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Defining Socialism through the Familiar: East German Representation of Hungary in the 1950s and 1960s

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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Kathryn Campbell Julian entitled "Defining Socialism through the Familiar: East German Representation of Hungary in the 1950s and 1960s." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

Vejas Liulevicius, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Denise Phillips, Margaret Andersen

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

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and 1960s

A Thesis Presented for
the Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Kathryn Campbell Julian
May 2010

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Abstract

This study analyzes East German representations of Hungary in cultural texts to investigate the emergence of a German socialist identity in the 1950s and 1960s. I further contend that post-1945 self- and collective identity in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was complex and formulated by official, intellectual, and mass perceptions. By examining East German iconography of Hungary it becomes clear that socialist identity in the early years of the dictatorship relied on traditional expressions of society as well as ideology. Hungary provided East Germans with a practical model for socialist friendship. Though the GDR was a state that ostensibly celebrated multiculturalism, East German texts presented the People's Republic of Hungary almost as another Germany with a shared heritage and culture. They articulated this palatable image of Hungary through the lens of ideology (Marxist-Leninist internationalism) and through traditional cultural definitions. This study concludes that East Germans used a composite of socialist ideas and folk customs to draw parallels with Hungary and create a distinct character that was both German and socialist.

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Introduction

“Aus, aus, aus, aus - das Spiel ist aus! Deutschland ist Weltmeister.” West German sports announcer Herbert Zimmerman passionately exclaimed that now famous statement as West Germany won the final game of the 1954 World Cup against Hungary’s “golden team.” Zimmerman continued in an emotional voice and the rare post-war sentiment of national pride: “Unser Stolz, unsere Freude und unseren ganz innigen Dank den elf Spielern in weißen Jersey und schwarzen Hosen.”¹ However, not all Germans shared Zimmerman’s enthusiasm. East German announcer Wolfgang Hempel reported the end of the game in a somewhat clinical manner, expressing little of the passion behind Zimmerman’s pronouncements: “Das Unvorstellbar ist passiert. Die Westdeutschen Nationalmannschaft wird Fußball Weltmeister 1954 in Endspiel gegen Ungarn mit ein 3:2 Sieg durch ein Tor von Rand acht Minuten vor dem Abpfiff. Die ganze Fußball Welt steht auf dem Kopf.”² In an interview toward the end of his life, Hempel admitted that East German officials had given him explicit directions to report West Germany’s games as he would any other Western nation. Members of the Central Committee instructed him that his friends were the Hungarians (“Eure richtigen Freunde, sagten sie, sind die Ungarn. Die westdeutsche Mannschaft behandelt ihr wie jede andere Mannschaft aus dem Westen.”)³ Though the regime approved of his impartial coverage, East German fans did not. Hempel disclosed that he received numerous letters after the World Cup from football fans in the GDR

¹ Herbert Zimmerman, “Reportage vom Endspiel um die Fußball-Weltmeisterschaft 1954 im Berner Wankdorf-Stadion,” 4.7.1954, *Wir sind wieder wer* (Berlin: Deutsches Historisches Museum, Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv, 1995). Translation: “Over, over, over, over – the game is over! Germany is World Champion.”

“Our pride, our joy, and our heartfelt thanks to the eleven players in white jerseys and black shorts.”

² Wolfgang Hempel, “Reportage vom Endspiel um die Fußball-Weltmeisterschaft 1954 im Berner Wankdorf-Stadion,” 4.7.1954. Translation: “The unimaginable has happened. The West German national team has become football 1954 world champions in the final match against Hungary with a 3:2 victory because of a goal from Rand eight minutes before the final whistle. The entire football world is on its head.”

³ Wolfgang Kohrt, “Eure Freunde sind die Ungarn,” *Berliner Zeitung* (14. Oktober 2003). Accessed online archive: <http://www.berlinonline.de/berliner-zeitung/archiv/.bin/dump.fcgi/2003/1014/blickpunkt/0001/>.

who accused him of not showing enough enthusiasm at the end of the game and not fully supporting West Germany, who were after all also German.⁴ The story of Hempel's subdued treatment of West Germany's victory over socialist Hungary represents the ambivalent position in which East Germans found themselves in the 1950s. Many were divided between a socialist identity promoted by the regime and their familiar German identity that tied them to their capitalist counterparts.

Despite familial, linguistic, and ethnic connections to West Germany, by 1989 East Germans had developed an identity that was distinct to the socialist regime. After the *Wende*, or turn, the cultural differences between East and West became apparent. East Germans had lived in a non-competitive, socialist dictatorship, while West Germans had been associated throughout the Cold War with freedom and democracy. In the context of unification, the distinctions between the Federal Republic's (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic's (GDR) social, political, and economic boundaries became markedly apparent and unified Germany was constructed to fit West Germany's cultural character.⁵ As a result, many East Germans felt colonized and self-identified as *Ossis* not Germans.

It is therefore important to evaluate East German history in the context of its socialist development and its relationship to other socialist countries. The GDR and its Eastern Bloc neighbors sought to craft a society in opposition to the West's capitalism. The early years, though tempered by repression and an ever-increasing state apparatus, were characterized by intellectual optimism and hope for a unified Communist project with the goal of establishing egalitarian societies. This study analyzes cultural East German representations of the People's

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Andreas Staab, *National Identity in Eastern Germany: Inner Unification or Continued Separation?* (Westport, CT, London: Praeger, 1998), 9.

Republic of Hungary (UVR, or *Ungarische Volksrepublik*) and the Magyar people in order to address questions about East German culture, socialist self- and collective identity as well as traditional folk identities.

The Socialist Unity Party, or SED (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*), used Hungary as an image of socialist partnership. Although the Soviet Military Administration (SMAD) undertook extensive efforts beginning in 1947 to articulate socialist identity and internationalism by highlighting connections to the Soviet Union, most ordinary Germans in the Soviet zone, and later East Germany, were suspicious of SMAD and the Communist Party. In the early years of the GDR Johannes Becher, the chief German cultural leader in the East, was more successful in pushing the project of Soviet-German friendship. He established organizations like the *Kulturbund*, the Society for the Study of the Culture of the Soviet Union, and Soviet-German friendship societies to gain the support of intellectuals, though they were met with resistance for harsh censorship policies. Still, the memory of Soviet-perpetrated rape and atrocity tainted German perceptions of their Soviet occupiers and subsequently the Communists and the Soviet- sponsored SED. The legacy of post-war violence continued to undermine government legitimacy and German-Soviet relations.⁶ Hungary, which suffered similar atrocities at the hands of the Russians, provided a practical alternative with which to model socialist friendship.

After 1949 the regime fashioned a socialist identity that better appealed to East Germans, most of whom were exhausted from the National Socialist years, war, and Soviet occupation. The people did not always exist in opposition to the regime's projects, and were often willing to

⁶ Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 121.

adapt to new political realities or restraints. Recent scholarship has moved away from historical approaches that paint East Germany as a uniform political regime or a dichotomous society composed of a repressive state and people in opposition to that state.⁷ Historians have recognized that East Germany was instead a complex, textured society, composed of intertwining ideas and various levels of existence. Their studies examine wide-ranging topics including compromise, grass-roots participation, “normalization,” consumerism, and the history of the everyday, or *Alltagsgeschichte*, in East Germany.⁸ In the years following the repression of Nazism and the Soviet Military Administration, East Germans reconstructed their lives and adjusted to existence in the German Democratic Republic. The 1950s and ‘60s thus provide an interesting framework for a study about East German official and popular representation of other socialist nations, as disillusionment with “real-existing socialism” had not yet crystallized as it did with younger generations in the late 1970s and ‘80s. During the first decade of the new regime there was a genuine optimism amongst workers, peasants, and leftist intellectuals, some of whom chose to immigrate to the East German state.⁹ Many East German citizens believed they were participating in a larger project to establish a true socialist society. Rhetoric and literature in the 1950s was not only optimistic but also filled with references to future utopias.

⁷ See Sigrid Meuschel, *Legitimation und Parteiherrschaft. Zum Paradox von Stabilität und Revolution in der DDR, 1945-1989* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992) and Jürgen Kocka and Martin Sabrow, *Die DDR als Geschichte*, vol. 2 in *Zeithistorische Studien* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1994). Meuschel posited that East German society “withered away” instead of the state.

⁸ See David Bathrick, *Powers of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), Joshua Feinstein, *The Triumph of the Ordinary: Depictions of Daily Life in East German Cinema, 1949-1989* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), Mary Fulbrook, *The People’s State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2008), Jeannette Madársz, *Conflict and Compromise in East Germany, 1971-1989: A Precarious Stability* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), and Esther von Richthofen, *Bringing Culture to the Masses: Control, Compromise, and Participation in the GDR* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009).

⁹ For example, authors Anna Seghers and Bertolt Brecht viewed the GDR as a better alternative to the capitalist West.

Other citizens simply wanted to move on after the crisis of world war and economic depression. Eventually the “age of ideology” gave way to a type of “consumer socialism” in the late 1950s and ‘60s.¹⁰ Mary Fulbrook argues that the concept of “normalization,” or adjustment to social and political realities, should be applied to this period of life in the GDR.¹¹ Though society was inundated with Party rhetoric and propaganda, the structures of everyday existence predominated over politics and ideology. People worked, traveled within limits, found happiness, and actively participated in or abstained from the East German state.¹² Alon Confino also suggests that East Germans found a balance between politics and everyday life by participating in the very regime that repressed their freedoms.¹³ Fulbrook marks 1961 and the construction of the Berlin Wall as the moment the state’s future became certain. The production of a tangible border cemented the realities of life in the GDR, and with it the possibility of German unification diminished in the minds of East Germans.¹⁴ Using a similar framework, Pierre Kende points to the 1956 Hungarian revolution as the moment of Hungarian normalization. He contends that Hungary’s defeat by the Soviet Union was total and with the Nagy government hopes of a liberalized Hungarian nation also disappeared.¹⁵

Likewise, East Germans began the process of establishing ordinary lifestyles and routines as early as the Soviet suppression of the 1953 Uprising. Even before 1953 East Germans

¹⁰ Mary Fulbrook, *The People’s State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2008), 12.

¹¹ Mary Fulbrook, “The Concept of ‘Normalisation’ and the GDR in Comparative Perspective,” in *Power and Society in the GDR, 1961-1979: The ‘Normalisation’ of Rule?* edited by Mary Fulbrook (New York, London: Berghahn Books, 2009), 2-5.

¹² Fulbrook, *The People’s State*, ix.

¹³ Alon Confino, “The Travels of Bettina Humpel: One Stasi File and the Narratives of State and Self in East Germany,” in *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, eds. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 133.

¹⁴ Fulbrook, “The Concept of ‘Normalisation’ and the GDR in Comparative Perspective,” 6.

¹⁵ Pierre Kende, “The post-1956 Hungarian Normalization,” in W. Brus, P. Kende, and Z. Mlynar, eds. *“Normalization” Processes*, 6.

engaged in everyday activities within the new socialist dictatorship. The GDR's establishment in 1949 marked a departure from the aberration of war and occupation and a return to the mundane as East Germans began to focus on rebuilding a semblance of their pre-war lives. Many once again embraced local identity and customs they had practiced before the war. The Cultural Ministry was at first wary of the continuance of provincial customs but eventually appropriated folk ideas to encourage state legitimacy. Though extensive cooperation between state and people was not established until Fulbrook's 1961 designation, many East German citizens accepted the circumstances of the society in which they lived much earlier. The East German regime also actively attempted to normalize its relationship to society. Confino asserts that modern, ideological regimes like the GDR derived legitimacy from maintaining happiness or at least the illusion of a normal life.¹⁶ Thus, the SED could not ignore public opinion, and indeed, part of the process of establishing a standard of familiarity with new ideologies and post-war realities involved the cultivation of a "socialist personality." Even in the 1950s East German citizens internalized a specific *East* German identity. Though many grew weary of ideology and agitprop, East Germans did not ignore politics, especially in the early years of the GDR. Particularly after 1953, GDR citizens began to absorb the socialist personality and reconceptualize their once-negative relationship to Moscow. The state also worked to form close friendships with other East European republics like Hungary. Affected by propaganda, education, and travel, many East Germans in the 1950s developed a sense of camaraderie with their socialist neighbors. Moreover, the East German state used images of other socialist states to promote a Marxist-Leninist personality. Depictions of Hungary were part of this project and by the 1960s informed the way East Germans perceived and thought about their socialist counterparts in Hungary.

¹⁶ Confino, "The Travels of Bettina Humpel," 134.

The state's attempt to create a socialist personality by appealing to ties with foreign nations was combined with their efforts to socialize the familiar. The regime compromised by fashioning an attractive form of socialism as sentiments of loyalty to Germanness still pervaded the East German consciousness. Their West German counterparts were more familiar and most East Germans maintained close connections to Germans in the Federal Republic throughout the forty year duration of the GDR. In addition, the zealous policy of antifascism encouraged a culture of forgetting that allowed East Germans to maintain pride for aspects of their German heritage. In order to make socialism more palatable to East Germans the regime employed the traditional trope of *Heimat*.

Jan Palmowski argues that the GDR regime encouraged the idea of a socialist *Heimat* beginning in the 1950s. Though defined by the state, socialist *Heimat* allowed East Germans to articulate a new identity that maintained regional and local ties.¹⁷ It urged participation in transforming society and provided a medium through which East Germans could express a sense of belonging. The iconography of the 1950s and '60s combined seemingly disparate ideologies by drawing on tradition, a sense of change, and socialist ideology.¹⁸ Palmowski further contends that local identities were not destroyed during the 1950s in favor of ideological antifascism which often equated *Heimat* and Nazism. Instead, the GDR regime appropriated the idea of local *Heimat* to promote new loyalties to socialism and the state.¹⁹ This study expands on Palmowski's notion of socialist *Heimat* by analyzing how this traditional concept was applied to international relations.

¹⁷ Jan Palmowski, "Learning the Rules: Local Activists and the Heimat," in *Power and Society in the GDR, 1961-1979: The 'Normalisation' of Rule?* edited by Mary Fulbrook (New York, London: Berghahn Books, 2009), 151.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Jan Palmowski, "Defining the East German Nation: The Construction of a Socialist Heimat, 1945-1962," *Central European History* 37 (2004), 367-368.

The SED used familiar images of Hungary to promote socialist *Heimat*. Socialist identity was therefore not a separate personality but a bridge between familiar ideas of collective identity and the new notion of socialist solidarity. Hungarian-German friendship was for East Germans palatable and so served the purpose of promoting socialist cohesion. The acculturation of a socialist personality also encouraged the sentiment that East Germans were contributing to a larger socialist project. Socialist fraternity resonated with both high and mass culture, as it was evoked in numerous facets of East German society from textbooks to art to popular literature and sport. By using the medium of printed sources, it is possible to discern the directives of the regime and intellectual ideas, yet these sources also enable the reader to explore messages intended for mass consumption.

In the 1950s and '60s negotiating identity in the GDR was an amalgamation of encouraging socialist solidarity and maintaining a traditional German identity. The multi-faceted East German identity of the 1950s both embraced and rejected the past and looked to new ideologies in Marxist-Leninism. Socialist states also created a *Freund-Feindbild* (Concept of the Friend and Enemy) paradigm that cast the capitalist West as enemy and socialist comrades as friends. The socialist personality was defined in opposition to the *Feindbild*. The *Feindbild* represented the dialectic between friend and enemy based on class orientation and political system, while the *Freundbild* depicted ideologically similar people, motivated by the same goals and in unity with their socialist brethren.²⁰

East German leaders encouraged sentiments of loyalty through depictions of likeminded people. They presented compatible images of Hungarians and East Germans in newspapers,

²⁰ Silke Satjukow and Rainer Gries, eds. *Unsere Feinde. Konstruktionen des Anderen im Sozialismus* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2004), 13-15.

magazines, and historical texts. By using countries like Hungary to craft a separate socialist identity that transcended national borders, the SED regime endeared itself to the Soviet Union, legitimated its claims to Marxist internationalism, and most important, provided East Germans with a new identity opposed to the capitalist Western “Other.” The SED used the concept of *Freundbild* to establish how East Germans should think about foreign policy and their socialist counterparts in the UVR.

Historians have yet to consider how East Germans re-imagined their relationship with the People’s Republic of Hungary during the first two decades of the GDR. Hungary had been an ally during the Second World War and was also negotiating its new role under Communist rule and Soviet influence. East Germany and Hungary were unique during the post-war period in Europe. Both had popular uprisings in the 1950s that directly challenged Soviet authority and caused them to become symbols of opposition and victims of Soviet oppression in the West. Scholars have further neglected to analyze how East Germany’s relationship to Hungary contributed to the formation of an East German identity. The GDR’s images of Hungary reflected traditional forms of German intellectual and cultural life. East Germany’s iconography of their socialist as well as Western counterparts illustrates the fluidity of identity in the GDR.

Historians have extensively covered the topic of post-1945 German identity. Jeffrey Herf contends that postwar identity was formulated through connections to the past, be it the Weimar period or the more recent violence of the Holocaust. East German leaders like Walter Ulbricht and Wilhelm Pieck gained their political legitimacy during the Communist movement of the inter-war years.²¹ To be sure, the memory of the past and especially the legacy of the Second

²¹ Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, MA, London: Harvard University Press, 1997).

World War continued to inform Germans and historians of Germany alike. However, constructing identity was more complicated than Herf's historical memory and even more complex than Benedict Anderson's socially constructed "imagined communities."²² Rather, people in postwar Germany possessed numerous identities. Their personal and collective character was formulated through interpersonal relationships, through engaging with the state, and principal to this study, by comparing themselves to others.

Fulbrook diverges from Herf in that she tries to reconstruct a more textured East German history by illustrating that East Germans were informed by their present as well as their past and the local as well as the national.²³ She recognizes that, like everyone, Germans (even East Germans in a repressive dictatorship) led complex lives and that their identity was neither monolithic nor fixed. This study builds on Fulbrook's notion that East German identity was complicated by illuminating another component of the East German *weltanschauung*: identification of a familiar "Other."

It is possible to explore both collective identity and cultural life in the early years of the German Democratic Republic through the framework of East German representation of Hungary. The following chapters will address East Germany's portrayals of a shared revolutionary heritage, parallels in official, intellectual, and mass culture, and direct interaction through travel. It is important to note that these categories did not develop in isolation from each other. State policy and popular perceptions coexisted in a reciprocal relationship, each informing the other. Both official and popular renderings of Hungary provide insight regarding the reality and

²² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and the Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983, 2006). Anderson defines "imagined communities" as "limited, sovereign, and elastic." East German identity in the liminal space of the 1950s was beyond elastic. He also underestimates ideology's role in formulating identity.

²³ Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

pretenses of East German socialist identity, Marxist internationalism, and trans-cultural relations in the Eastern Bloc. Images of Hungary's revolutionary heritage and folk traditions served the GDR's objective of articulating identity through affiliation with other socialist nations instead of by comparison with West Germany. Significantly, Hungary provided East Germans a lens through which to understand other Communist dictatorships and formulate their own socialist identity.

Chapter 1: Memorialization of a Shared Revolutionary Tradition

The East German regime sought to legitimate itself by portraying East Germans as the inheritors of the German revolutionary tradition from Karl Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, and Karl Liebknecht. Germany, after all, was the birth place of socialism and East Germany thus the proper expression of Germany's historical progress and final culmination in socialism after suffering under the highest stage of capitalism: fascism. GDR leaders observed that Hungary had evolved to socialism through similar means. East German authors likewise appropriated the legacy of revolution in Hungary to show close parallels and an analogous heritage. East Germans therefore illustrated their own dialectic of history by analyzing Hungary's historical progression from oppression to revolution,

The focus on the People's Republic of Hungary (UVR) as a participant in Germany's revolutionary heritage not only served the state's diplomatic mission to strengthen ties with countries in the Eastern Bloc but also established East Germany as a cultural and socialist leader in Eastern Europe. In order to legitimate its special status, the SED stressed Germany's rich socialist history, beginning of course with the father of scientific socialism, Karl Marx.

The East German regime was aware of its symbolic importance in the Cold War and perpetuated the idea that reunification was their priority. At the twenty-fifth Plenum of the Central Committee in 1955, leaders emphasized the necessity of East Germany's success not only for sake of democracy and peace in Germany but also to ensure the prolonged existence of worldwide socialism.²⁴ *Politische Grundschule (Political Primary School)*, a text designed to teach citizens about "der erste Staat der Arbeiter und Bauern" (the first state of the workers and

²⁴ Zentralkomitee der SED, ed. *Politische Grundschule. Die Deutsche Demokratische Republik – der erste Staat der Arbeiter und Bauern in der Geschichte Deutschlands – die Basis im Kampf um die nationale Wiedervereinigung Deutschlands* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1959), 119. Quoted from an issue of *Neues Deutschland* published on 1 November 1955.

peasants), further stressed the GDR's unique position in the history of socialism: "The founding of the GDR, which Stalin described as a 'turning-point in the history of Europe' has greater historical significance for further revolutionary transformation..."²⁵ It also posited that the GDR was a paradigm of socialist economic structure, a model for other central European socialist states, and a leader in the Warsaw Pact.²⁶ Part of this assumed exceptionality centered on a divided Germany, but it was in equal part due to Germany's revolutionary heritage. The official iconography of Hungary's revolutionary tradition, therefore, mirrored the German model. East Germans highlighted events, such as the 1848 revolutions and the 1919 Communist uprisings, which also took place in Germany, to illustrate Hungary's evolution to socialism.

East German leaders and intellectuals interpreted the 1848 revolutions in both Germany and Hungary as reactions against similar oppressors. In Germany, Prussian Junkers subjugated the lower classes, while Hungary suffered under the rule of the Hapsburg monarchy. During the early 1950s, the dictatorships of the GDR and Hungary appropriated the image of the "Prussian" and the "Hapsburg" as *Feindbilder*. Propaganda during the 1950s often sought to demonstrate continuity from the rule of Junker and Austrian lord to the fascist regimes of Adolf Hitler and Miklós Horthy.²⁷ These *Feindbilder* became synonymous with Western imperialism, and after de-Stalinization, with cults of personality. Interestingly, the Hapsburg and Prussian *Feindbilder* were also appropriated to fit a socialist *Sonderweg* position. Hungarian historians in the late 1950s and early 1960s claimed that the Hapsburg monarchy could only be interpreted as an

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

Original quote: "Die Gründung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (7. Oktober 1949), die J.W. Stalin als einen 'Wendepunkt in der Geschichte Europas' bezeichnete, hat große historische Bedeutung sowohl für die weitere revolutionäre Umgestaltung..."

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 51, 62.

²⁷ Árpád von Klimó, "'Habsburger' und 'Preußen'. Historische Feindbilder und ihre Wandlungen in Ungarn und der DDR im Vergleich," in *Unsere Feinde. Konstruktion des Anderen im Sozialismus*, edited by Silke Satjukow and Rainer Gries (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2004), 517.

imperialistic oppressor-state (*Unterdrückungsstaat*) that had hindered the normal development of Hungary's economic history and thus led to fascism under Horthy.²⁸

The German-Hungarian Historical Commission, or *Kommission der Historiker der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und der Volksrepublik Ungarn*, collaborated throughout the 1960s and 1970s for the purpose of illuminating the parallels in German and Hungarian history. Their accessible study *Die Ungarische Revolution von 1848/49 und die Demokratische Bewegung in Deutschland*, or “The Hungarian Revolution of 1848/49 and the Democratic Movement in Germany,” explored these parallels through the framework of Marxist history. In the foreword, economic historian Iván Berend legitimated the purpose of the joint historical commission. He emphasized the practical elements of their research by claiming that historical investigation helped strengthen socialist society and friendships through new knowledge. His implicit case for funding and continued research was therefore structured in scientific and diplomatic terms, both of which appealed to the SED regime. An exploration of the historical relationship of the GDR and the UVR as well as an exchange of expert opinions between objective German and Hungarian historians would strengthen the contemporary friendship of these socialist nations. The project also served to expand knowledge of a mutual and important revolutionary past. This historical text was thus a symbol of the productive collaborative work (“als ein Symbol der guten Zusammenarbeit”) between Berlin and Budapest.²⁹

East German historian Karl Obermann further highlighted the theme of collaboration and solidarity throughout the study. He contended that not only were the 1848 revolutions in Hungary and Germany comparable but they also marked the first collaboration between German

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 518.

²⁹ Iván Berend, “Vorwort,” in *Die Ungarische Revolution von 1848/49 und die Demokratische Bewegung in Deutschland*, by Karl Obermann, edited by Kommission der Historiker der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und der Volksrepublik Ungarn (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1971), 7.

and Hungarian revolutionaries in their struggle for democracy.³⁰ Obermann described the Hungarian Revolution as characteristic of the exceptional events of 1848. Both revolutions constituted the high point of political and social conflict in the first half of the nineteenth century. Although Obermann did not ignore that these were primarily bourgeois revolutions, he emphasized the role of democratic elements and workers. For instance, he portrayed Lajos Kossuth, leader of the Hungarian revolt, as a charismatic champion of the proletariat. Despite the revolution's failure, Kossuth's name continued to stand for the people's movement for freedom and independence.³¹ Most important, this study stressed German interaction with Kossuth and other revolutionaries during their struggle for democracy.

According to Obermann, the Magyar people communicated frequently with sympathetic Germans. Revolutionary Germans supported the Hungarian fight against the feudal, reactionary Habsburgs, as it was reminiscent of their own struggle against Prussian Junkers and counterrevolutionaries. Obermann returned to Robert Blum as the epitome of a German revolutionary in his commitment to the ideological struggle against oppression. Blum was a man of humble origins, devoted to the ideal of equality, and a leading member of the failed *Frankfurter Nationalversammlung*, or National Assembly. He was also illegally executed for revolutionary activity during the *Oktoberaufstand*, or October Uprising, in Vienna. Obermann stated that the counterrevolutionary forces in Vienna naively believed that revolutionary sentiment could be eliminated if they executed Blum and ignored institutions like the National Assembly.³² Instead, the legacy of Blum and Hungarian revolutionary Sándor Petőfi came to symbolize the internationalist element of 1848. Blum provided Obermann with the ideal martyr

³⁰ Karl Obermann, *Die Ungarische Revolution von 1848/49 und die Demokratische Bewegung in Deutschland*.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

³² *Ibid.*, 29.

through which to illustrate the early revolutionary cause as well as a representative of German determination to aid their revolutionary comrades suffering under Hapsburg rule.

The failure of the October Uprising and the defeat of the “heroic Hungarian people” was said to have ultimately signaled the collapse of revolutionary hope in all of Europe.³³ Obermann described the shock of German revolutionaries and their conviction that the suppression of Hungary’s fight for freedom, the disintegration of Germany’s constitution, and the oppression of Russian revolutionaries were all connected events.³⁴ An East German teaching guide likewise underlined the collaborative nature of Germany’s and Hungary’s bourgeois revolutions.³⁵ It outlined the parallel victories of the counterrevolutionary forces in Hungary, Poland, Austria, and Prussia, stating that the bourgeoisie capitulated and were subsequently suppressed.³⁶ The text stated that though reactionaries returned to power to enforce the old “system of slavery” of Metternich and Louis Philippe, the revolutionary spirit of 1848 persisted and would affect later change.

To illustrate this revolutionary partnership, Obermann’s study included extracts from nineteenth-century German documents applauding the Hungarian uprising and the democratic movement. Most indicative of the message the German-Hungarian Historical Committee wanted to relay was their inclusion of posters urging Germans to join their Hungarian brothers-in-arms. The first placard printed contained a message familiar to East Germans by the end of the 1960s. The word “Cameraden,” or Comrades, is printed in bold across the top of the page, and the first sentence used recognizable ideological language: “Ich bringe Euch den herzlichen Gruß und den

³³ *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁵ Eberhard Trzcionka, ed. *Unterrichtshilfen. Geschichte 8. Klasse. Zum Lehrplan 1969* (Berlin: Volkseigener Verlag, 1969), 58-59.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 72-73.

brüderlichen Händedruck der uns zu Hilfe geeilten Brüder aus Ungarn.”³⁷ (I bring you heartfelt greetings and brotherly handshakes to hurry to the aid of our brethren in Hungary.) These words indicated a long-standing revolutionary partnership between Germans and Hungarians and underlined socialist fraternity.

However, Obermann’s emphasis on collaboration between these revolutionary movements at times clouded the differences between events in Germany and Hungary, which must be understood in their respective cultural context. In addition, he frequently conflated the Magyar as one *Volk* whose revolution was oppressed by “tsarist” forces in 1849. It is significant that Obermann used the term “tsarist” instead of “Russian” to describe the Russia’s intervention. By doing so, he preserved Soviet legitimacy and provided East Germans reading this text with a somewhat simplified and satisfying image of the Hungarian role in the 1848 revolutions. Obermann’s description unequivocally connected Hungary to German history and heritage. By intertwining their own history with the history of Hungary, these East German authors fashioned a common narrative of the German-Hungarian past that appealed to both traditional and socialist sentiments.

Historical texts in the GDR also treated contemporary events and used revolutionary history as a framework for relaying political and ideological messages. In particular, after the 1956 uprising in Hungary, socialist regimes sought to maintain the revolutionary authenticity of the People’s Republic of Hungary and the Soviet Union. Authors therefore emphasized ubiquitous counterrevolutionary forces in Hungary’s history by drawing parallels between the events of 1848, 1918-19, and 1956. The 1918 Communist revolution in Hungary led by Béla Kun was upheld as a model of temporary success, unlike the failed Communist

³⁷ Obermann, *Die Ungarische Revolution*, 73. Anhang, Nr. 5

Spartakusaufstand (Spartacus Uprising) that took place the same year in Berlin. However, the same variety of counterrevolutionaries that stopped Liebknecht's and Luxemburg's uprising would reverse Kun's revolution as well and put an end to the Hungarian *Räterepublik*, or representative people's government.³⁸ Official agitprop classified the 1956 Hungarian uprising as an attempt to overthrow the existing Communist state. It too was orchestrated by similar ambiguously defined, but malevolent, counterrevolutionaries.

An example of this comparative trend was Heinz Lindner's 1958 text *Revolution und Konterrevolution in Ungarn in den Jahren 1918/19*, or *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Hungary in 1918/19*. Writing after the 1956 uprising, Lindner manufactured continuities between counterrevolutionary forces in 1919 and 1956. Indeed, the belief that history should serve political and ideological purpose was widely held by GDR officials and writers. Lindner echoed this idea in his emphasis on connections between the events of 1919 and 1956: "The function of this reading should be above all to analyze the history of the Hungarian soviet republic in light of the Hungarian events of autumn of 1956 and accordingly to draw political conclusions."³⁹ Lindner's purpose was also to stimulate further German studies regarding the Hungarian *Räterepublik* upon its fortieth anniversary in 1959.⁴⁰ Accordingly, Lindner reiterated the motif of international socialist triumph over its collective *Feinde* (enemies).

Hungary's *Räterepublik*, he announced, represented the positive and natural development of a people's democracy. Lindner claimed that the Communist Party of Hungary was the first

³⁸ *Räterepublik* is often translated as "council or soviet republic." In Hungarian, the word is *Tanácsköztársaság*, or literally "council republic."

³⁹ Heinz Lindner, *Revolution und Konterrevolution in Ungarn in den Jahren 1918/19*. Die Ungarische *Räterepublik* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1958), 3.

Original quote: "Die Aufgabe dieser Vorlesung soll es deshalb vor allem sein, die Geschichte der Ungarischen *Räterepublik* im Lichte der ungarischen Ereignisse vom Herbst 1956 zu analysieren und daraus die entsprechenden politischen Schlußfolgerungen zu ziehen."

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Communist party that attempted to follow the model of the Soviet Union after the October Revolution. It signaled the evolution of a new stage in the Hungarian worker's movement, a stage in which ideas of equality and democracy were finally realized.⁴¹ Lindner juxtaposed the democratic victory of the *Räterepublik* with earlier forms of Hungary's political history with the Habsburgs, as both periods ostensibly marginalized the majority of the population. In an attempt to provide a Marxist pattern for Hungary's development, Lindner compressed in a few pages the dialectic of Hungary's past. Under the leadership of Sándor Petőfi and Lajos Kossuth the workers began to emerge from under the oppressive shadow of Habsburg "feudalism."⁴² Like Obermann, Lindner minimized the bourgeois and nationalistic nature of the 1848 revolt in Hungary. Instead, he focused on the emergence of a cogent worker's movement and class consciousness. In this way, Lindner, like socialist officials of the GDR and Hungary, allowed established bourgeois heroes, such as Petőfi, to remain enshrined in the national iconography of socialist nations.

However, the Communist revolutions of 1918-19 provided East German authors with a resolutely socialist catalogue of heroes. It was through these figures that Lindner, like Obermann, addressed the historical relations between Germans and Hungarians. He focused particularly on the revolutionary struggles of analogous Communist figures: Germans Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg and the courageous Béla Kun. Instead of direct interaction between these German and Hungarian revolutionaries as in the 1848 revolutions, *Revolution und Konterrevoltuion* emphasized shared experiences. Germans and Hungarians suffered under repressive and violent imperialism during the First World War and were educated in Marxist

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 9.

radicalism. Significantly, Lindner pointed out that most of the Hungarian communists spent time in Russia during the war and experienced the success of their Russian comrades in 1917. The implication was, of course, that “unmittelbare Erlebnis” (direct experience) with the October Revolution allowed for the initial victory in Hungary.⁴³ Lindner even traced continuities to Hungary’s later leaders, such as Mátyás Rákosi, who by 1958 had fallen out of favor.

The 1919 German-Hungarian connection was also memorialized in art. A book entitled *Revolutionary Art in Hungary* was published by the *Ministerium für Kultur der DDR* (Ministry for Culture of the GDR) in 1973.⁴⁴ It celebrated progressive, oppositional works of numerous Hungarian artists, yet notably devoted extensive descriptions to Hungarian artists with German connections. For instance, the collection featured László Mednyánsky and János Nagy Balogh, both of whom studied at the *Akademie für bildene Kunst* in Munich, where many of their revolutionary ideas were formulated. Mednyánsky’s humanistic paintings often depicted the futility of war, while Balogh’s subjects were realistic workers and the everyday.⁴⁵ Both men participated in Hungary’s *Räterepublik* and both became martyrs of the worker’s revolution; Mednyánsky died in Vienna in 1919 and Balogh in Budapest. Cultural figures like these painters, Kun, and Liebknecht allowed East German authors to articulate a positive image of Germany’s interaction with Hungary.

According to Lindner, the counterrevolutionary resurgence began with Kun’s concessions to capitalism. The Communist coalition with the Social-Democrats initiated the process of decline. Lindner explained that Hungarian Communists faced a difficult position after the war, but he did not excuse Kun’s actions and maintained that Kun should have fought for the

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁴⁴ Ministerium für Kultur der DDR, *Revolutionäre Kunst in Ungarn, 1900-1925* (Karl-Marx-Stadt, Leipzig; Neue Berliner Galerie Zentrum für Kunstausstellungen der DDR 1973, 1974).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

“dictatorship of the proletariat” instead of compromising the principles of Marxist-Leninism.⁴⁶

After the compromise and the transformation of the government on 4 April 1919, Social-Democrats gained the majority in the *Räterepublik* and defaulted on the promises of the revolution. The hegemony of the Social-Democrats, what V.I. Lenin called a “backward compromise with the bourgeoisie,” finally afforded international imperial and fascist counterrevolutionaries the opportunity to assert themselves and begin the destruction of the short-lived Hungarian *Räterepublik*.⁴⁷

Lindner’s analysis of these counterrevolutionary forces offers a fascinating window into the East German conception of *Feindbild*. Lenin warned the Hungarian Communist leaders against vacillation and compromise with the petty bourgeoisie in 1919. Such cooperation would lead to deterioration of the *Räterepublik* and more imperialistic war.⁴⁸ Lindner confirmed Lenin’s prognostication by highlighting the ascendancy of the “fascist” Horthy regime in 1920. He explained that Western imperial powers joined with the Hungarian counterrevolution in order to defeat the democratic worker’s republic. Here Lindner drew comparisons to the “counterrevolution in 1956.” Lindner went so far as to equate the reformist government of Imre Nagy to Horthy’s conservative regime. He concluded that Nagy and his compatriots, like Horthy, betrayed the Hungarian people by aligning with Western militarism to achieve political hegemony.⁴⁹ Likewise, a text profiling the People’s Republic of Hungary attributed the failure of the 1919 *Räterepublik* to the collaboration between Western, imperialistic forces and Admiral

⁴⁶ Lindner, *Revolution und Konterrevolution*, 36.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

Horthy's counterrevolutionary forces.⁵⁰ European and American imperialists were "beside themselves with rage" (*außer sich vor Wut*) at the construction of Hungary's dictatorship of the proletariat, which was applauded by Lenin and later Stalin. These Western powers therefore gave free aid to Hungarian fascists and counterrevolutionaries.⁵¹ In stronger language, Lindner insisted that the "fascist terror" of 1956 revived the infamy of the 1919 Horthy-counterrevolution with their brazen murder and destruction.⁵²

The accusation of betrayal was significant for Lindner's context. In 1958 Nagy was executed for treason. Lindner's text thus justified the Soviet repression of the revolt and the subsequent trials, while casting the West in the role of traditional counterrevolutionary *Klassenfeind* (class enemy). Implicit in his text was also the idea that the same malevolent forces were responsible for the 1953 uprising in East Germany. It is unsurprising that Lindner connected subversion in the 1950s GDR and Hungary with the brutal legacy of fascism. Lindner concluded with a cautionary note regarding the still aggressive capitalist West. He emphasized that the goal of militaristic imperialism was to intervene in socialists' collective mission to spread the proletariat revolution. These Western powers, likewise, had an agenda to extend the counterrevolution in the form of capitalist imperialism.⁵³

This view of the capitalist "Other" coincided with contemporaneous documents published in the Eastern Bloc, especially those that sought to explain the people's revolts of the 1950s. By this period, the United States had emerged as a dominant Western power and was said to embody the traits of all of socialism's common enemies: fascism, feudalism, capitalism, and imperialism.

⁵⁰ J.F. Gellert, G. Möchel, R. Sommer, B. Szent-Istvani, and U. Bamborschke, *Volksrepublik Ungarn* (Berlin: Verlag Kultur und Fortschritt, 1955), 77.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁵² Lindner, *Revolution und Konterrevolution*, 90.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

It is within this context that the foreign ministry of the Hungarian People's Republic released a report called *Documents on the Hostile Activity of the United States Government against the Hungarian People's Republic*.⁵⁴ Significantly, the report, which was translated and published in East Germany in 1953, underscored the motif of shared enemies. The United States as representative of capitalism and militaristic imperialism presented not only a threat to Hungarians but also to the peace and stability of the East German people. Through underhanded methods such as sabotage and espionage, the United States attempted in the late 1940s to subvert Hungary and draw it back into the fascist, antidemocratic, and reactionary system from which they had escaped.⁵⁵

The report traced the problem of American aggression to their increasingly disingenuous trade with Hungary after the war and outlined the United States' duplicity in economic and diplomatic terms. The book included excerpts from official documents between representatives from Hungary and the United States with interpretations of America's motives. The report villainized embassy officials, businesses, the Hungarian-American league in the United States, as well as President Truman and military generals. The foreign ministry accused American officials of broad crimes, such as planting agents to undermine the revolution, to specifics like Truman's attempt to sabotage the democratic vote in 1947.⁵⁶ The Central Committee released a statement in 1950 explaining that the "process" that removed Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs László Rajk from authority (and led to his ultimate death) was part of a larger purge of

⁵⁴ Außenministeriums der Ungarischen Volksrepublik, ed. *Dokumente über die feindliche Tätigkeit der Regierung der Vereinigten Staaten gegen die Ungarische Volksrepublik*, translated by Erich Salewski (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1953).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 70-75.

agents who secretly served British and American interests.⁵⁷ In defense of the Stalinist Rákosi, the document described in detail the way in which Americans planted spies in order to sabotage the “democratic people’s republic” and prepare for war against the Soviet Union.⁵⁸ The text also implied that there was little difference between the United States and former fascists in Germany and Hungary.

For socialist officials, a clear indication of America’s connection to the legacy of fascism was the work of MAORT, or the Hungarian-American oil shareholding company (*Magyar Amerikai Olajipari Részvénytársaságot*). The oil fields had been bought and a business partnership organized during the Horthy regime. MAORT continued to operate during the war and even affiliated with Germany. According to the Hungarian foreign ministry, United States capitalists decided to take advantage of this “collaborative oil-society” in 1948. Greedy for increased profits, the American government supported the capitalist plan to sabotage the arrangement with Hungary.⁵⁹

In the same vein as these economic discussions, the text attributed cultural and political espionage within Hungary to interaction with the imperialist West. The report focused especially on the protests of Cardinal József Mindszenty, a Catholic cardinal who wrote scathing critiques of Communism. It claimed that his criticisms were in concert with the American campaign to undermine the Hungarian People’s Republic.⁶⁰ In this way, Mindszenty, who had spent time in the United States and was later offered American asylum, was not merely a representative of

⁵⁷ “Aus der Erklärung des Zentralkomitees und der Zentralen Parteikontrollkommission der SED: Zu den Verbindungen ehemaliger Emigranten zu Noel H. Field, 24. August 1950,” in *DDR. Dokumente zur Geschichte der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1945-1985*, Hermann Weber, ed. (München: Deutschen Taschenbuch Verlag, 1986), 177-179.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁵⁹ Außenministerium der Ungarischen Volksrepublik, ed. *Dokumente über die feindliche Tätigkeit der Regierung der Vereinigten Staaten gegen die Ungarische Volksrepublik*, 78-79.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

oppressive, Western religion, but also a participant in American diplomatic imperialism.⁶¹

Lindner also portrayed Mindszenty's early career as part of the counterrevolution. He stated that the cardinal was a traitor to the Hungarian people on multiple occasions. The church, Lindner contended, was complicit in the counterrevolution of 1919. Lindner insisted that the Pope supported the oppression of expression and the rise of fascism in Hungary.⁶² The Hungarian foreign ministry painted American motives and acts, such as the oil sabotage and the "Mindszenty-conspiracy," as nefarious and lacking substance. The report employed only the tropes of the *Feindbild*: sabotage, espionage, capitalism, militarism, fascism, and imperialism.

The same terms were later used to categorize the architects of the 1956 autumn uprising in Hungary. The uncomfortable legacies of 1953 in Germany and 1956 in Hungary haunted officials in the GDR and the UVR. It was difficult for socialist dictatorships to recover legitimacy after these popular, spontaneous uprisings. Workers, intellectuals, and ordinary people had participated in the protests on June 17 1953 (*der 17. Juni*) as well as in anti-Soviet protests regarding the suppression in Hungary. As a result, the East German regime was careful in addressing these events. Officially approved descriptions were usually short ideological explanations about counterrevolution, Western criminality, and anti-Bolshevism. The 1957 *Jahrbuch der DDR* accused Radio Free Europe and Western bourgeois conspirators of instigating reactionary counterrevolution in Hungary. It further claimed that wealthy Americans funded spies who undermined the UVR's regime by spreading imperialist propaganda and initiating the 1956 uprising.⁶³

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 122-123.

⁶² Lindner, *Revolution und Konterrevolution*, 91.

⁶³ Deutsche Institut für Zeitgeschichte, ed. *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Berlin: Verlag die Wirtschaft, 1957), 346.

By the late 1950s and '60s, textbooks began to include short discussions of both revolutions, which were usually conflated in a section about counterrevolutionary forces. One history textbook, *Geschichte 10*, for East German students in their tenth year treated 1953 and 1956 as part of “the increasing failure of imperialistic ‘cold war politics.’”⁶⁴ The teacher’s guide to *Geschichte 10* explained further that Hungary had been a satellite of fascist Germany in the Second World War and even in 1956 Catholicism still held sway over the minds of many people.⁶⁵ The short description, however, focused primarily on the Hungarian revolt as an anti-proletariat counterrevolutionary putsch. Its depiction of the revolt was meant to bolster state authority by illustrating the militancy of the West and “the futility of Cold War putsches.”⁶⁶ By outlining Hungary’s counterrevolution, East German officials could address the issues of 1953 without having to speak directly to an uneasy period in their own history.

Accounts of the Hungarian uprising of 1956 appeared in the GDR as early as 1957. Eva Priester, an Austrian journalist and Communist sympathizer, likewise described counterrevolutionary forces as capitalist imperialists in her purportedly empirical account of the 1956 uprising. Priester took advantage of her “special correspondent” status (*Sonderberichterstatter*) and traveled to Hungary for six weeks to observe the events surrounding the uprising that occurred between 23 October and 4 November. Her subsequent eye-witness narrative *Was war in Ungarn wirklich los? (What really happened in Hungary?)* was published in East Berlin a year later.⁶⁷ East German officials declared Priester’s report to be not only an

⁶⁴ John Rodden, *Textbook Reds: Schoolbooks, Ideology, and Eastern German Identity* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 133.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 412.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 134. The implication is that they were also fascist. Lindner had earlier labeled the 1956 counterrevolution as another attempt at a “fascist Putsch” related to the “white Terror” of 1919, *Revolution und Konterrevolution*, 83, 90.

⁶⁷ Eva Priester, *Was war in Ungarn wirklich los? Bericht einer Augenzeugin* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1957).

objective description of the events that surrounded the revolution, but also a thoughtful explanation of the revolt.⁶⁸

Interestingly, Priester juxtaposed the radio reports of West and East on 23 October. Radio Wien pronounced that “Hungary arose against the hated communist regime.” Radio Budapest, however, played recorded music and finally an alarmed announcer delivered the ominous news: “During the course of the night, counterrevolutionary groups attacked various factories and public buildings. Scores of workers, soldiers, and citizens were murdered.”⁶⁹ Priester also contrasted Imre Nagy’s radio addresses, the first on 23 October, in which Nagy accused the movement of being counterrevolutionary. In his second address a few days later, the “counterrevolutionary bands” had transformed into “heroic freedom fighters.”⁷⁰

In order to explain why this rhetorical transformation occurred, Priester interviewed Hungarians and in journalistic style included her own experiences with those of the people she encountered. Like the book published by the Hungarian foreign office regarding U.S. criminality, Priester used the model of *Feindbild* to describe the popular uprising. In so doing, she attempted to exonerate the Communist Party in Hungary and dramatize the events of 1956. Her images of counterrevolutionaries were more personal and therefore more believable. She described an interview with a Hungarian “freedom fighter” who could speak little German. Her suspicions of American connections were confirmed when he replied in fluent English with a distinct American accent. He later revealed that his group was influenced by Radio Free Europe,

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 4-5. Original quotes: Radio Wien: “Ungarn erhebt sich gegen das verhaßte kommunistische Regime.” Radio Budapest: “Im Laufe der Nacht haben konterrevolutionäre Banden verschiedene Betriebe und öffentliche Gebäude überfallen. Zahlreiche Arbeiter, Soldaten und Bürger sind ermordert worden.”

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 6. Nagy’s classifications: “konterrevolutionären Banden” to “heldenhafte Freiheitskämpfer.”

another indicator that influences from the capitalist West, and more specifically the United States, were indirectly behind the 1956 uprising.⁷¹

Intellectuals, Priester explained, were also not immune to nefarious Western influences. She painted the workers as victims of bourgeois intellectuals like the Petőfi-Klub (or Circle) and the Writer's Union. Both groups were integral in instigating revolt and encouraged by the student movements in Poland. The 1956 revolt adopted Petőfi's *Nemzeti dal*, or National Song, from the 1848 revolution after Péter Veres, president of the Writer's Union, read it aloud to a crowd on 23 October. Priester claimed that in the days following the revolution the nationalist words of 1848 resembled more closely the fascist chants of the Horthy-regime as intellectuals initiated a new White Terror.⁷² She explained that most Hungarians outside of Budapest neither understood nor approved of the uprising. The revolt thus only injured workers and peasants whose lives were interrupted by selfish students.

For Priester even the Hungarian students and Nagy himself were unwitting casualties of more conniving counterrevolutionary forces, such as former fascists and the imperialist West. Groups like the Petőfi Circle and the Writer's Union compromised their integrity in the fight against the Party by working with former fascists from the Horthy era. Not only were they connected to Hungarian fascists but also tightly allied to counterrevolutionaries and their Western friends.⁷³ Priester questioned the protestors' integrity and their commitment to the people of Hungary by highlighting their connections to Hungary's fascist past. It was not lost on Priester that many East German intellectuals had ties to the Hungarian Writer's Union and the

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 40-41.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 72-73. "Aber der Charakter dieser Minutenmenschen war überhaupt nicht die starke Seite dieser Leute."

Petőfi Circle. Though her narrative was intended for a wide audience, Priester's criticisms of the Hungarian revolt often seemed directed against the loyalty of German intellectuals as well.

Texts like Priester's represent the East German effort to reclaim the image of the socialist state as the worker's revolutionary regime. However, the memorialization of Hungary's revolutions and the focus on the counterrevolutionaries of 1956 was also an attempt to marginalize the GDR's own uncomfortable legacy of 1953. It is equally significant that Priester's, Obermann's, and Lindner's texts were intended for mass consumption. They were to be read by a large number of East Germans to serve the ideological purpose of articulating a socialist identity and to explain Hungarian society by reference to a comparable revolutionary past. East German history texts, sometimes implicitly, also emphasized a distinct German culture and heritage. As a result, even texts analyzing events that occurred in Hungary contained references to the larger German nation's past. The image of Hungary was relayed through memorialization of a revolutionary legacy that encompassed both Germany and Hungary. Socialist identity articulated through East German textbooks was an amalgamation of internationalism and national cultural identity. The Party encouraged East Germans to embrace their own revolutionary heritage and socialist state by familiarizing the people with a linear history of a country like their own.

Chapter 2: The Socialist Public Sphere and Cultural Representation

In addition to their revolutionary legacy, East Germans were encouraged to believe they were the inheritors of an enlightened intellectual tradition. This chapter focuses on how East Germans constructed the myth of German cultural authority through the lens of the state doctrines of antifascism and socialist realism. East Germans appropriated Hungarian ideas and projected their own culture onto interpretations of the People's Republic of Hungary to fashion a new cultural identity.

East Germans imagined themselves as preservers of the “true Germany.” They claimed continuity with the intellectual, non-fascist past of Goethe, Schiller, and Bach. East German intellectuals viewed themselves as “custodians” of German culture and believed that those traditions transcended the political East-West divide.⁷⁴ The East German state adopted the policy of socialist realism as a political means through which to control culture. The socialist aesthetic was supported by intellectuals like Bertolt Brecht, who helped the state craft a new form of nationalist opera.⁷⁵ Until 1961, many East Germans believed the prospect of German unification was likely. As late as 1959 the SED predicted that the illegitimate Federal Republic would eventually be absorbed into their socialist regime: “In the patriot’s struggle for a unified, peace-loving, and truly democratic Germany, the GDR must be strengthened by various interests, because it is the strong bulwark in the struggle for national reunification and the embodiment of the future unified Germany.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Joy Haslam Calico, “‘Für eine neue deutsche Nationaloper’: Opera in the Discourses of Unification and Legitimation in the German Democratic Republic,” in *Music and German National Identity*, Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, eds. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 190.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 192-193.

⁷⁶ Zentralkomitee der SED, ed. *Politische Grundschule*, 114. Original text: “Im Kampf der deutschen Patrioten um ein einiges, friedliebendes und wahrhaft demokratisches Deutschland ist die allseitige Stärkung der Deutschen

During the first decade of the GDR, the SED was obsessed with legitimating its authority and consolidating the central-administrative system. Also called the *Dauerkrise*, or permanent crisis, this period of centralization and development lasted from the foundation of the East German state in 1949 to the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961.⁷⁷ With the increasing escalation of the Cold War, negative legitimation of non-socialist regimes became a central part of SED policy. The 1953 uprising was not a clear-cut failure of the regime's legitimation policies or of their "secret" *Meinungsforschung* (opinion research), as the workers' protests were at first rooted in economic dissatisfaction rather than politics. Still, it caused the insecure SED to become more of a plebiscitary regime, fixated on privately documenting public opinion and legitimating its claim to authority.⁷⁸ The Hungarian uprising of 1956 presented an even greater challenge to the task of state legitimacy, as its demands were overtly cultural and political in nature. The Politbüro of the SED continued its strategy of negative legitimation with new intensity but focused equally on defining socialist regimes in positive terms.

Most important for East German legitimacy was the humanist facet of the German socialist cultural legacy. A pamphlet about scientific research in the GDR published by the *Liga für Volksfreundschaft der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, or League for People's Friendship of the German Democratic Republic, emphasized the cooperative and practical nature of science in the GDR. They envisioned themselves as direct inheritors of the German scientific traditions of naturalist Alexander von Humboldt and physicist Max Planck. The pamphlet declared that mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz was the "spiritual ancestor" of the

Demokratischen Republik von entscheidener Bedeutung, denn ist das feste Bollwerk im Kampf um die nationale Wiedervereinigung und verkörpert die Zukunft des geeinten Deutschlands."

⁷⁷ Heinz Niemann, *Meinungsforschung in der DDR: Das geheimen Berichte des Insituts für Meinungsforschung an das Politbüro der SED* (Köln: Bund-Verlag, 1993), 65.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

German Academy of Sciences in Berlin. This pamphlet revealed East Germany's attempts to legitimate itself internationally by drawing connections to Germany's constructive past. The treatise concluded with a positivist quote that implied that the GDR represented the rightful Germany: "They [scientists] are therefore working in the spirit of the great humanist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: 'I hold it for truth that humanity will ultimately win.'"⁷⁹

The Party ostensibly celebrated the thinker in his or her role of cultivating humanistic learning, though the relationship of the SED state with intellectuals, who often wrote scathing critiques of the regime, was at times tumultuous. Even so, the regime perpetuated the notion that intellectual culture should be fêted in place of capitalist materialism. Indeed, the Central Committee (ZK) of the SED classified Western society as "Unkultur" (Nonculture, implying barbarism), as opposed to the triumph of cultural humanism in the people's democratic republics. In 1952, the SED founded the Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, charged with the development of "manifold international contacts in the cultural sphere and carrying to all parts of the world the message of the existence and efforts of a new democratic Germany."⁸⁰ Through cultural relations the GDR hoped to build ties to both foreign intellectuals and the working classes to legitimate the East German state. It is not surprising that official and cultural texts regarding other countries used both intellectuals and mass culture as their subjects.

Scholars have recently interpreted the relationship between intellectual culture and the state with an emphasis on participation rather than dissent. Many academics actively participated in the formation of the GDR and its relations to other socialist countries. Indeed, the first East German diplomats to the People's Republic of Hungary were intellectuals. Stefan Heymann,

⁷⁹ Liga für Völkerfreundschaft der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, *Science of the GDR in the Science of Peace* (Leipzig: Druckhaus Einheit, 1962).

⁸⁰ *Mosaic: An Excursion through the Cultural Life of the German Democratic Republic* (Berlin: League of Friendship Societies of the GDR, 1962), 17.

ambassador in Budapest during the early 1950s, was also a professor who authored books dealing with East German cultural policy, Marxist theory, economics, and racism. He helped draft antifascist principles and the regime's policy toward Hungary during the 1956 crisis.⁸¹ Werner Mittenzwei's study of literature in the GDR investigates the connection between intellectuals and the state by exploring the effect of a writing public on politics.⁸² In her study on the complex role of the individual in socialist society, Esther von Richthofen contends that cultural activity allowed East Germans to maintain a sense of involvement by voicing discontent within the context of personal enjoyment.⁸³ Both East and West Germany developed a particular way of life and "established patterns of socialization."⁸⁴ Thus, participation and culture for the people in the GDR dictatorship was just as complex for East Germans as in the lives of their Western counterparts. Though cultural life was channeled by authorities in East Germany, it cannot be reduced to repression and control.

Furthermore, no clear dichotomy existed between the regime and its people. East German society should not be characterized as a constant binary of imposition and subversion. There was often negotiation between the state and the populace as well as citizen participation at all levels of East German society. By the 1970s a compromise between the regime and people had developed that relied on mutual interests and cooperation. The state became

⁸¹ Ingrid Muth, *Die DDR-Außenpolitik, 1949-1972. Inhalte, Strukturen, Mechanismen* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2000), 166.

⁸² Werner Mittenzwei, *Die Intellektuellen: Literatur und Politik in Ostdeutschland 1945-2000* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2003).

⁸³ Esther von Richthofen, *Bringing Culture to the Masses: Control, Compromise and Participation in the GDR* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

“vergesellschaftet” or “societalised.”⁸⁵ A semi-public sphere also developed in the early years of the GDR, what Mary Fulbrook terms a “participatory dictatorship.”⁸⁶

It is thus important to understand that public opinion did not always exist in opposition to official ideology. Richthofen illustrates the reciprocity of shaping cultural life in the GDR by investigating high and mass culture from organized state events to theatre to leisure activities, like card games. Mass culture, the intelligentsia, and the regime’s dictates often influenced one other. Official, intellectual, and popular culture therefore informed the East German perception of Hungary and Hungarians. This chapter builds on Richthofen’s notion of East German cultural participation by analyzing intellectual, artistic, and popular representation of Hungary.

Intellectuals in East Germany contributed to both an official and unofficial project of crafting a distinct socialist-German identity. Intellectuals often articulated that identity through cultural representation. Many writers and academics negotiated this space between fiction and reality as preservers of German tradition. Even dissenting intellectuals played a large role in the formation of a semi-public sphere and supplied cultural iconography for formal renderings of Hungary’s relation to German identity. However, intellectuals did not exist in a vacuum and their actions were not entirely dictated by the regime. Within the small public sphere of the GDR, intellectuals informed mass perception and were in turn influenced by representations of Hungary in popular culture.

In the mid-twentieth century, German and Hungarian leftist intellectuals observed the transformation of their governments from fascist dictatorships to Soviet occupied territories to Communist dictatorships. Some, such as Anna Seghers, who was married to Hungarian

⁸⁵ Dan Wilton, “The ‘Societalisation’ of the State: Sport for the Masses and Popular Music in the GDR,” in *Power and Society in the GDR, 1961-1979: The ‘Normalisation’ of Rule?* edited by Mary Fulbrook (New York, London: Berghahn Books, 2009), 104-105.

⁸⁶ Fulbrook, *The People’s State*, 12.

Communist Laszlo Radvanyi, interacted with Hungarian radicals while in exile during the rule of the NSDAP in Germany and the Horthy regime in Hungary.⁸⁷ Politicians like Walter Ulbricht, Wilhelm Pieck, and Mátyás Rákosi communicated and exchanged ideas while in exile in the Soviet Union. *Neues Deutschland*, the organ of the SED, printed an article in 1949 that discussed Germany and Hungary's close cultural relationship. Hungarian leader Rákosi explained that he had lived and worked in Germany and had a good rapport with East German leaders Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl. Rákosi declared with confidence at a youth conference in Budapest in 1949: "I know the German people very well." ("Ich kenne das deutsche Volk sehr gut.") He continued in his conviction that youth in Germany worked for a new, democratic Germany, just as Hungarians struggled to establish socialism.⁸⁸

Leaders like Rákosi and Pieck also developed relations with Marxist intellectuals in exile and were influenced by their ideas. The ideas of György Lukács (also written as Georg) resonated with these leaders and enjoyed particular influence in East Germany. Indeed, Lukács's ideas formed the basis of the GDR's cultural policies. Lukács wrote frequently in German and lived in Berlin before the First World War and again in the early 1930s before moving to Moscow. In 1938 he exchanged letters with other exiled Marxist thinkers, namely Bertolt Brecht, Ernst Bloch, and Anna Seghers, regarding the role of aesthetics in the Marxist weltanschauung.⁸⁹ His German connection made him accessible to East German intellectuals and leaders alike. However, Lukács lived in Budapest after the war not Berlin, and for most in the GDR Lukács was known only through his scholarship. Nevertheless, through the ideas of

⁸⁷ Left wing members of the German intelligentsia were forced into exile to Central and South America, the Soviet Union, and North America. *Exilliteratur* as a genre arose from their experiences.

⁸⁸ "Deutsche Jugend bei Rakosi," *Neues Deutschland. Zentralorgan der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, August 26 1949.

⁸⁹ Manfred Jäger, *Kultur und Politik in der DDR, 1945-1990* (Köln: Edition Deutschland Archiv, 1995), 21.

intellectuals like Lukács, Hungary had direct influence on cultural administration in the GDR.⁹⁰

Lukács was a part of the international, socialist intelligentsia, but his “Hungarianess” became particularly troubling to East German officials after the 1956 uprising.

Lukács’s philosophy featured prominently in the policies of East German socialist realism, the idea that art and literature should reflect working class culture, serve the greater public good, and further the cause of socialism.⁹¹ Lukács outlined his thoughts regarding socialist realism in a speech in Budapest in 1949 that was published in *Neues Deutschland*.⁹² He asserted that socialist realism was not radically new. Its character was derived from Germany’s cultural past. The socialist literary critic enjoyed a higher purpose than his or her decadent bourgeois counterpart, in that the socialist focused on the reality of “der werktätige Mensch” (the working man), whereas bourgeois realism dealt more generally with society as a whole.⁹³ *Neues Deutschland* published another article in 1951 marking Goethe’s anniversary that expanded on Lukács’s ideas regarding the connection of literature, art, and society. The article discussed Lukács’s analysis of Goethe’s *Faust* as a precursor to socialist realism and as a story that reflected the idea of freedom.⁹⁴ As late as 1981, the East German regime outlined its cultural policies using Lukács’s notion of the socialist aesthetic:

We experience culture through the diversity and at the level of our social, interpersonal, and aesthetic relationships, in an intact and beautiful environment and nature, in meaningful spent leisure, in connection with general knowledge, with art and literature. In this respect, culture and our ability to experience it are “for all human life, for societal development, as well as for the existence of the individual, something basic, elemental, and essential.”⁹⁵

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ See György Lukács, *Studies in European Realism: A Sociological Survey of the Writings of Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, Tolstoy, Gorki, and others* (London: Hillway Pub. Co., 1950) and György Lukács, *Ästhetik* (Neuwied am Rhein: Luchterhand, 1963).

⁹² Georg Lukacs, “Der höchste Grad des Realismus,” in *Dokumente zur Kunst- Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED*, Elimar Schubbe, ed. (Stuttgart: Seewald Verlag, 1972), 117.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 118-119.

⁹⁴ “Georg Lukács sprach über Goethe,” *Neues Deutschland*, Juni 1950.

⁹⁵ Leo Fiege, *Erlebnis Kultur. Zur Rolle der kulturellen Massennarbeit* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1981), 6.

The author quoted Hans Koch's 1979 work about the connections between culture and society, but Lukács's notions of a socialist aesthetic were very much evident.

Lukács's ideas influenced intellectual culture in the GDR even more profoundly. He and his colleagues shared their academic reflections with East German intellectuals and participated in a kind of socialist "republic of letters." In November 1956 philosopher Wolfgang Harich and other academic members of the SED drafted a document demanding more independence for East German universities and a return to true Marxist-Leninism and Rosa Luxemburg's ideas about liberalization.⁹⁶ The creators of this document were clearly influenced by the temporary success of the Hungarian student movement and the Nagy government. To legitimate their stipulations, they listed personal correspondence with Polish, Hungarian, and Yugoslavian comrades who shared the same opinions. Harich and his colleagues attributed their ideological development to their "Hungarian comrade Georg Lukacs." The document implored the Central Committee to consider the application of Lukács's ideas regarding intellectual freedom within the Party.⁹⁷ Unfortunately for Harich, in 1956 such liberal notions threatened the Central Committee of the SED. Harich was subsequently imprisoned for his criticism of the Party and his suggestion of a "third way" that involved the "humanist socialism" advocated by Bloch and Lukács. The SED deemed his group of intellectuals, the so-called "Harich Gruppe," counterrevolutionary.

"Wir erleben Kultur in der Vielfalt und im Niveau unserer sozialen, zwischenmenschlichen und ästhetischen Beziehungen, in einer intakten und schönen Umwelt und Natur, in sinnvoll verbrachter Freizeit, im Umgang mit Bildungsgütern, mit Kunst und Literatur. Insofern sind Kultur und ihre Erlebbarkeit 'für alles menschliche Leben, für die gesellschaftliche Entwicklung wie für das Dasein des einzelnen, etwas Grundlegendes, Elementares und Unverzichtbares.'"

⁹⁶ "Aus der politischen Plattform Wolfgang Harichs und seiner Freunde, November 1956," from SBZ-Archiv, Köln, Nr. 5/6 from 25.3.1957, in *DDR Dokumente zur Geschichte der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1945-1985*, Hermann Weber, ed. (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1986), 227-229.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 228.

Harich's treatise represented the exchange of ideas through scholarly associations like the Petőfi society, an intellectual organization in Hungary that promoted cultural liberalization. Numerous East German scholars, especially members of the *Schriftstellerverband* (Writer's Union) had connections to the Petőfi Circle before the Hungarian Uprising. After 1956, however, the Party reversed its position on scholars like Lukács, who was suddenly labeled an arch-revisionist (*Erzrevisionist*).⁹⁸ The SED used the Hungarian revolt as justification to marginalize controversial intellectuals, especially those who were connected to the Petőfi society. The Central Committee's post-1956 cultural critiques attacked both high and mass culture. The GDR regime's spokesmen wrote scathing critiques of Bloch's work, forced the head of the Department of Philosophy at Karl-Marx-Universität into an early emeritus position, condemned cabaret as *Unkultur*, and censored the satires of the weekly magazine *Eulenspiegel*.⁹⁹

The Party's allergic reaction to the 1956 Hungarian revolt illustrated its fear of domestic subversion and delegitimization. When the SED formulated its image and the image of other socialist countries they were always cognizant of the other Germany. The regime thus employed cultural policies to construct a positive image of the true, *socialist* Germany. Portrayals of culture in the GDR also relied on representations of other socialist countries. The purpose of including different communities, like the Magyar, was threefold: these depictions affirmed socialist unity, stressed the multiculturalism of East Germany and their aversion to fascist racism, and perhaps most important, established by comparison with other nations that the GDR was a functioning and legitimate state.

⁹⁸ Jäger, *Kultur und Politik in der DDR*, 83.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

The *DDR Revue*, a monthly magazine in English, was published for this explicit purpose. From 1956, issues focused on a variety of subjects, including peasant customs, film, theatre, science, art, industry, sport, and nature. The first issue of the *DDR Revue* stated that its objective was the encouragement of “honorable and open international relations, which alone can contribute to increase the necessary economic and cultural exchange between all nations.”¹⁰⁰ It is significant that this magazine first appeared in 1956 after the Hungarian uprising when Communist dictatorships were especially sensitive about their popular legitimacy. The magazine stressed the peaceful, cultural interaction between East Germans and their socialist counterparts as well as Western nations. The first issue included testimonials from a French scientist and a Finnish visitor in the Dresden Philharmonic, both attesting to the progressive nature of East German science, art, and culture.¹⁰¹ The second and third issues continued to stress East Germany’s cultural heritage by featuring Heinrich Heine, Bertolt Brecht, and a story that described the preservation of East Germany’s minority Sorb folk culture: “the Sorbs at last found their Fatherland, the German Democratic Republic.”¹⁰²

Likewise, popular expression in both the GDR and Hungary in the 1950s reflected the ideas of socialist realism, legitimacy, and antifascism. Ideology and mass culture intersected most prominently in radio and literature. The popularity of certain radio programs, such as *Da lacht der Bär* allowed producers to maintain some creative liberty despite censors.¹⁰³ *Da lacht der Bär* can thus be analyzed as an expression of socialist popular culture. Still, intellectual socialist ideas and overt political messages appeared in even comedy radio programs like *Da*

¹⁰⁰ *DDR Revue* 1 (Berlin: Gesellschaft für kulturelle Verbindung mit dem Ausland, 1956), 1.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 43, 59.

¹⁰² *DDR Revue* 3, 36-39, 55.

¹⁰³ Inge Marbolek and Adelheid von Saldern, *Radio in der DDR der fünfziger Jahre. Zwischen Lenkung und Ablenkung* (Tübingen: edition discord, 1998), 197.

lacht der Bär. Such *Unterhaltungsangeboten* (entertainment programs) emphasized themes such as *Weltfrieden* (world peace) and friendship with other socialist nations, thereby bolstering the positive image of the Eastern Bloc in opposition to Western imperialism.¹⁰⁴

Socialist realism featured even more prominently in *Aufbau* literature of the 1950s. Authors during the *Aufbau* period were encouraged to take time to observe workers or do work in factories themselves. This inspired positivist novels celebrating Communist society and the connection of art to the worker. Brigitte Reimann's socialist realist novel, *Ankunft im Alltag* was often considered the archetype of this genre.¹⁰⁵ Reimann's novel centered on three young graduates, Curt, Nikolaus, and Recha, who spent one year in a *Großbetrieb*, or large manufacturing plant. During this year, the heroine, Recha, reconfirmed her socialist ideals and devotion to East German society, as opposed to the imperialist West which is viewed through the lens of fascism.

The theme of antifascism resurfaced throughout these discussions as a way of reminding the reader that East Germany embodied the opposite of Germany's fascist past. The *DDR Revue* thereby implied that West Germany represented continuity to Hitler's Germany. One article villainized the Federal Republic by highlighting its refusal to participate in progressive international peace talks.¹⁰⁶ By intertwining official rhetoric with intellectual and folk ideas, the *DDR Revue* represented the intersection of high and mass culture. The magazine framed these areas of society by emphasizing international relations, socialist unity, and antifascism, a topic meant to legitimate Berlin while criminalizing the imperialists in Bonn.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁰⁵ Brigitte Reimann, *Ankunft im Alltag* (Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1961). Title: *Arrival in the Everyday*.

¹⁰⁶ *DDR Revue* 3, 65.

Antifascism as a political doctrine featured prominently in many East German texts of the 1950s and '60s.¹⁰⁷ The doctrine of “Antifaschismus” publically exonerated East Germans from crimes under the racist regime of the NSDAP by painting them as victims and preservers of true socialist German culture. The doctrine of antifascism extended to other socialist republics, especially the People’s Republic of Hungary. Hungarians as well as East Germans were enrolled under the category of victim-status in discussions about the Second World War. Hungarian workers and peasants had suffered under the Horthy regime and later under Nazi occupation, just as East Germans had under NSDAP rule. The true Hungarians and Germans preserved culture in the face of fascist oppression. A 1955 book entitled *Volksrepublik Ungarn* declared that the Hungarian population declined from 1941 to 1949 due to meaningful losses during the fascist occupation. More than fifty-seven percent became sacrifices to Hitler’s terror.¹⁰⁸ Extending antifascism to Hungary in cultural discussions reinforced the idea that Hungarians shared a common history with East Germans.

Cultural texts also appealed to traditional ideas of *Heimat*. Socialist policies, such as antifascism, were often presented through the more palatable medium of folk practices and local custom. A 1954 songbook for the *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (Free German Youth), or FDJ, included Hungarian folk songs translated into German. The text for a folk song entitled “Fahnen rauschen,” or “Flags rustle,” was given Communist connotations with words about protecting the industry and fields of Hungary. Nevertheless, the song relied on distinct themes of traditional

¹⁰⁷ The Berlin Wall was, after all, called the “Antifaschistischer Schutzwand,” or Antifascist Protection Wall.

¹⁰⁸ Geller, *Volksrepublik Ungarn*, 24. “von 420000 Gefallenen fielen 57% dem Terror Hitlers zum Opfer.”

Heimat. For example, the last stanza affirmed that the free people of Hungary would carry out a “vow of fidelity to the Fatherland” (“Vaterland, wir leisten dir den Treueschwur”).¹⁰⁹

Texts also described aspects of Hungary’s constitution in the familiar language of *Heimat* in addition to the rhetoric of socialism: “The defense of *Heimat* [against fascist, imperialist forces] on the basis of general military conscription is the honor-duty of all citizens.”¹¹⁰ This national profile of Hungary further highlighted the idea of cultural *Heimat* by devoting chapters to Hungary’s historic folk art and architecture. Earlier Hungarian art, especially from the revolutionary period of the early-twentieth century, captured both ideas of *Heimat* and socialist realism. Hungary’s artists working in this tradition in 1919 and 1920 created art for the general public. As with other forms of cultural expression, it was art’s duty to fight against injustice and depict socialist unity, but art’s most essential purpose was to reflect the lives of the poor, as that is “the most important aesthetic factor.”¹¹¹ Significantly, *Volksrepublik Ungarn* attributed the emergence of a nascent Hungarian folk art movement to German influences and the “germanization” of art, reinforcing the idea that German culture embodied the proletariat revolution.

From the late eighteenth century, Hungarian art began to develop a national character that, according to the editors of *Volksrepublik Ungarn*, was decidedly antimonarchical. This nationalist movement featured triumphant folk art and majestic sculptures, like Marschalkó’s famous lions on Budapest’s *Linzhid*, or Chain Bridge. The Revolution of 1848/49 marked the

¹⁰⁹ Fühmann, tras., “Fahnen rauschen,” *Leben Singen Kämpfen. Liederbuch der Deutschen Jugend*, edited by Alexander Ott (Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1954), 250-251.

¹¹⁰ Geller, *Volksrepublik Ungarn*, 8. “Die Verteidigung der Heimat auf der Grundlage der allgemeinen Wehrpflicht ist Ehrenpflicht aller Bürger.”

¹¹¹ Ministerium für Kultur der DDR, *Revolutionäre Kunst in Ungarn*, 12-13.

climax of Hungary's cultural movement.¹¹² Later painters, such as Mihály Munkácsy, also typified Hungary's great folk artists. His realistic paintings depicted Hungarian village life and thus fit the artistic context of socialist realism of the 1950s and '60s. His work was appropriated by twentieth-century socialist regimes to represent the turn to democratic concerns.

Volksrepublik Ungarn explained that the Munkácsy's ideas of realism were drawn from democratic ideas regarding the nature of Hungary's people and their relation to the land.¹¹³ The notion of socialist *Heimat* was apparent in these words, though the author did not explicitly refer to the term. The author further implied that Munkácsy's work was a precursor to socialist realism: "The heroes of his paintings were simple peasants, recruits from villages, and poor people in the cities."¹¹⁴ Framed in these terms, Hungary's cultural past became very much a part of the German reader's present.

It was important for the East German state to demonstrate that their leaders closely interacted with peasant and working class culture. A book commemorating Walter Ulbricht's life displayed various images of the General Secretary at international folk gatherings. In Hungary, Comrade Ulbricht sat at a long table in a traditional Hungarian pub watching folk dancers.¹¹⁵ The caption read "baratság," the Hungarian word for friendship. In this way, the book highlighted international solidarity and demonstrated socialist realism in practice.

Perhaps even more than folk practices, sport in the GDR illustrated the intersection between official legitimation of culture and popular expression. The SED declared sport and fitness (*Körperkultur*) to be an exceptionally important societal concern at the "heart of the

¹¹² Geller, *Volksrepublik Ungarn*, 153-154.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹¹⁵ Nationalrat der Nationalenfront des demokratischen Deutschland, *Walter Ulbricht - Ein Leben für Deutschland* (Leipzig, Berlin: VEB E.A. Seemann Verlag, 1968), 211.

socialistic lifestyle.”¹¹⁶ Like art and literature, sport was adapted to the socialist aesthetic as its purpose was to inculcate a collectivist character. According to the state, the most essential function of sport was to serve the worker, improve morale, and most important, express the collective nature of socialism.¹¹⁷ In the GDR, politics and diplomacy were explicitly connected to sports, which in its political context became an expression of state hegemony and mass culture. The *Nationalrat*'s tribute to Ulbricht featured photographs of the Party Secretary at sports events and as a young man playing team sports. According to the text, as an adolescent Ulbricht was an “avid athlete” (*begeisterter Sportler*) who never thought of his individual purpose but rather focused on the success of the team. It was on the pitch, the text emphasized, where Ulbricht first learned the skills necessary for cooperative work and leadership.¹¹⁸

The collective nature of athletics made it a safe articulation of socialist and German identity. It was therefore used in both Germanys as a vehicle through which to express happiness and pride. In addition, sport was a venue that allowed East Germans to communicate with and define other countries. Both West and East Germany used similar rhetoric to characterize their international rivals. West Germany's official remembrance of the World Cup illustrated that national identity was often defined through safer cultural channels, like sport. The FRG's official book commemorating their 1954 World Cup victory over Hungary proclaimed, “Nowhere in the world do so many people play football as in Germany.”¹¹⁹ The book celebrated West Germany's training programs and mastery over the sport. While the book acknowledged

¹¹⁶ Werner Rossade, *Sport und Kultur in der DDR. Sportpolitisches Konzept und weiter Kulturbegriff in Ideologie und Praxis der SED* (München: Tuduv-Studien, 1987), 3.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹¹⁸ Nationalrat der Nationalfront des demokratischen Deutschland, *Walter Ulbricht*, 16.

¹¹⁹ Gerhard Bahr, ed. *Fussball Weltmeisterschaft 1954. Offizielles Erinnerungswerk* (Nürnberg: Protektorate Deutscher Fußball-Bund, 1954), 21. “Nirgendwo auf der Welt spielen so viele Menschen Fußball wie in Deutschland.”

the skill of Germany's Hungarian rivals, it depicted the eleven West German players who triumphed over Hungary as national heroes.

East Germany's *Die XXI Olympischen Spiele*, a commemorative work of the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne, employed the same heroic language as their West German counterparts.¹²⁰ The text lauded the cooperative efforts of East German athletes in their preparation for the Olympic Games and included memoirs of their experience abroad. Like the FRG's *Weltmeisterschaft*, the GDR's *Olympischen Spiele* presented Hungarians as worthy competitors. For East Germans, more than West Germans, it was important to emphasize the friendly rivalries of their Eastern Bloc allies. The GDR's commemorative compilation included as a preface words from the President of the International Olympic Committee that stressed the peaceful purposes of the Olympic Games, specifically how sports brought together even West and East Germany.¹²¹ Heinz Schöbel, the President of the National Olympic Committee of the GDR, emphasized similar themes of unity and camaraderie in his foreword. He stated that the summer games served the larger ideals of people's friendship (*Völkerfreundschaft*) and the collective unity of humanity.¹²² In this way, sport became a kind of a mass diplomacy.

A *Sportlied* (Sport Song) in the FDJ songbook equated sport with socialism's progression, German *Heimat*, and international friendship. After entreating youth to throw the ball high, the lyrics pronounced, "Socialism is our plan, for *Heimat*, friends, we draw the watch."¹²³ Set to a march tempo, the song repeated the phrase "Vorwärts zum Ziel," denoting both the physical athletic goal of victory and the final triumph of world socialism. Athletes thus

¹²⁰ *Die XVI. Olympischen Spiele in Melbourne 1956. Offizielles Standardwerk des Nationalen Olympischen Komitees der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Berlin: Sportverlag, 1957).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 9-10.

¹²³ P. Wiens, *Leben singen Kämpfen*, 116-117.

participated in the East German project in a tangible way. This message was not lost on the compilers of the GDR's Olympic memoir. Many of the images depicted victorious athletes from other socialist republics, especially those from the Soviet Union and Hungary, both of which had strong athletic programs in the 1950s and '60s. The book noted that Hungary received more gold medals than some larger, Western nations. Sports like fencing received several pages, as Hungary received the most accolades in that sport. A photograph of Rudolf Karpati, the champion at saber, was featured beside a picture of a British fencer, confirming that socialist nations could not only compete with Western nations but also supersede them.¹²⁴ It is worthwhile to point out that while the book exhibited images of most of Hungary's gold medal winners with anecdotes about their victories, it neglected details regarding Hungary's water polo team. Hungary's team had, after all, defeated the Soviet Union in the semi-finals in the famously violent "Blood in the Water" match. The Hungarian team allegedly sought revenge for the Soviet repression of Hungary's October uprising, creating a "blood bath" and a story that was exaggerated in Western newspapers. East Germany avoided the contentious subject matter and Hungarian water polo altogether in favor of emphasizing socialist unity and international camaraderie.

The theme of socialist unity was also applied to Hungarian football. The Hungarian *aranycsapat* (golden team) of the 1950s was considered unsurpassed in Europe. East German officials emphasized socialist ability by celebrating the Hungarian football team, at least before most of the players defected to the West in the late 1950s. Issues of *Neues Deutschland* dating from the early 1950s focused frequently on the success of football in Hungary, even if it meant

¹²⁴ *Die XVI. Olympischen Spiele in Melbourne 1956*, 149.

reporting losses for East German teams.¹²⁵ One article entitled “Ungarns Hünen sind da!” (Hungarians’ Giants are here!) celebrated the arrival of the *aranycsapat* in Berlin. The article stated that the leaders of the sports committees of the GDR and Hungary greeted one another as representatives of the friendship that existed between these two democratic people. The article asserted that President Varga of Hungary brought his country’s finest football players but also the greetings of more than 350,000 workers in Budapest.¹²⁶

Neues Deutschland reaffirmed the socialist aesthetic in sports; these athletes signified not only their team affiliation but also the workers and farmers at home in Hungary. For East Germans, the *aranycsapat*, with its stars like Ferenc Puskás, provided a tangible and recognizable image of Hungarians. Football, perhaps more than art or literature, was an accessible and appealing way for regular East Germans to interact with their socialist neighbors. Sports connected mass culture to official ideology and even to ideas of socialist aestheticism, as sport related more closely to everyday experience, in ways that official propaganda or high forms of art could not. Athletic competition in post-war Europe was something familiar and exhilarating. Sports supplied a Hungarian icon that seemed identical to the East German athlete and served as a new nationalism, or in the case of East Germany and Hungary, internationalism.

¹²⁵ “Budapest-Ostzonenauswahl 3:2,” *Neues Deutschland*, August 1949, Sport section.

¹²⁶ “Ungarns Hünen sind da!” *Neues Deutschland*, Oktober 1949, Sport section. “Er bringe nicht nur Ungarns beste Fußballspieler nach Berlin, sondern zugleich die Grüße von mehr als 350000 Budapester Werktätigen, die mit den besten Wünschen den Neuaufbau des demokratischen Deutschland verfolgen.”

Chapter 3: Engaging the Socialist “Other?”: East German Travel to Hungary

East Germans most directly interacted with Hungarians through travel. Travel allowed East German to formulate empirical perceptions of Hungary that combined ideas about socialist fraternity with the subtext of “Otherness.” This chapter examines how direct and indirect interaction between East German citizens and the Hungarian landscape affected their perceptions of another socialist country. These ideas of the People’s Republic of Hungary informed broad notions of what it meant to be a socialist as well as what it meant to be a German-socialist in contrast to the Hungarian socialist “Other.” I define “travel” broadly to include both a physical journey to another place, usually in the form of tourism, and “imaginary travel,” which comprises activities that do not require physical movement but are still viewed as interaction with another place or culture. Imaginary travel in this sense encompasses consumption of goods, popular literature, and images.

East German travel in the 1950s and 1960s revealed an attempt to return to a state of pre-war normality of consumer tourism, though German travel during this period also reflected post-war restlessness. Both Rudy Koshar and W.G. Sebald identify the modernist theme of displacement as precedent for this facet of *deutscher Tourismus*.¹²⁷ However, East German travel is often overlooked in discussions of tourism as merely a collective expression of state authority. To be sure, travel was directed primarily by the FDGB, or *Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (Free German Trade Federation), and the *Reisebüro der DDR* (Travel Agency of the GDR), yet East Germans traveled almost as frequently as their West German counterparts and should not be omitted from the discourse of tourism. Eighty percent of East

¹²⁷ Rudy Koshar, *German Travel Cultures* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2000) and W.G. Sebald, *Luftkrieg und Literatur. Züricher Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2001), 41.

Germans spent their holidays within the GDR, but another twenty percent ventured beyond East Germany's borders to other socialist countries.¹²⁸ As travel to Western capitalist countries was inaccessible to the average East German, many sought to fulfill their peripatetic desire by traveling to other socialist countries. Awaiting bureaucratic approval and expense dissuaded most East Germans from visiting faraway destinations such as Cuba or the Black Sea. The famed *Plattensee*, or Lake Balaton, in Hungary thus became an East German Mallorca.

The western Hungarian landscape, especially the area around Lake Balaton, provided the medium through which German-Hungarian cultural interaction occurred. The Balaton area was first romanticized by nineteenth-century German intellectuals and remained a tourist destination for Germans into the twentieth century. In particular, East Germans enjoyed the *Plattensee* as a tourist destination and a means of escape. Not only did East Germans influence the cultural landscape in Hungary, but travel to the Balaton region also provided an experiential outlet to define one's own identity against the Hungarian "Other." Though the Magyar was a familiar "Other" for East German travelers, they were, nevertheless, aware of cultural differences. German travel guides emphasized vestiges of an older Hungarian cultural legacy and the beauties of the Hungarian landscape. Descriptions of the Balaton region as a natural socialist preserve appealed to the GDR's promotion of collective camping and hiking, but also to German traditions of *Wanderung*. A 1959 German language travel guide for the *Plattensee* invited its socialist neighbors to enjoy the natural landscape in the surrounding areas. An introductory letter to Balaton's visitors emphasized Hungary's postwar establishment of socialism and the

¹²⁸ *100 Jahre Deutscher Tourismusverband*, http://www.deuschertourismusverband.de/content/files/100_jahre_dtv.pdf (accessed 30 January 2009), 46.

equality that existed in the area as a result of Hungary's new cooperative regime.¹²⁹ The guide's introduction also included a geographical description of western Hungary and described Balaton's hills and sunny shores as an ideal environment for nature activities, like hiking or observing flora and fauna.¹³⁰ Despite the introduction's attempt to provide a scientific report of the area's economy, climate, and geology, the majority of descriptions of Balaton's landscape were romantic renderings meant to appeal to the traditional sense of *Heimat*.

For East German tourists, Hungary was a foreign yet familiar space. The travel guide implicitly linked nature with a cultural, romantic past. It urged visitors who might holiday in Balatonfüred, a town on the north shore of the sea, to locate the oldest tree in the park and read the poetic inscription:

“When I am no longer on this earth, my tree,
Let the ever renewed leaves of the spring
Murmur to the wayfarer:
The poet did love while he lived.”¹³¹

Including this tree and its poem as a tourist attraction indicated that the German tourist should value the Hungarian scenery in terms of idealistic, literary notions of nature. The guide likewise pointed out other towns surrounding Balaton as natural preserves. The book hailed the town of Tapolca, with its extensive cave system and access to cycling, canoeing, and hiking, as the ideal landscape for “friends of nature” (*Naturfreunde*).¹³² The encyclopedic *Volksrepublik Ungarn* presented Hungary's geography in similar terms by focusing on rural life and farming. It celebrated the fact that Hungary at one time was primarily an agrarian land, highlighting the

¹²⁹ László Huba, Gábor Lipták, and Ferenc Zákonyi, *Der Plattensee. Balaton. Ein praktischer Reiseführer rund um das “ungarische Meer”* (Budapest: Corvina, 1959), 5.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 7-18.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 84.

agricultural success of the Alföldi plain.¹³³ In addition, the text associated landscape with Hungary's cultural monuments by featuring images of picturesque villages alongside art museums and famous statues like the figure of the martyred bishop Gellért overlooking Budapest and a monument to revolutionary leader Lajos Kossuth.¹³⁴ These photographs served to connect Hungary's national culture to its landscape.

Tied closely to notions of nature and landscape, Hungarian folk culture provided an image of an accessible Hungary with which German tourists could directly engage. The Balaton guide urged German visitors to frequent folk museums and view cultural landmarks in the region. The town of Keszthely boasted the oldest churches and statues. The art and architecture of Keszthely ranged from gothic to baroque to modern.¹³⁵ The emphasis on these traditional and untarnished local forms of art likely appealed to East Germans who lived in devastated, post-war Europe. German tourists were encouraged to view even the traditional, primitive Hungarian thatched homes as *Volkskunst*, or folk art. These dwellings signified the ingenuity of the Hungarian people in this region.¹³⁶ In order to add to the quaint allure of these regions, the guide relayed local fairy tales. The author devoted two pages about the town of Tihany to a local *Märchen* that attributed the inlet's noise (*Tihanyer Echos*) to a beautiful mountain princess who was imprisoned by the wave king (*Wellenkönig*) and forced to forever answer people's questions.¹³⁷ Such *Märchen* would be familiar to East Germans who read prominent Hungarian stories and poems, like "Lúdyas Matyi," the celebrated folk story of the peasant goose shepherd, Matyi, who outsmarted and took revenge on the malevolent local lord Dániel Döbröghy. *Neues*

¹³³ Gellert, ed. *Volksrepublik Ungarn*, 12, 26.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, insert between 24-25.

¹³⁵ Huba, *Der Plattensee*, 94-95.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

Deutschland even featured a story about a Hungarian film derived from the folk tale.¹³⁸ The article applauded the film for brilliantly capturing peasant culture and class conflict. Romantic stories, like Lúdas Matyi and Tihany's princess of the Sound, added to the familiar flavor and folk character of the local landscape but also were consistent with the project of socialist realism.

Even Hungary's thermal baths were framed within history and folk culture. Since the seventeenth century, German and Hungarian elites traveled to the region for the healing waters of natural springs. "The local people knew that the beneficial properties of the water's source protected against stomach ailments and various other conditions."¹³⁹ The text further emphasized early German folk connections to the area by quoting German traveler Matthäus Lower's 1694 description of Balaton's thermal baths and their healing properties.

Gästeherbergen, or guest houses, were erected for German tourists as early as the eighteenth century. The guide pointed out that visitors could still stay in some of these early inns while visiting the "berühmteste ungarische Badeort" ("the most famous Hungarian bath locale") in Balatonfüred.¹⁴⁰ Here the tour guide explicitly linked Germany's and Hungary's pasts to tourism of the 1950s. East Germans visiting the *Plattensee* were connected to their national predecessors in a physical way by traversing the same landscapes and participating in a new form of blended Hungarian-German culture.

Sports and other leisure activities likewise characterized proposed holidays in the Balaton region. The guide included images of beach life, sailing, and swimming in the sunny southern regions of Balaton. By contrast, the description of Siófok centered on its revolutionary history. The author lamented the dark days of Siófok's history when Horthy and the

¹³⁸ "'Ludas Matyi' – auf der Festwoche des volksdemokratischen Films," *Neues Deutschland*, Juni 1950.

¹³⁹ Huba, *Der Plattensee*, 50. "Die Bevölkerung der Umgegend kannte schon damals die heilsame Wirkung des Wassers der Quellen gegen Magenbeswerden verschiedener Art."

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

counterrevolutionaries made it their base of operation. However, the guide assured its readers that since 1945 and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Siófok had become a new center for sport and culture – a true worker’s paradise.¹⁴¹ The guidebook framed its discussion of traditional Balaton with socialist themes like revolutionary heritage that were equally recognizable to East Germans. The introduction, after all, listed as its purpose to spread Hungarian culture and socialist friendship through travel.¹⁴²

In many ways, the *Plattensee* tour guide connected official, intellectual, and popular iconography of Hungary. The text also emphasized that German culture was a part of Balaton, and that many people in the region spoke German in addition to their native Hungarian. This may have been included to reinforce the idea of socialist friendship and encourage tourism, but it also provided German travelers with a sense of security and an idea that Hungarians were more like displaced Germans than eastern “Others.” East Germans could therefore travel to the Balaton region and connect with Hungarian folklore, history, sports, and landscape without having to depart from “the familiar Other.”

Travel allowed East German tourists a medium through which to engage socialist *Heimat* by interacting with nature and folk culture, but it also offered the East German traveler an escape from political pressures. The attempt to establish new societal norms and to adjust to new ideological realities was evidenced in travel literature, such as Helmut Hauptmann’s 1957 travel journal *Donaufahrt zu dritt*. Hauptmann and his companions embarked from the GDR on a journey that would take them down the Danube River from its alleged source in a town in West Germany to the Black Sea. From the beginning, Hauptmann clarified that his adventure was

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 5-6.

ideological as well as empirical. In West Germany, he and his companions were confronted by two women who criticized the Communist system. Hauptmann, of course, proved them wrong after a good-natured discussion.¹⁴³ Much of Hauptmann's exposition confirmed that socialist countries along the Danube had recovered and were thriving as well as or better than their Western counterparts.

Like the authors of the *Plattensee* guide, Hauptmann described the Danube Bend, or *Dunakanyar*, using romantic language. He extolled the beauty of its hills and mountains and included charming, scenic photographs of Esztergom, one of the oldest Hungarian cities as well as the castles of Visegrád.¹⁴⁴ Hauptmann and his companions spent time in Budapest, which he termed the "queen of the Danube" to enjoy the cultural offerings. They sampled Hungarian wine, observed peasant women selling their wares, listened to gypsy music, and were impressed at how well some Hungarians spoke German.¹⁴⁵ Hauptmann relayed a sense of ease and familiarity among the Hungarians. In fact, he and his colleagues seemed more comfortable in Budapest than in the western German speaking areas of their travels, like the Black Forest and Vienna. As his account was published in 1957, it is likely that there was a political message behind Hauptmann's image of the Hungarian people. Hauptmann's presentation of Hungarians as good socialists, close to the land and factories, exonerated the majority of the people from the 1956 uprising and instead placed blame on a few counterrevolutionaries and misguided students. Hauptmann's idyllic descriptions of the Hungarian countryside, Budapest, and the people he encountered painted an optimistic and memorable image of East Germany's socialist friends on the Danube.

¹⁴³ Helmut Hauptmann, *Donaufahrt zu dritt* (Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1957), 16, 19.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 80-83.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 96-98.

Many East Germans relied on descriptions like Hauptmann's to construct images of countries like Hungary, as the majority of people did not holiday outside of the GDR. They also formulated ideas about Hungary based on photographs and rare Hungarian commodities, like paprika, palinka from the Alföldi region, wine from western Hungary, or commemorative stamps. Communist regimes often released stamps that memorialized folk culture, the Olympic Games, workers, and art.¹⁴⁶ In short, many East Germans consumed Hungarian culture without venturing beyond the GDR's borders.

There was an emphasis on the unique cultural heritages of East Germany and Hungary but also on shared artistic beauty and socialist realist themes. The GDR's 1963 *Fotojahrbuch* aligned more closely with the project of socialist realism and crafting the proper iconography for other socialist republics.¹⁴⁷ The *Fotojahrbuch*'s purpose followed the principles of socialist realism by purporting that it would supply Communist internationalism with a human face as well as inform East Germans about worldwide human conditions. Its mission statement declared that photography must "show the real things, to provide a natural copy of reality." Their photographers followed the dictum to depict their subjects "the way the things really are."¹⁴⁸ The *Fotojahrbuch*'s images of non-European socialist countries, such as Vietnam, Cuba, and the People's Republic of China, emphasized ethnic and cultural differences and thus reflected ideas about multiculturalism and implicit notions of exotic "Otherness."¹⁴⁹ In contrast, the

¹⁴⁶ *Mosaic*, 13.

¹⁴⁷ Deutscher Künstlerbund, *Fotojahrbuch international* (Halle: Fotokinoverlag, 1963).

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 13. "Die Fotografie müsse die wirklichen Dinge zeigen, also eine naturalistische Kopie der Wirklichkeit geben." "wie die Dinge wirklich sind."

¹⁴⁹ These depictions of Asia, Africa, and Latin America reveal that even socialist nations defined themselves by first denoting ethnically different "Others." However, these definitions of exoticism were not used as a hegemonic cultural apparatus in East Germany's socialist context (as opposed to the Soviet Union) and certainly did not apply to East Germany's imaginings of Hungary. East German romanticization of Hungary relied on the same ideas that Germans used to romanticize their own landscapes and culture.

photographs of Hungary presented familiar images of workers and customary folk practices. A romantic image entitled “Fischfang am Plattensee,” or “Fishing on Balaton,” displayed silhouetted figures of fishermen at sunset.¹⁵⁰ Other images included a Hungarian fencing team, a bride crying at a traditional wedding, men rowing, industrial workers and new machinery, and a worker laboring proudly at a furnace.¹⁵¹ Nevertheless, East Germans were aware that Hungary offered a somewhat different cultural flavor than Germany. One of the largest images in the *Fotojahrbuch* was a panorama of Budapest and the Danube at night.¹⁵² This photograph diverged from the others in that it created a fantastic icon of Hungary’s capital. The book therefore framed the slightly exotic with the mundane.

East German ideas about Hungary were political in nature, but direct travel contained social as well as political motives. During periods of strict travel restrictions within the GDR, the Balaton region provided a meeting place for West and East Germans. Families separated by the Wall met at the *Plattensee*.¹⁵³ Balaton thus acted as a space separate from the political landscapes of the two Germanys. This region of western Hungary became a third Germany, where East and West could meet and escape the cultural and political restraints of the FRG and the GDR. A former East German interpreter explained in an interview that Hungary served as a rendezvous point for her family after she fled the GDR. She and her family had fond memories of Hungary since it provided refuge.¹⁵⁴ She was certainly not the only East German to enjoy the

See Edward Said’s *Orientalism* for a discussion of the fabricated, romantic assumptions that underlay Western colonial and imperial ambitions in the East. Even socialist countries were influenced by these same romantic images.

¹⁵⁰ Deutscher Künstlerbund, *Fotojahrbuch international*, 134.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 178, 147, 142, 139, 175.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 184-185. “Budapest am Abend”

¹⁵³ Ivan Volgyes, “Hungary and Germany: Two Actors in Search of a New Play,” in *The Germans and their Neighbors*, Dirk Verheyen and Christian Sjøe, eds. (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 1993), 287.

¹⁵⁴ Rodden, *Schoolbooks, Ideology, and Eastern German Identity*, 253.

benefits of relaxed travel to Hungary. Ivan Volgyes implies that Hungarians and East Germans alike observed the stark differences between West and East, the Mercedes and the Trabant, when they travelled in Hungary.¹⁵⁵ A recent article in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* asserted that the first stages of reunification occurred on Balaton's shores.¹⁵⁶

As a result of East German tourism during the latter half of the twentieth century, the Hungarian cultural landscape engaged both German and Hungarian identities. It developed a syncretic personality characterized increasingly by Hungarian and German cultural kitsch: Hungarian folk dancing, traditional thatched homes and cabins, modern hotels, German beer and food, and a mixture of German and Hungarian languages. The cultural syncretism of the Balaton region demonstrated how German cultural influences rooted in socialist-era travel have transformed landscapes outside of Germany that resonate into contemporary culture. Balaton existed as a space not wholly German yet not entirely Hungarian either. East German travel to Hungary illuminated not only how East Germans interacted within the temporal and spatial framework of the Eastern Bloc but also explained the existing heterogeneity in places like western Hungary.

¹⁵⁵ Volgyes, "Hungary and Germany," 288.

¹⁵⁶ Jana Schulze, "Deutsche Einheit am Balaton," *Frankfurter Rundschau* (July 2008).

Conclusion

Walter Ulbricht announced in a speech in Budapest the existence of an improved brotherly relationship between the GDR and Hungary in 1967 after signing a pact of friendship with the UVR's leaders.¹⁵⁷ This contract of international camaraderie promised that both Hungarians and East Germans would work for the betterment of world socialism. It repeated phrases about antifascism and shared revolutionary heritage that by 1967 had become cliché. The new contract for international relations reiterated notions of a unique shared East German-Hungarian culture that had been formulated in the first two decades of the GDR.

During the 1950s East Germans still felt connected to a German nation rooted in an older nineteenth-century reality but also shared a new identity with socialist republics like Hungary. After the 1956 Hungarian uprising, the regime's crisis of legitimacy made the project of articulating a safe and attractive Hungarian image seem more urgent. The focus shifted from intellectuals like György Lukács, who had been associated with the movement for cultural liberalization, to the Hungarian folk. To be sure, the SED was more attentive to popular opinion to stave off discontent. The Central Committee encouraged FDJ leaders to "spice up their speeches with jokes" to appeal to mass adolescent audiences.¹⁵⁸ In this spirit, depictions of Hungary centered increasingly on sports stars, folk customs, and hard-working peasants and workers. Still, earlier interaction with Lukács, especially with his articulation of the socialist aesthetic, and the ideas of intellectuals in the Petöfi Circle, contributed to the cultural policy of

¹⁵⁷ Walter Ulbricht, "Eine neue Etappe unserer brüderlichen Beziehungen beginnt. Ansprache Walter Ulbrichts auf der Großkundgebung in Budapest," in *Ein Beitrag zum Frieden und zur Sicherheit in Europa. Verträge zwischen der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und der Ungarischen Volksrepublik sowie zwischen der DDR und der Volksrepublik Bulgarien über Freundschaft, Zusammenarbeit und gegenseitigen Beistand* (Dresden: Verlag Zeit im Bild, 1967), 24-25.

¹⁵⁸ Uta Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 92.

the East German state and continued to influence leaders and intellectuals alike until *Wiedervereinigung*, or unification.

Negotiating identity in a Communist dictatorship, where most activities were state directed, was never truly a free enterprise. However, East Germans found mediums through which to formulate popular cultural expression. Sport, folk practices, travel, and even participation in the state provided ordinary citizens opportunities to fashion ideas about what it meant to be German and socialist. Imagining other socialist countries with similar customs and histories made the task of Communist internationalism seem less complicated and supported the regime's cultural policies of socialist realism and antifascism.

East German identity developed as a hybrid of socialist and German culture, but it was also fluid. German localism, international socialism, and notions of nationalism intertwined to form assumptions of what it meant to be East German but also what it meant to be a part of the socialist Eastern Bloc. By defining countries like Hungary by German standards, East Germans established a notion of the importance of their own cultural influence in the Eastern Bloc. Certainly, they were aware of their importance as a symbol of the Cold War, and thoughts of their cultural and revolutionary legacy only legitimated attitudes of authority.

Cultural texts from the early years of the GDR provided a vehicle through which the state articulated and inculcated post-war identity that, though ideologically socialist, was culturally German. These texts suggested that Hungary and Germany shared a parallel revolutionary history, a rich cultural heritage, and familiar geo-political landscapes. East Germans both read and fashioned those texts and by so doing engaged the incongruous notions of familiar and unfamiliar, national and foreign. By appealing to working class traditions, sentiments of *Heimat*, local loyalties, romantic images of landscape, and memories of revolution, the GDR combined

the Marxist-Leninist ideal of an international Workers' and Peasants' State with continuities from the past and created a normalized space for the majority of East Germans. In its project to construct a cultured, socialist society separate from the imperialist West, East Germany relied on tropes like *Heimat* that had been employed since the nineteenth century. Their Germanized image of Hungary was in fact quite similar to West Germany's depictions of countries like Hungary. In the 1950s, ideas of *Heimat* and folk practice came under the umbrella of East German cultural-political terms like socialist realism and antifascism. These terms, however, did not change the traditional nature of the concepts behind *Heimat* and mass culture.

It is surprising how closely the GDR's iconography of the People's Republic of Hungary corresponded to East German self-representations. The illusion that their cultures and traditions paralleled created a palatable and safe eastern "Other" through which to communicate socialist identity. Analogous narratives did not feature in the GDR's depictions of other socialist countries. East German portrayals of China, Vietnam, and Cuba, for example, contained images of exoticism. The East German portrait of Hungary and the Magyar certainly diverged from this unusual "Other." Instead, East Germans created an iconography of Hungary that was more German in appearance than Hungarian.

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Vita

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