the termination of collaboration with the Securitate. “I have been showing that the regime was not simply disintegrating social relations but *striving to reforge them*, thereby altering the kinds of human beings they enmeshed. *Securisti* intended to create new contacts for people while disrupting older ones: their aim was not just to obtain knowledge but to transform the conditions under which information would be produced (...) they sought to induce networks around their targets” (p.201). She argues that “personalistic ties were the currency of social life in socialism” (p.188). Thus, “it was networks, not individuals, that the Securitate pursued” (p.189). Finally, the author acknowledges how her analysis aims to critique lustration in transitional justice, which, “targets not categories (p.all forms of collaboration), but individual persons who collaborated” (p.210). As she observes, “if collaboration was quintessentially a networked phenomenon, not an individual one [...], such interventions appear misguided” (pp.210–11). Finally, the author insists on the problematic nature of the use, in the service of truth during democratization, of the files produced by the Securitate (p.211).

In her “Conclusions,” subtitled “The Radiant Future?”, Verdery discusses the relevance of the surveillance conducted by the Securitate for today’s world, especially in the case of the United States. She addresses the issue of voluntary

online surveillance on social networks such as Facebook, but also the more problematic surveillance deployed by the United States in the aftermath of September 11 by the National Security Agency.

The volume authored by Katherine Verdery, *Secrets and Truths*, is a good overview of the approaches used by the secret police in Romania in which the author uses her own files, but also information from other files either directly or in a published form, as well as recent scholarship on secret police forces in Eastern Europe. The book is well organized in three distinct chapters that consider the truths encompassed in the secret archives, the type of work undertaken by the secret agents, and, finally, the ways in which informers were manipulated by the Securitate in the creation of new ties within society. The volume provides detailed information on the Securitate and its activities that helps further a deconstruction of many of the myths on its approach.

The author compares her ethnographic method to that of the Securitate operations, and at the same she time compares the Securitate to secret (male) societies. While the former is useful in her analysis of the secret police in Romania because it shows the type of knowledge and practices they used, the latter is less immediately pertinent, except perhaps to the anthropological study of secrecy practices.

Secrets and Truths provides an understanding of the Securitate that does not take it as a provider of truth, but rather shows the multiplicity of aspects included in the practices of this institution. Verdery's ultimate purpose is to criticize the ways in which the archives have been used since the transition to democracy as a source of truth in a manner that continues to follow the logic of the Securitate itself.

Caterina Preda

Notes on Contributors

- APOR, BALÁZS (Trinity College, Dublin), aporb@tcd.ie
- BAKOVIĆ, NIKOLA (Regional Historical Archives of Čačak, Serbia),
laonik.bakovic@gmail.com
- BALOGH, RÓBERT ((Institute of History, Research Centre for the Humanities,
Hungarian Academy of Sciences), Balogh.Robert@btk.mta.hu
- BARTHA, ÁKOS (University of Debrecen), akosbartha@yahoo.com
- ČERNÁ, MARIE (Institute of Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Sciences),
cernamarie@gmail.com
- GAYER, VERONIKA (Institute for Minority Studies, Centre for Social Sciences,
Hungarian Academy of Sciences), gayer.veronika@tk.mta.hu
- HORVÁTH, SÁNDOR (Institute of History, Research Centre for the Humanities,
Hungarian Academy of Sciences), horvath.sandor@btk.mta.hu
- KUČERA, RUDOLF (Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences),
r.kucera@email.cz
- HUDEK, ADAM (Historical Institute, Slovak Academy of Sciences. Currently a fellow at
Imre Kertész Kolleg, Jena), adamhudek@gmail.com
- LACZÓ, FERENC (Imre Kertész College, Friedrich Schiller University, Jena),
ferenc.loerinc.laczo@uni-jena.de
- MIRESCU, ALEXANDER (Saint Peter's University, Department of Political Science, Jersey
City, US), amirescu@saintpeters.edu
- PREDA, CATERINA (Department of Political Sciences, University of Bucharest),
caterinapreda@gmail.com
- SIRUTAVIČIUS, VLADAS (Lithuanian Institute of History), sirutavicius@yahoo.com
- SZ. BÍRÓ, ZOLTÁN (Institute of History, Research Centre for the Humanities,
Hungarian Academy of Sciences), sz.biro.zoltan@btk.mta.hu
- TAKÁCS, TIBOR (Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security),
tibortakacs@t-online.hu