

**DESTINED OR DOOMED?
HUNGARIAN DISSIDENTS AND THEIR WESTERN FRIENDS, 1973-1998.**

by

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Destined or Doomed?**Hungarian Dissidents and their Western Friends, 1973-1998****Victoria Harms, PhD****University of Pittsburgh, 2015**

Through the lens of Hungarian dissidents and their supporters in the West, the following study analyzes the motivations of intellectuals from East and West to engage in an open East-West dialogue, their efforts to change the social and political structure of the Cold War, and their contributions to the peaceful revolutions of 1989. It investigates the alliance of intellectuals from either side of the Iron Curtain, their formative experiences and mutual influences. To understand the origins, functions, and legacy of this network, the study investigates the period from the 1960s to the late 1990s, focusing on the years 1973 to 1998.

Findings suggest that the motivations that would bring intellectuals from either side of the Iron Curtain together in the 1980s originated in similarly formative experiences in the 1960s, which shattered their youthful convictions and initiated a search for a new intellectual identity that would bring Easterners and Westerners together by the late 1970s. In response to the encounter, the participants developed a distinct set of political and historical convictions that rooted in cultural liberalism, their commitment to free, open and democratic societies, and the acceptance of universal human rights.

This case study touches upon developments throughout Eastern Europe and evaluates the history of the Cold War as interplay between East and West. It indicates a retreat from authoritarian rule in the East as early as 1987, and highlights the problematic, one-sided perception of the Hungarian Democratic Opposition in the West. It discusses

the achievements of the former dissidents, and their struggle to adjust to the situation in post-1989 Europe.

The project is based on archival research in six different countries; findings are based on documents found in private collections, national libraries, institutional, national and state security archives. Additionally, over forty eyewitnesses and experts shared their experiences and views in interviews conducted between 2009 and 2012.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

- APO – Außerparlamentarische Opposition (extra parliamentary opposition), West Germany, 1960s and 1970s.
- CIA – Central Intelligence Agency, 1947- present.
- CCF – Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1950-1967
- CDU – Christdemokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union), 1945-present.
- CEU – Central European University, 1991- present.
- CSCE – Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.
- DAAD – Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (German Academic Exchange Service)
- EU – European Union, 1992- present.
- FEIE – Fondation pour une entraide intellectuelle européenne (Foundation for Intellectual Support in Europe), 1966-1991.
- FIDESZ – Fialat Demokraták Szövetsége (Young Democrats' Alliance, since 1995 Fidesz-Magyar Polgári Szövetsége – Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Alliance), 1988- present.
- FDP – Freie Demokratische Partei (Free Democratic Party), 1948- present.
- KISZ – Kommunista Ifjúsági Szövetség (Hungarian Communist Youth League), 1957-1989.
- IUC – Inter University Center Dubrovnik, 1973- present.
- IWM – Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen (Institute for Human Sciences), 1983- present.
- KMP –Kommunisták Magyarországi Pártja (Hungary's Communists' Party), 1944-1948.
- IACF – International Association for Cultural Freedom, 1967-1978.
- MDF – Magyar Demokrata Fórum (Hungarian Democratic Forum).
- MDP – Magyar Dolgozók Pártja (Hungarian Workers' Party), 1948-1956.
- MTA – Magyar Tudományos Akadémia (Hungarian Academy of Science).
- MSZMP – Magyar Szocialista Munkás Part (Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party).

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1949- present.

NYU – New York University, 1831- present.

OECD – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

PCI – Partito Comunista Italiano (Communist Party of Italy).

RAF – Rote Armee Fraktion (Red Army Faction), 1970-1998.

SPD – Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland (Social Democratic Party Germany).

SZDSZ – Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége (Alliance of Free Democrats), 1988- present.

SZETA – Szegényeket Támogató Alap (Organization for the Support of the Poor), 1979-
1989 (?).

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Introduction

Despite international concerns in 2014 the incumbent Viktor Orbán was re-elected prime minister of Hungary. In his previous term, he had not only changed media, criminal and electoral laws, but most importantly the constitution, now known as the Basic Law, put the national bank under governmental control, privatized pension funds, bought back loans in Swiss francs, and showed little interest in placating international critics. He had declared his 2010 election the “voters’ booth revolution,” claiming that since 1989 previous administrations had deprived Hungarians of real change.¹ Foreign observers from journalists to politicians cried foul.² The state of Hungarian democracy and a possible return of authoritarianism became a matter of debate in the European parliament in Strasbourg; domestic critics took offense at the wholesale dismissal of any accomplishments since 1989.³ That the Hungarian prime minister in a volte face sought out Russian President Vladimir Putin at the height of a ‘new Cold War’ did not endear him to his colleagues in the European Union either.

More considerate commentators looked at the past twenty to thirty years and wondered how Hungary, the one-time pacemaker of reforms in the 1980s, within less than ten years of its accession to the European Union had mutated into the EU’s anti-

¹ Zoltán Ripp, "A rendszerváltó ellenforradalom száz napja," *Népszava*(2010), <http://www.nepszava.hu/articles/article.php?id=342706>. János Kornai, "Taking Stock," *Népszabadság*(2011), http://www.nol.hu/gazdasag/janos_kornai__taking_stock.

² For a polemic critique of foreign and domestic opponents, see Tibor Fischer, *The Hungarian Tiger*, Kindle ed. (Amazon E.U. , 2014). For else, Mária Vásárhelyi, "Angriff auf die Pressefreiheit. Die Medienpolitik der Fidesz-Regierung," *Osteuropa* 61, no. 12 (2011). András Bozóki, "The Hungarian shock: Transition from Democracy?," *Transit online*(2011), <http://www.iwm.at/read-listen-watch/transit-online/the-hungarian-shock/>.

³ Jacques Rupnik and Jan Zielonka, "The State of Democracy 20 Years on: Domestic and External Factors," *East European Politics and Society* 27, no. 3 (2013).

democratic pariah. In 2012, the former Austrian Vice Chancellor Erhard Busek, a long-time friend of the neighboring country, resigned with a sigh:

I really do not understand, how they have gotten from a relatively good economy to this point. They have really jeopardized everything. They have gambled away the pole position! Their economy was based on the Russian not knowing Hungarian [smirks]. That was Kádár's achievement, despite his horrific role in 56 – [...] he allowed such liberalism, and that paid off economically. That *was* a good starting position!⁴

The recent alienation between the Hungarian government and 'the West' points to a complex and conflicted development that started well before 1989. On the surface, EU membership in 2004 had appeared as the fulfillment of the historic promise of 1989, when state socialism collapsed and the peaceful revolutions in Eastern Europe celebrated the 'return to Europe.' However, the region has undergone tremendous changes that no one could have foreseen during the peaceful revolutions of 1989. Whereas some countries have overcome the foes of the transformation, others – especially Hungary – have been mired in crises, inviting some to deny the accomplishments of the change of regimes.

Findings suggest that to understand the current situation one has to investigate the ways the Cold War has framed Hungary, its place within Europe and the conditions it set for the post-1989 transformations. The Cold War needs to be assessed as a structure in which East and West influenced one another. Through the lens of the Hungarian dissidents and their supporters in the West, the following analysis focuses on the mutual influences and engagements between Hungary and 'the West.' The study evaluates causes and consequences of rapprochement and alienation in a divided Europe in the second half of the twentieth century.

⁴ Erhard Busek, interviewed by the author, 7 February 2012, Vienna, Austria

The following history of the East European dissidents and their supporters in the West offers a particularly informative and dynamic analysis of the interdependences of the two blocs because it interrogates how intellectuals have understood and shaped the relations between East and West *and* between state and society per se. It sheds light on their reevaluation of Europe's past and their visions for Europe's future outside of the Cold War framework, which allows an investigation into the making of recent European history as the dissidents and their supporters have constructed it.

This approach offers new insights into the motivations that drove Western intellectuals to support East European dissidents, and the impact these friendships had on both sides. The analysis investigates how dissident ideas have influenced the Westerners and how they were appropriated and used in the national discourses in West Germany and the U.S., even in Austria and France. Furthermore, it reveals the impact that the one-sided portrayal of Hungary in the West through the lens of the cosmopolitan dissidents had on the discourse within Hungary and its consequences for the change of regimes. Therefore, it contributes new perspectives on the role of public intellectuals, the construction of European values and the problems of supporting opposition to foreign regimes considered unjust and illegitimate.

Although the study begins in the 1960s, the focus lies on the years from 1973 to 1998. The year 1973 serves as starting point because of the crackdown on domestic critics in Hungary; in general the mid-1970s saw the rise of a new type of opposition against the state socialist regimes in Eastern Europe in general. The study concludes in 1998, when Hungary joined NATO and began the process for accession to the European Union. The second round of free and democratic elections signaled the transfer of

political authority to a younger generation who had no recollection of the Second World War, Stalinist rule or the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, and were instead the beneficiaries of ‘goulash communism.’⁵

Research for this study has explored the following questions: What motivated intellectuals from either side of the Iron Curtain to engage in a dialogue across the Cold War divide? How have they influenced one another? What limits did the Cold War set for individual opportunities and joint projects and how have the intellectuals and activists involved sought to circumvent those obstacles inherent to the bipolar world order? What did members of this network aspire to individually and what did they hope to achieve together? How did dissidents and their Western supporters contribute to the end of the Cold War and how have they influenced the transformation of Eastern Europe since the collapse of state socialism in 1989? Last but not least, what is the legacy of their struggle against a bipolar world order and state socialism for today?

The focus lies on Hungary as a representative case study for changes in East-West relations during and since the end of the Cold War in general. By the nature of the subject it also touches upon the opposition movements in Poland and Czechoslovakia and discusses the unique opportunities available to this network in non-aligned Yugoslavia and neutral Austria. Hungary allows drawing far-reaching conclusions regarding the dynamics of the last phase of the Cold War, the possibilities and limits of interaction across the Iron Curtain, and reflects some of the more commonly experienced problems of the transformation the region in the 1990s.

⁵ Balász Trencsényi, "Beyond Liminality? The Kulturkampf of the Early 2000s in East Central Europe," *boundary 2* 41, no. 1 (2014): 135.

Findings allowed for the following arguments: Instead of the social revolution some of the protagonists had called for in the 1960s, Hungary, West Germany and the U.S. underwent more subtle but significant changes towards the end of the decade orchestrated from above, which forced the intellectuals to reassess their ideological commitments. This study demonstrates how and why these intellectuals from either side of the Iron Curtain shed its radical leftist convictions. By the late 1970s, their ideological convictions moderated and a cultural liberal consensus, which allowed them to equally criticize the overarching structure of the Cold War, the division of Europe, Western capitalism and Eastern state socialism per se.

The study outlines the narrative of European history and the associated values on which the intellectuals came to agree and how the East-West encounter inspired the reassessment of personal biographies and family histories. Western intellectuals reacted to the East European demand for respect for the Helsinki Final Act, in which the two blocs in 1975 had, among other key issues, agreed on “human rights and fundamental freedoms” such as freedom of thought, conscience, religion and, by joining and expanding the international human rights movement.⁶ The alliance of like-minded intellectuals from East and West contributed to the acceptance of human rights as universal; their role in monitoring and exposing violations helped make them a mainstay in Cold War politics.

The impact of the strikes in Poland in August 1980 and the success of the independent trade union Solidarity for this network cannot be overstated. They suggested that change from below was indeed possible. The shock of the declaration of martial law in December 1981 only reinforced the Westerners’ commitment to support the dissidents.

⁶ "Final Act," (Helsinki: Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, 1975).

Poland in 1980 had demonstrated that the fate of Europe would not be decided in the centers of political, military and economic powers in Washington D.C. and Moscow; the hope for a more humane united Europe that had emancipated itself from the two superpowers rested within the periphery. To counter the growing alienation of Eastern and Western Europe in the 1980s, the Westerners came to identify strongly with dissident ideas. As a result, the borderland of the Cold War that stretched from the Baltic to the Adriatic Coast was reconceptualized as Central Europe. The “rediscovery” of the idea of Central Europe in the 1980s was therefore less a sign of Habsburg nostalgia, but an attempt to construct a historical legacy and legitimation for the East-West network.

Between 1979 and 1988, the expanded network constituted a Cold War variant of the Enlightenment concept of a ‘Republic of Letters’ that included the New York Institute for the Humanities, the *New York Review of Books*, Helsinki Watch, the West German Rotbuch and Suhrkamp publishing houses, the DAAD’s artist-in-residence program, the Paris-based ‘Fondation pour une entraide intellectuelle européenne,’ the Institute for Human Sciences and the International Helsinki Federation in Vienna, the Jan Hus Fund in Oxford and Prague, the Inter-University Centre in Dubrovnik, George Soros’s inchoate Open Society Fund and the Soros-MTA Foundation as well as such notable intellectuals as Susan Sontag, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Tony Judt and Timothy Garton Ash.

The fact that authorities only half-heartedly attempted to prevent the network’s counter-event to the official Helsinki Review Conference, the Alternative Forum, in Budapest in October 1985 reveals the extent to which the party-state had already retreated from the use of force and its monopoly of power. This event represents the

international network's greatest albeit fleeting moment of triumph. However, the Alternative Forum also reveals the dilemma of the Westerner's biased perception of Hungary. The Western media and intellectuals tended to portray only the like-minded, cosmopolitan, often former Marxist and Jewish-born thinkers in Hungary in a positive light. They would at best ignore, if not berate and belittle their populist counterparts further deepening the traditional divide within the Hungarian intelligentsia.

The triumph over the one-party-state in 1989 only temporarily glossed over concerns about the rise of hostile nationalism and anti-Semitism in the region. East European dissidents and their Western friends sought to establish their vision for the region and salvage their legacy, which had quickly come under attack in the new system. The cult of a Christian-Magyar nation-state indicated with hindsight that the Democratic Opposition was only one among many voices from Hungary.

Although earlier they had condemned intellectuals who had assumed political roles and power, in 1989, many former dissidents were swept into politics. This study highlights not only how they failed to gain full control of the transformation of Eastern Europe and seemed unable to realize their erstwhile dissident visions. West European politicians and their political adversaries easily hijacked their ideas for their own purposes. Within a few years, most had left the political limelight deeply disappointed. Feelings of inadequacy, frustrations over Hungary's and their party's direction as well as the inability to communicate their visions dominated the mid-1990s. By 1998, most of the dissident-turned-politicians had resumed careers more similar to their dissident preoccupations: journalism, philosophy, research and teaching.

Westerners have retained their values but often broke for new shores, while benefitting from the expertise they had acquired in the network. The legacy thus appears ambivalent and diffuse: disillusionment is mixed with isolated success stories. Some of the network's cultural and ideological priorities have been realized, particularly through George Soros' Open Society Institute, the legalized continuation of former *samizdat* journals, and most importantly the Central European University. Most highlight and speak fondly of the friendships that they have made before 1989 and that have endured the transformation; these friendships would only be challenged by the terror attacks in New York on 11 September 2001 and the U.S. response to it, the "war on terror" and the invasion of Iraq.

Contribution and Literature Overview

The findings in this study contribute to our understanding of three fields of academic inquiry: first, the nature of the Cold War; second, the causes for its ending, and third, its legacy for Europe and European history. Within the larger body of scholarly literature, this study found inspiration in and seeks to complement the recent rise of New Cold War Studies. The conceptual approach of this project, its transnational reach from Budapest to New York, and temporal scope from the 1960s until the late 1990s differs significantly from previous work on the East European opposition movements and the end of the Cold War.

First of all, the analysis takes not only a transnational but also transatlantic approach; it transgresses national as well as bloc boundaries. Findings underscore the importance of Western supporters for the East European dissidents just as much as it reveals the previously largely neglected but in fact significant impact Easterners had on

their friends in the West. This network did not constitute a patronizing one-directional relationship, but consisted of interrelations, interdependencies and mutual appropriation.

Second, in extending research until 1998, the analysis overcomes the common periodization in which the peaceful revolutions of 1989 seemingly render dissent obsolete and uninteresting to academic inquiries. Instead, I treat the “*annus mirabilis*” as only the end to one phase of the historical phenomenon of dissent and investigate the impact of the post-1989 transformations on the former dissidents and their friends.⁷ As a result, the investigation reveals common experiences and developments that characterize a generation that had come of age and spend a significant part of its working adult life during the Cold War and its immediate aftermath. This generational profile shows distinct similarities within a cohort of intellectuals despite having been born and raised in different countries on different sides of the Iron Curtain.

Most American scholarship *on* the Cold War *during* the Cold War has focused on the bipolar competition between the U.S. and the USSR. Two of the most notable trends were revisionism, a school of thought that in the wake of the Vietnam War and decolonization held the U.S. accountable for the escalation of the conflict, and post-revisionism, which refuted that claim and tried to find a middle ground between revisionism and its predecessor, the orthodox anti-Stalinist approach of the 1950s, which had exculpated the U.S., in assigning *some* responsibility to the U.S. but still retaining

⁷ Andrew B. Wachtel, *Remaining Relevant After Communism. The Role of the Writer in Eastern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 44-45.

America's moral superiority.⁸ Well into the 1990s, these two schools set the framework for most of the discussion of the beginning, nature and ending of the Cold War.

When state socialism ended in Eastern Europe in 1989 and the Soviet Union broke up in 1991, the latter trend, post-revisionism, seemed to prevail. An air of triumphalism wafted through journalism and scholarship alike, most notably in political science and international relations studies. Michael Meyer, who in 1989 had written for *Newsweek Magazine*, contends that: "We Americans tend to see the end of communism as somehow foreordained," and believe in "the idea of the United States as an emancipator, a liberator of repressive regimes."⁹ A new trend, transitology, emerged in the early 1990s that sought to analyze the transformation and simultaneously advise policymakers in Eastern Europe. In the realist interpretation of international relations and political science, U.S. interests and security needs had triumphed, giving way to a congratulatory tone that praised the delayed success of the Washington consensus over 'backward' East European economies and societies. Hand-in-hand went an emphasis on state actors, most notably President Ronald Reagan, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev that continues to this day.¹⁰ It seemed history was taking a backseat to the disciplinary dominance of IR and political science.

John Lewis Gaddis, the authority of post-revisionism, whose 1982 *Strategies of Containment* had seemingly implied the inevitable demise of the Soviet Union and the triumph of American democracy per its more appealing foreign policy, has continued to

⁸ For the former, see Melvyn P. Leffler and David S. Painter, eds., *Origins of the Cold War. An International History* (New York: Routledge, 1994).; for the latter, see John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972).

⁹ Michael R. Meyer, *The Year that Changed the World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), xi.

¹⁰ Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). Mary Elise Sarotte, *1989. The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

shape the debate about the Cold War.¹¹ He had elaborated on the inherent success of containment in 1987, when he reinterpreted the bipolar conflict as *The Long Peace*.¹² In 1998, after research in newly accessible archives Gaddis wrote *We Now Know: Rethinking the Cold War*, which added nuances but still argued: the “American empire,” that is the Western bloc, had prevailed in the Cold War because U.S. foreign policies the American-led Western alliance had been consensual in contrast to the Soviets who relied on coercion, a strategy doomed to fail.¹³

That same year, in 1998, CNN broadcast a 24-episode-series, *Cold War*, to which Gaddis and others had contributed as consultant. Pundits and scholars alike criticized the series as too lenient towards the Soviets, particularly for suggesting a moral equivalence of American and Soviet intentions and interests.¹⁴ However, the controversy ensued between U.S. scholars, who had already battled the academic fields in the 1980s. Only very few resented the triumphalist tone in later episodes on the collapse of state socialism, which cast Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher in the questionable role of benevolent backers of both the opposition movements and Gorbachev. The whole affair left a stale aftertaste, which subsided after two years. However, it also indicated the need for new approaches and new voices.

One of the most prolific scholars conceptualizing the study of the Cold War is the London-based historian Odd Arne Westad. Likewise in 1998, he convened a conference in Copenhagen, because he sensed indicators of a paradigmatic change in the field.

¹¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 1982).

¹² *The Long Peace: Inquiries Into the History of the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 1987).

¹³ *We Now Know: Rethinking the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹⁴ Thomas M. Nichols, "Mules, Missiles, and McCarthy: CNN's Cold War," *International Journal* (1999). John Lewis Gaddis, "The View From Inside: Answering Some Criticism," in *CNN's Cold War Documentary*, ed. Arnold Beichman (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2000).

Driven by the paradox of newly opened archives contrasted by the quick disappearance of the Cold War from the public eye, Westad sought new approaches to the recent past. He objected to the view of the Cold War as a confrontation of two monoliths, and instead welcomed new explanations for change, which often expressed an “apparent centrality of the role of *ideas and beliefs*.”¹⁵ However, the general gist of the essay collection remained exploratory, since Westad so far ‘only’ sensed that “the new Cold War history means the (slow) emergence of new lines of division in the scholarly debate.”¹⁶

Soon several publications that claimed to “rethink,” “review” and “reinterpret” the Cold War followed Westad’s pioneering advance. More often than not, Westad’s name was among the contributors.¹⁷ Even John Lewis Gaddis acknowledged the shift with his 2005 book *The Cold War: A New History*.¹⁸ In 2010, a new three-volume-series of *The Cambridge History of the Cold War* appeared with Westad as editor.¹⁹ He argued that scholars coming into the profession in the 1990s preferred more internationalist approaches, incorporated non-state actors, and conceptualized varied research inquiries using an ever more diverse source base than before. Contrary to realist and post-revisionist analyses, recent historical studies also take domestic issues into consideration,

¹⁵ Odd Arne Westad, "Introduction: Reviewing the Cold War," in *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory*, ed. Odd Arne Westad (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6, 10.

¹⁷ Silvio Pons and Frederico Romero, eds., *Reinterpreting the End of the Cold War. Issues, Interpretations, Periodizations* (London: Frank Cass, 2005). William C. Wohlforth, ed. *Cold War Endgame. Oral History, Analysis, Debates* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2003). Duncan Bell and Joel Isaac, eds., *Uncertain Empire: American History and the Idea of the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin, 2005).

¹⁹ Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

‘soft’ topics like human rights and the environment, the “generational experience and, in some cases, international or even transnational or ‘imagined’ communities.”²⁰

In short, over ten years after Westad’s explorative conference, the compendium demonstrates a much clearer conceptualization of New Cold War Studies. The fact that Oxford University Press followed suit in 2013 with *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, which attested to the same paradigm shift, demonstrates that New Cold War Studies have taken hold in the discipline.²¹ Moreover, like Westad, the Oxford editors contextualize the Cold War as a component of global history, which

Does not imply that the superpower rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union has lost its significance. The chapters [...] take note of the centrality of this rivalry, as they should. The cold war, nevertheless, can no longer be owned by either one or both of these countries’ historical memory or historiography alone. It must be appreciated as global history, and as global history it reveals nuances, idiosyncrasies, and complexities obscured by more traditional accounts.²²

Westad had highlighted the significance of generational experiences across national and bloc boundaries. In 2010, he and the Danish historian Poul Villaume edited a volume on détente in Europe with the title *Perforating the Iron Curtain*.²³ They argue that between 1965 and 1985, “the stalemate in the superpower confrontation was gradually superseded, [...] by the intensification of peaceful interaction between European states.”²⁴ Western integration was driven by a change in attitudes in France and

²⁰ Odd Arne Westad, "The Cold War and the International History of the Twentieth Century," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, ed. Odd Arne Westad and Melvyn P. Leffler (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 10.

²¹ Richard H. Immerman and Petra Goedde, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

²² "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, ed. Richard H. Immerman and Petra Goedde (Oxford University Press, 2013), 1-2.

²³ Odd Arne Westad and Poul Villaume, eds., *Perforating the Iron Curtain. European Détente, Transatlantic Relations, and the Cold War, 1965-1985* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2010).

²⁴ "Introduction: The Secrets of European Détente," in *Perforating the Iron Curtain*, ed. Odd Arne Westad and Poul Villaume (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 2010), 1.

Germany in particular; contrary to some critics, it did not drive a wedge into the transatlantic alliance, Westad and Villaume argue, but “the cohesion on key strategic aims improved.” The key to the success was its appeal to Eastern Europe, the two conclude, because it suggested to Communist leaders “one could have *both* the power and productivity of the America *and* the social inclusiveness of France or Germany.”²⁵ The entire volume sets out to prove that *in the long term*, as unexpected consequence, the years of détente, roughly the 1970s, fundamentally changed Cold War dynamics.

One of Westad’s collaborators for *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, the German-born Princeton scholar Jan-Werner Müller highlights the significance of the 1970s, but with a different emphasis than the study at hand. As expert in intellectual history, he begins his inquiry with 1968, the year of global revolt. Müller argues that the demands, events and developments associated with the shorthand ‘68 “called into question traditional concepts of the political, tearing down the ideological barricades between the public and the private, and making culture and everyday experiences explicitly politicised.” However, more importantly, he notes that in the absence of any immediately groundbreaking transformations, “the promise of liberation was followed by a sense of malaise.”²⁶ He sees the 1970s as a crisis of democracy, which was confounded by the post-modernism of France’s ‘new philosophers’ and in the U.S. by the rise of neo-conservatism, the brainchild of many New York intellectuals who had abandoned the leftist radicalism of their youth.

²⁵ Ibid., 10.

²⁶ Jan-Werner Müller, “The Cold War and the intellectual history of the late twentieth century,” in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, ed. Odd Arne Westad and Melvyn P. Leffler (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.

Müller elaborates on the relevance of the 1970s for Western political thought in *Contesting Democracy*, an analysis of political thought in the twentieth century.²⁷ “In retrospect the mid-1970s seem like the high point of a profound crisis affecting not just Western Europe, but the West as a whole,” he claims.²⁸ In his rendition, which incorporates dissident thinkers like György Konrád and Václav Havel too, the 1980s became a swan song of leftist and social democratic ideologies, which were upended after 1989 by Francis Fukuyama’s laudation of Western-style liberalism and parliamentary democracy and the unexpected return of ‘classic liberalism’ among economists and politicians like Václav Klaus.²⁹

Although Müller and Westad take different approaches and put different emphases, their findings complement each other. Most importantly, both point out the fundamental importance of the 1970s for the political, social, and economic history of the Cold War. Détente represents a Europe-focused turning point altering the dynamics of the bipolar world. Although my approach and focus differ, this study of the support network of the East European dissidents, especially the Hungarians, points to similar conclusions.

More specifically, this project has benefitted from previous studies of resistance, dissent and opposition, particularly work on their contribution to the collapse of state socialism. These themes are a subfield of Cold War Studies and have undergone significant interpretive changes since 1989. Philip Ther has shown how twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall conflicting, at times contradictory, narratives co-exist in

²⁷ *Contesting Democracy: Political Thought in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 202.

²⁹ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

popular and academic narratives.³⁰ Scholarship has approached opposition and resistance in the Eastern bloc mostly focusing on the cataclysmic years 1956, 1968 and 1989, often in the form of essay collections.³¹ The revolts in those years highlight landmarks of East European history, and indicate a historical progression of opposition to state socialism. Vladimir Tismaneanu even asserts that one cannot make sense of 1989 without 1968.³²

Initially, opposition movements and dissident communities before 1989 had been viewed as inchoate civil societies, which were considered the necessary backbone to democracy. The British journalist-turned-historian Timothy Garton Ash was one of the first, and certainly the most prolific writer who championed the civil society paradigm. He happened to be in Gdańsk during the shipyard strikes and the founding of *Solidarność*, the first independent trade union in a socialist state.³³ The report Garton Ash published after the declaration of martial law in 1981 established his reputation as expert on Eastern Europe. In 2002, the book went into its third, revised edition—giving evidence to its lasting influence.³⁴ He blended empathetic eyewitness accounts, always on the side of the underdog, with investigative reporting and an excellent style of writing.

³⁰ Philipp Ther, "1989 -- eine verhandelte Revolution," *Docupedia - Zeitgeschichte*(2010), <http://docupedia.de/zg/1989>.

³¹ Vladimir Tismaneanu and Sorin Antohi, eds., *Between Past and Future: The Revolutions of 1989 and Their Aftermath* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999); Charles Gati, *Failed Illusions. Moscow, Washington, Budapest, and the 1956 Hungarian Revolt* (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006); Paul Lendvai, *Der Ungarnaufstand 1956. Eine Revolution und ihre Folgen* (Munich: C. Bertelsmann, 2006). Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe, eds., *Revolution and Resistance in Eastern Europe. Challenges to Communist Rule* (New York: Berg Publishers, 2007). Roger Engelmann, Thomas Großbölting, and Hermann Wentker, eds., *Kommunismus in der Krise. Die Entstalinisierung 1956 und die Folgen*, Wissenschaftliche Reihe der Bundesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU) (Berlin: Bundesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR, 2008). Vladimir Tismaneanu, ed. *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusions and Utopias* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011).

³² "Introduction," in *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion and Utopia*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), 16.

³³ Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*, 1 ed. (New York: Scribner, 1984).

³⁴ *Solidarność. The Polish Revolution*, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

In 1989, Garton Ash once more found himself in the right place at the right time. He travelled to Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague for the key moments that constituted '89. The essay collection that summarizes Garton Ash's experiences, *The Magic Lantern*, opens with Václav Havel's declaration "People, your government has returned to you!" – a statement that reflects the message of the collection.³⁵ Civil society was a concept promoted by the dissidents themselves as a form of justification, and sympathetic Western observers like Garton Ash amplified this view. In 1989, the dissidents' self-understanding of civil society seemed to turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy that portrayed them as the champions of the peaceful revolutions.

However, as the promises of 1989 – freedom *and* prosperity – did not quite meet everyone's expectations and dissidents who had taken up political roles faltered one by one in face of the challenge of Eastern Europe's transformation, scholarship explored new routes of investigation. The glamour that had surrounded the former dissidents faded, and the disillusionment with the erstwhile heroes reflected in studies such as Padraic Kenny's *Carnival of Revolution*.³⁶ He argued that dissident intellectuals had been less relevant to the end of state socialism than often assumed; indirectly, he pointed out that their experiences were not that of the majority population. Instead, relying on over two hundred interviews with young activists in the peace and environmental movements deserved more attention, because their reluctance to participate in state-ordered activities and organizations undermined the authority of the one-party state and ultimately terminated the regimes. Nick Thorpe, the BBC correspondent who has been based in

³⁵ *The Magic Lantern. The Revolution of '89 as witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague*, 3 ed. (New York: Vintage, 1993 (1990)).

³⁶ Padraic Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution. Central Europe 1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

Budapest since 1986, makes a similar claim in his 2009 autobiographical account *89. The Unfinished Revolution*.³⁷

Concomitantly to this history from below, around the twentieth anniversary of 1989, a more general fascination with everyday life under state socialism emerged, with Paula Bren's *The Greengrocer and his TV* about the normalization in Czechoslovakia after 1968 as one of the most informative publications of this type.³⁸ Nevertheless, the interest in the dissidents did not subside, largely because they were such a unique phenomenon to Eastern Europe during the Cold War. In 2004, encouraged by her mentor Gordon Skilling, an early expert on the Charta 77, Barbara Falk sought to establish 'dissident ideas' as an inherent part of Western political thought. Comparing the critical intellectuals in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, she pursues an "experiment to further our understanding of the relationship of political ideas to political change, and [...] how [...] ordinary and extraordinary human beings make this happen."³⁹ Although she focuses little on the "ordinary", Falk was probably the first foreign scholar to accomplish a comprehensive comparison and contextualization of all three opposition movements demonstrating their similarities, differences and linkages.⁴⁰

Vladimir Tismaneanu likewise defends the contributions of the dissident intellectuals to the peaceful revolutions. A Romanian émigré, he has been personally invested and close to those dissidents who have chosen academia over politics. Although he acknowledges other factors that resulted in the collapse of the Eastern bloc, he insists

³⁷ Nick Thorpe, *89. The Unfinished Revolution* (London: Reportage Press, 2009).

³⁸ Paula Bren, *The Greengrocer and his TV. The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

³⁹ Barbara Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe. Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003), xviii.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, xviii.

that it was largely the work of civil society in the form of the Polish Workers' Defense Committee KOR and the Czech Charta 77.⁴¹ "My main thesis is that the events of 1989 had world-shattering revolutionary consequences. Some authors praise the role of civic society, critical intellectuals and dissidents; others take issue with this approach, but none of them denies the important fact that these changes resulted in the end of Leninist regimes in east and central Europe."⁴²

The twentieth anniversary in 2009 inspired a number of re-assessments. With two decades gone by, several authors revisited the locations of the peaceful revolutions in Central Europe to better understand not only the causes but also the legacies. Motivated by the 'human factor', the British journalist Victor Sebestyen, who had been a correspondent in Eastern Europe in 1989, returns to the region, paying homage especially to Mikhail Gorbachev who has become a scapegoat at home while in the West he is still celebrated as hero.⁴³ Intending to upset a simplistic but popular triumphalism that has credited President Ronald Reagan – and to a lesser extent the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher – with the collapse of Communism drives Sebestyen's account. His well-written, captivating study strikes a balance to note the interconnectedness of the Cold War: "East Europeans liberated themselves, but the West played a vital part."⁴⁴

Regardless of Tismaneanu's defense of dissidents and 'civil society', younger scholars have come to question the validity of the concept altogether. Representative for this trend is Agnes Arendt's article "Renaissance or Reconstruction? Intellectual Transfer

⁴¹ Vladimir Tismaneanu, "The Revolutions of 1989: Causes, Meanings, Consequences," *Contemporary European History* 18, no. 3 (2009): 278.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 276.

⁴³ Victor Sebestyen, *Revolution 1989. The Fall of the Soviet Empire* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2009). The first U.S. scholar to recognize the momentous significance of Gorbachev's reforms was Moshe Lewin in 1988. Moshe Lewin, *The Gorbachev Phenomenon. A Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

⁴⁴ Sebestyen, *Revolution 1989*, x.

of Civil Society Discourses Between Eastern and Western Europe.”⁴⁵ The author illustrates the appearance and acceptance of the *concept* of civil societies in Poland as part of the dissident discourse permeating the Iron Curtain. Instead of assuming the concept describes an a priori existing reality, Arendt analyzes how dissident thinkers like Adam Michnik have adopted and applied the term, justifying their own activities as sign of an inchoate civil society and with the revolution of 1989 turning it into a self-fulfilling prophecy.⁴⁶ Most importantly, she proves that Michnik, a leading thinker throughout Eastern Europe in the 1970s and 1980s, used the concept without interrogating its theoretical foundations and compatibility.

The Princeton historian Steven Kotkin dismisses any such interpretation that credits the dissident intellectuals or grass root movements for the collapse of state socialism. Following his detailed analysis of the demise of the Soviet Union, *Armageddon Averted*, in the rather polemic *Uncivil Society* Kotkin concludes that instead of being overthrown the reform communists in the Eastern bloc largely withdrew from power voluntarily.⁴⁷ Kotkin argues that the Polish opposition merely “imagined itself as civil society,” but “recourse to ‘civil society’ in fact exaggerated the role of intellectuals (at the expense of workers, churches, and the world economy).” In Hungary, he argues, “proreform Communists in 1989 had to bolster the anti-Communist opposition in order to have a negotiating partner.”⁴⁸ According to Kotkin, state socialism collapsed because of a

⁴⁵ Agnes Arendt, "Renaissance or Reconstruction? Intellectual Transfer of Civil Society Discourses Between Eastern and Western Europe," in *Samizdat, Tamizdat, and Beyond*, ed. Friederike Kind-Kovács and Jessie Labov (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted. The Soviet Collapse 1970- 2000*. (Oxford Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁴⁸ *Uncivil Society. 1989 and the Implosion of the communist establishment* (New York: Random House, 2009), xiv, 8.

“global political economy and a bankrupt political class in a system that was largely bereft of corrective mechanisms.”⁴⁹

The Budapest-based historian Andreas Oplatka makes a similar argument about the domino effect initiated by Hungary’s decision to open its borders in early 1989. However, *Der erste Riss in der Mauer* strikes a very different tone in an attempt to highlight the difficult decision-making process and cautious negotiations the last prime minister, Miklós Németh had to undertake with partners in East and West when confronted with an outdated border defense system, a bankrupt economy and a wave of East German refugees flooding the capital. Although far from a trend, Kotkin’s and Oplatka’s studies represent an important corrective and check on overestimating intellectuals’ influence on real politics.

The project at hand comes the closest to a recent transnational publication that seeks to contribute to New Cold War studies. In *Written Here, Published There*, the Regensburg-based scholar Friederike Kind-Kovács analyzes “*tamizdat* for its ability to provide the vision of and practice for an undivided, pan-European literature that deconstructed (although marginally) the divisions of Cold War Europe.”⁵⁰ Kind-Kovács’s refreshingly sober assessment of the fringe phenomenon highlights how a small group helped breath life into the Helsinki Final Act and nudged on the growing human rights movement. Like this project, she was particularly interested in the motivations, exchanges, appropriations and mutual influences within the *tamizdat* community. She takes a broad geographical approach that credits Soviet writers as pioneering and Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty for reintroducing dissident thought into the Eastern bloc.

⁴⁹ Ibid., xvii.

⁵⁰ Friederike Kind-Kovács, *Written Here, Published There. How Underground Literature Crossed the Iron Curtain* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014), 11.

Taking into account earlier exaggerations of the dissidents' presumed triumph, she relativizes the reach of the 'public sphere' *tamizdat* and *samizdat* had created in forty years of Cold War history. Although she discusses the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the Paris-based *tamizdat* journal *Magyar Füzetek*, Robert Bernstein and the U.S. Helsinki Watch, her focus on literary exchanges does not cover the network analyzed here. Apart from the above-mentioned reservations, Kind-Kovács acknowledges the effectiveness, ingenuity and courage of the transnational network and honors its accomplishments with "a social history of intellectuals, as it focuses not only on intellectual ideas and discourses but also on social practices."⁵¹ The monograph *Written Here, Published There* followed a remarkable collection of essays by junior scholars, *Samizdat, Tamizdat, and Beyond*, which Kind-Kovács had published in 2013 with Jessie Labov and which features Agnes Arendt's 'civil society' analysis.⁵²

Two recent unique monographs deserve mention because they discuss the Cold War framework of this study and illustrate the porousness of the Iron Curtain and the transnational exchange of ideas between the U.S. and the Eastern bloc. They analyze two controversial elements of "American political warfare," as Mark Kramer put it.⁵³ In *Hot Books for the Cold War*, Alfred A. Reisch investigates a largely unknown, secret book distribution program, "a Marshall plan for the mind." Through front organizations such as the Free Europe Committee and the International Advisory Council, Inc., the C.I.A. funded books for distribution in Central Europe. Individuals in the target countries Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and the Soviet Union requested

⁵¹ Ibid., 12.

⁵² Friederike Kind-Kovács and Jessie Labov, eds., *Samizdat, Tamizdat, and Beyond: Transnational Media During and After Socialism* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013).

⁵³ Mark Kramer, "Introduction," in *Hot Books in the Cold War* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013).

and received books from 1956 to 1991. Reisch, who passed away shortly after the publication in 2013, worked for Radio Free Europe; he interviewed hundreds of refugees from Hungary in 1956 and 1957, and has written numerous insightful background reports. His dense analysis of the book distribution program is rich in primary sources – especially the letters from behind the Iron Curtain – that warrant attention even though his conclusions that it directly contributed to the American “victory” in the Cold War should be treated with caution given his personal implication.

Reisch’s study complements the investigation of his friend and colleague A. Ross Johnson of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, two well-known U.S. radio stations for the Eastern bloc.⁵⁴ Both scholars relied heavily on recent acquisitions of the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University. However, Johnson ends his study already in 1971, when in response to the revelation they had been funded by the C.I.A. the U.S. Congress decided to take stronger control and incorporate the radio stations’ financing into the federal budget. He sought to cover the most controversial period, from the beginnings to the C.I.A. scandal, in order to demonstrate the multiple interests that informed its operations and content, especially of the different émigré groups employed and the American employers. Johnson focuses more on the operational, not the receiving end of his transnational story.

The emergence of human rights and a network of monitoring groups represent a special field among Cold War studies, which is intricately connected to West European integration and détente. Neither compendia, *The Cambridge History* nor *The Oxford*

⁵⁴ A. Ross Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. The CIA Years and Beyond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

Handbook can do without a chapter on human rights.⁵⁵ Three monographs stand out because of the way they have conceptualized the history of human rights during the Cold War. In 2001, Daniel Thomas analyzed the “surprising weakness of Communist rule and the emergence of rights-protective states to the transformation of state-society and West-West relations catalyzed by the Communist governments’ acceptance of new international norms on human rights in the mid-1970s.”⁵⁶ Thomas argues that the Helsinki agreement not only influenced European norms, establishing democratic standards and respect for human rights as part of the European agenda, but also defeated the Communist parties’ monopoly over interpretations of law, access to information and control over the public. According to Thomas, the human rights pressure groups contributed significantly to the peaceful denouement of 1989.

Samuel Moyn understands the rise of human rights as a paradigmatic shift in the history of ideas. In *The Last Utopia*, Moyn makes the daring suggestion that human rights became a universal ideology as a replacement for other utopian ideologies, particularly Marxism, once they had proven not viable.⁵⁷ Criticizing Moyn’s argument as faulty and inaccurate, Aryeh Neier has published his assessment of the international human rights movement to disprove Moyn’s claims. Although he has played an essential role in the defense of human rights himself, Neier – a protagonist of the study at hand – neglects to discuss his own role as former director of the ACLU and founder of Helsinki Watch. His informative account of social movements and pressure groups such as the Civil Rights

⁵⁵ Rosemary Foot, “The Cold War and human rights,” in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, ed. Odd Arne Westad and Melvyn P. Leffler (Cambridge University Press, 2010). Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War. A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

⁵⁶ Daniel Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton University Press, 2001), 7.

⁵⁷ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Harvard University Press, 2010).

movement, Index on Censorship, Amnesty International, Helsinki and Americas Watch will be part of the story here.⁵⁸

In *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*, Sarah B. Snyder has focused on the role of civic activism in the international Helsinki movement, its impact on the Helsinki review process and contribution to the end of state socialism.⁵⁹ Apart from John Fry, who already in 1994 interrogated exclusively the official review process, Snyder successfully demonstrates the interaction between civic group and diplomats and negotiators.⁶⁰ The Hungarian scholar András Mink takes a similar approach, but focuses on the emergence of the movement in the eastern bloc to trace the arrival of the Helsinki movement in Hungary. He is the only one to analyze the history of the International Helsinki Federation and its direct support of Hungarian dissidents.⁶¹ A comprehensive study of the International Helsinki Federation, the umbrella organization for the Western Watch groups founded in 1984, has yet to be written. This analysis is the only one to discuss the history of the Federation's early years.

A striking number of autobiographies and – at least of the Westerners involved – biographies have come out to tell the story from the perspective of the participants. Most notably, George Soros wrote an autobiography, *Underwriting Democracy*, in which he lays out his philosophical and personal motivation, goal, and intentions. Aryeh Neier did not only write *The International Human Rights Movement*, but in 2003 published *Taking*

⁵⁸ Aryeh Neier, *The International Human Rights Movement: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

⁵⁹ Sarah B. Snyder, "The Rise of the Helsinki Network: 'A Sort of Lifeline' for Eastern Europe," in *Perforating the Iron Curtain*, ed. Odd Arne Westad and Poul Villaume (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2010).

⁶⁰ John Fry, *The Helsinki Process. Negotiating Cooperation and Security in Europe* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1994).

⁶¹ András Mink, *The Defendant: The State. The Story of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee*, trans. Ervin Dunay and Péter Bognár (Budapest: Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 2005).

Liberties: Four Decades in the Struggle for Rights, which recounts his life from his earliest memories as a refugee in the UK during World War II to his directorship of the Open Society Institute.⁶² Jeri Laber, who has served Neier as executive director of Helsinki Watch, wrote *The Courage of Strangers: Coming of Age with the Human Rights Movement*.⁶³ It is a very personal, self-reflective rendition of her activities and support for the suppressed behind the Iron Curtain that has – with the exception of Sarah B. Snyder – been largely ignored.

In Hungary, Róza Hodosán, the former *samizdat* activist and Member of Parliament, wrote an insightful autobiography that recounts her time growing up in the Hungarian countryside, her political maturing, and dissident activities in the 1980s. Tellingly, the book ends with the reburial of the 1956 prime minister on 16 June 1989. *Samizdat stories* – as the title could be translated – is the rare example of a woman telling the story of her life as a dissident.⁶⁴ The former *samizdat* editor, member of parliament and director of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee Ferenc Kőszeg has published two semi-autobiographical volumes, *K. stories* in 2009 and *The End of Our Past* in 2011.⁶⁵ In 2006, the autobiography of the novelist and probably internationally best-known Hungarian dissident György Konrád, *A Guest in My Own Country*, came out.⁶⁶

The former New York Times Eastern Europe correspondent Michael Kauffman has written a laudatory biography of Soros, based on interviews with him, members of his family, friends and collaborators. The title, *Soros: The Life and Times of a Messianic*

⁶² Aryeh Neier, *Taking Liberties. Four Decades in the Struggle for Rights* (New York: Public Affairs, 2003).

⁶³ Jeri Laber, *The Courage of Strangers. Coming of Age with the Human Rights Movement* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002).

⁶⁴ Róza Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek* (Budapest Noran, 2004).

⁶⁵ Ferenc Kőszeg, *K. történetei* (Budapest: Magvető, 2009). *Múltunk Vége* (Budapest: Kalligram, 2011).

⁶⁶ György Konrád, *A Guest in My Own Country*, trans. Jim Tucker (New York: Other Press, 2007).

Billionaire, hints at the general tone of the book. Barbara Tóth's biography of Karl von Schwarzenberg, the son of Bohemian nobility, former president of the International Helsinki Federation, advisor to President Václav Havel and now foreign minister appears similarly inclined towards its subject. Hans Magnus Enzensberger's biographer Joachim Lau is fascinated by his subject's cosmopolitan life style, but he completely ignores his involvement with the East European opposition movements.⁶⁷ Stefan Müller-Doohm who wrote two excellent intellectual biographies, one on Theodor Adorno and one on his protégé Jürgen Habermas, also neglects the latter's activities behind the Iron Curtain.⁶⁸

Whereas it is hardly surprising that such biographies reveal a certain bias, take a different approach to the lives of their subject and may target an audience presumably not interested in these issues, what is striking is that none of the Hungarian autobiographies – except for György Konrád's – has been translated into English or German. Ferenc remarked that he had contacted a German publishing house, but found the editors indifferent.⁶⁹ Suhrkamp editor Christian Döring commented that the former dissidents have come out of fashion.⁷⁰

Along similar lines, János M. Rainer's biography of the revolutionary Prime Minister Imre Nagy, which is two volumes in the Hungarian original, has been compressed into one in its English and German translations. Regrettably, Tibor Huszár's two-volume well-researched and balanced biography of János Kádár, this towering figure of Hungarian goulash communism, has never been translated.⁷¹ Only Roger Gough's *A*

⁶⁷ Jörg Lau, *Hans Magnus Enzensberger. Ein öffentliches Leben* (Berlin: Alexander Fest, 1999).

⁶⁸ Stefan Müller-Doohm, *Adorno. A Biography*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005). *Jürgen Habermas. Eine Biographie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2014).

⁶⁹ Ferenc Kőszeg, interviewed by the author, 19 April 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

⁷⁰ Christian Döring, interviewed by the author, 26 June 2012, Berlin.

⁷¹ Tibor Huszár, *Kádár János politikai életrajza* (Budapest: Szabad Tér, 2001). *Kádár. A Hatalom Évei, 1956-1989* (Budapest: Corvina, 2006).

Good Comrade. János Kádár, Communism and Hungary exists in English, and – although successful in its intention of rendering this complex historical figure of Hungarian history intelligible to an uninitiated audience – it remains at an introductory level.⁷² Essential primary source collections of the Hungarian opposition, such as the proceeding of the Monor meeting in 1985 or the three-volume *Bibó Commemorative book*, and the interview collections of the *Monday Free University* and Érvin Csizmadia's *The Hungarian Democratic Opposition (1968-1988)* have not been translated.⁷³ Even in Hungarian, some of these have gone out of print by now. It almost seems like Tibor Fischer in his polemical *The Hungarian Tiger* was right when he suggested: "No one hugely cares about Hungary, but let me tell you about it anyway."⁷⁴

Terminology

First of all, I use the term 'intellectual' or public intellectual to describe a person who seeks public attention and uses his – in this case rarely her – social capital to criticize and influence events, actors, political decisions and opinions, particularly public opinion.⁷⁵ They had received a university education and were trained in academic disciplines, mostly the humanities. Historically, the concept of intellectuals has remained contested, and the protagonists of this study have struggled with its meaning, too. Academic literature has found a fairly stable consensus of who belonged to the 'New

⁷² Roger Gough, *A Good Comrade. János Kádár, Communism and Hungary* (London: I.B Taurus, 2006).

⁷³ János M. Rainer, ed. *A monori tanácskozás 1985. június 14–16* (Budapest: 1956-os Közalapítvány 2005). Pál Réz, "A Bibó Emlékkönyv elé," in *A Bibó Emlékkönyv* (Budapest: Századvég, 1991). Sándor Szilágyi, ed. *A Hétfői Szabadegyetem és a III/III. Interjúk, dokumentumok* (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 1999). Ervin Csizmadia, *A Magyar Demokratikus Ellenzék (1968-1988)*, vol. III (Interjúk) (Budapest: T-Twins, 1995).

⁷⁴ Fischer, *The Hungarian Tiger*.

⁷⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed," in *The Field of Cultural Production. Essays on Art and Literature by Pierre Bourdieu*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); "Symbolic capital and social classes," *Journal of Classic Sociology* 13, no. 2 (2013).

York intellectuals.’ Susan Sontag is oftentimes considered the last of this type. Intellectuals and their role in society intrigued Sontag herself; she grappled with this complex and her own role in numerous published articles and in her diaries.⁷⁶

Members of the network studied here shared a common understanding of the role intellectuals should play in society. Noam Chomsky revealed the main function of intellectuals in his scathing critique of those intellectuals involved in the Congress for Cultural Freedom and corrupted by accepting funds from the C.I.A.: “It is the responsibility of intellectuals to speak the truth and to expose lies. This, at least, may seem enough of a truism to pass over without comment. Not so, however. For the modern intellectual, it is not at all obvious.”⁷⁷ To avoid confusion, I have tried to differentiate between what scholarly literature knows as ‘the New York intellectuals’ and the intellectuals in New York who advocated on behalf of East European artists and critics in the 1970s and 1980s. The latter I refer to as ‘the New Yorkers’; the difference is relevant precisely because they consider ‘the New York intellectuals’ their nemesis; they wanted to avoid at all costs resembling those who had ‘sold out’ to the U.S. government. In the words of Alan Wald, they repudiated the intellectual trajectory of their seniors who had “moved from a distinct variety of communism in the 1930s to a distinct variety of liberalism by the 1950s; from advocating socialist revolution to endorsing American capitalism.”⁷⁸ Hungarian dissidents and West German intellectuals could point to similar

⁷⁶ Susan Sontag, "Simone Weil," *New York Review of Books* 1, no. 1 (1963). "The Last Intellectual: Walter Benajmin," *New York Review of Books* 25, no. 15 special issue (1978). *Reborn. Journals & Notebooks, 1947-1963* ed. David Rieff (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008). *As consciousness is harnessed to flesh. Journals and Notebooks, 1964-1980*, ed. David Rieff (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2012).

⁷⁷ Noam Chomsky, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals," *New York Review of Books* (1967).

⁷⁸ Alexander Wald, *The New York Intellectuals. The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).-11

detering examples, when intellectuals had abused their position and manipulated the public in return for political acceptance and personal gain.⁷⁹

In the early 1970s, the Hungarian sociologists György Konrád and Iván Szelényi wrote a study on *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*. They demonstrated how the existing socialist state had inverted the Marxist dogma: bureaucrats and experts – “intellectuals” in their understanding because they had received training to manage public affairs – were depriving the working class of their franchise and prosperity.⁸⁰ Konrád later abandoned his interpretation of the administrative and technical bureaucracy as intelligentsia and adopted the American understanding.

On both sides of the Iron Curtain, the members of the network arrived at a common understanding that denounced what Julien Benda in 1925 had called “la trahison des clerks.”⁸¹ They considered moral integrity, political independence, critical thinking and the duty to intervene in public affairs to be responsibilities of the intellectual. They believed the public should be free from governmental intervention, based on equality, merit and freedom of speech and upheld the Enlightenment concept of the ‘Republic of Letters’ as their role model. They also came to see themselves as intellectuals, in Hungarian using the term ‘kritikai értelmiség’; their understanding of the role of intellectuals, informed by historical and personal experiences, guided their actions and their public intervention; most notably, these principles can be observed in the *New York Review of Books* and Konrád’s *Antipolitics*.⁸²

⁷⁹ György Dalos, *Vom Propheten zum Produzenten. Zum Rollenwandel der Literaten in Ungarn und Osteuropa* (Vienna: Wespennest, 1992), 38-45. Müller-Doohm, *Jürgen Habermas*, 64-67.

⁸⁰ George Konrad and Iván Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1978).

⁸¹ Julien Benda, *La Trahison des Clerks* (Paris: Grasset, 1927).

⁸² György Konrád, *Antipolitik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985).

I use the word ‘dissident’ as it has become the commonly used shorthand for the critics of state socialism in Eastern Europe in the 1970s and 1980s, who for political reasons had to face political prosecution, harassment, and discrimination. Two problems arise: First of all, the term originated in the West, and for years those thus described vehemently rejected it. To that end, Jacques Rupnik reminds readers that Václav Havel’s paradigmatic *The Power of the Powerless* opened with: “A specter is haunting Eastern Europe: the specter of what in the West is called ‘dissent.’”⁸³ Some were concerned that if labeled ‘dissident’, their work would only merit attention by the virtue of their political repression, and not its aesthetic quality and cultural value.⁸⁴

Second, the Hungarian case is further complicated by the fact that the verb ‘disszidál’ means emigrating and permanently leaving the country for political reasons, to go into exile. I have preferred “critics” or “critical thinkers” until by the mid-1980s the dissidents themselves have accepted the label dissident. Similar to Friederike Kind-Kovács, I have used the term “non-conformist” to demonstrate the expressed disagreement with the status quo.⁸⁵ Towards the end, I have used “opposition” synonymously, because it better reflects the original Hungarian name “Demokrátikus Ellenzék,” the Democratic Opposition.

Another problem results from the lack of a proper translation for two ideological trends unique to Hungary: “*urbánus*” and “*népi*.” *Urbánus* is commonly translated as

⁸³ Jacques Rupnik, "The Legacies of Dissent. Charter 77, the Helsinki Effect, and the Emergence of a European Public Space," in *Samizdat, Tamizdat, and Beyond*, ed. Friederike Kind-Kovács and Jessie Labov (New York: Berghahn, 2013), 316-17.

⁸⁴ György Dalos, "Von Berlin nach Berlin und zurück. Ein literarischer Reisebericht, geheimdienstlich untermauert, (Vortrag im Roten Rathaus, 26. Oktober 1996)," in *Ungarn. Vom Roten Stern zur Stephanskronen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 112-14. Wachtel, *Remaining Relevant After Communism*, 44-46.

⁸⁵ Friederike Kind-Kovács and Jessie Labov, eds., *Samizdat, Tamizdat, and Beyond. Transnational Media During and After Socialism* (New York: Berghahn, 2013), 7.

‘cosmopolitan,’ which should not be mistaken with the code word for anti-Semitic prejudices used in the Stalinist purges of the early 1950s. Admittedly, the matter is complicated by the fact that the *urbánus* camp featured several members in leading position who had Jewish roots, which not the regime but nationalists used to stigmatize the Democratic Opposition.

Historically, *urbánus* describes those intellectuals – artists, writers, and publishers – who pursued a political and economic modernization of the country following a Western model. As ideology that found expression in art and culture as well, its origins can be traced back to the influential avant-garde journal from the early twentieth century with the telling title *Nyugat*, which means ‘West’.⁸⁶ It has traditionally been the educated liberal bourgeoisie of the capital that has been drawn to this ideology, although at the end of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire it had found itself in a tough competition with radical democracy articulated in the journal *Századunk* [Our Century] and by the circle of its editor Oszkár Jászi.

Like the *urbánus*, in the interwar period, the *népi* writers sought a way out of Hungary’s enduring semi-feudalist political and social structure. Like the cosmopolitans, they grappled with social reforms, suffrage and land distribution, but also the nationalities question and Hungarian folkish tradition. In the 1930s, when Hungary was hit particularly hard by the global economic crisis, its most prominent representatives had set out to the countryside in search of the Hungarian soul and salvation. Today, the contemporary translation of “populist” conceals the historical focus on and concern for the Hungarian peasantry that gave rise to the academic field of ‘sociography’ in the

⁸⁶ Mario D. Fenyo, "Writers in Politics: The Role of Nyugat in Hungary, 1908-1919," *Journal of Contemporary History* 11, no. 1 (1976).

1930s. The best-known representative of this type of sociological reportage was Gyula Illyés, who in 1937 published *The People of the Puszta*.⁸⁷ It highlighted the populists' combination of "peasant romanticism and serious social reform-demands," explains Miklós Lackó. The peace settlement after World War I, the Treaty of Trianon, left but a rump state of Hungary, unnerving writers who placed the salvation of the Magyar nation squarely on an idealized image of the peasantry.⁸⁸

Additionally, Rudolf Tőkés describes a fundamental dilemma:

Although the entire phenomenon of 'village exploration' might appear to be a case of latter-day *narodnichestvo* and a by-product of a backward political culture, the actual purpose [...] was the disillusioned young generation's search for realistic, non-revolutionary ways towards socio-political modernization and democratization at home and a 'third road' between nazi Germany and bolshevik Russia in Central Europe. Their message was democratic in form and nationalist in content, but they failed to gain adherents among the liberal intelligentsia, the rank and file trade unionists, and, indeed, the peasants themselves.⁸⁹

Comparable to the popular front in France at the time, this pursuit of a 'third road' resulted in the 'March Front' in 1937, a twelve-point manifesto that sought a consensus in opposition to the banned Communist party, the rise of a fascist movement and the looming rapprochement with Nazi Germany. Nevertheless, *népi* representatives could swing either way, to the extreme right or the extreme left. Lackó points out that many "approved the anti-Jewish legislations, and [their] position toward the Jewish question, was, in general, negative."⁹⁰ But after the Second World War, the Communists

⁸⁷ To name additional representatives: Ferenc Erdei, Zoltán Kodály, László Németh, etc. Gyula Illyés, *The People of the Puszta*, trans. G. F. Cushing (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971).

⁸⁸ Miklós Lackó, "Populism in Hungary: Yesterday and Today," in *Populism in Eastern Europe: Racism, Nationalism and Society*, ed. Joseph Held (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1996), 112.

⁸⁹ Rudolf Tőkés, "Popular Front in the Balkans 3: Hungary," *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no. 3 (1970): 87.

⁹⁰ Lackó, "Populism in Hungary," 114.

appropriated some of the populist writers, who more or less reluctantly agreed to put their anti-capitalist and anti-feudalist convictions into the service of the post-1948 regime.⁹¹

The *urbánus* and *népi* ideologies have not always been diametrically opposed, mutually exclusive antagonists. Suppressed and appropriated, they underwent significant changes during the forty years of state socialism. These traditions were evoked again in the 1980s; whereas the Democratic Opposition was made up primarily of *urbánus* thinkers, the *népi* camp had gained a foothold in the official Writers' Association and the Patriotic Peoples Front, bringing together banned, tolerated, and well-established writers. The return of seemingly old problems and traditions plays an important role in this project when discussing the Western perception of and self-perceptions of Hungarian intellectuals at the end and after the Cold War. The intellectual historian Balázs Trencsényi has likened the resurgent ideological conflict to a 'Kulturkampf'.⁹²

Sources and Archives

Given the international approach, this project has necessitated research in seven different countries: Hungary, Germany, the U.S., France, Austria, Croatia, and the Czech Republic. The most important source for documents has been the Open Society Archive in Budapest, an affiliate of the Central European University. It holds one of the largest collections on the Cold War in the world. Most importantly, it stores the print archive of Radio Free Europe with its incredible wealth of background reports, newspaper clippings from both sides of the Iron Curtain, biographical snippets and so forth. It also holds the personal archive of the 1956 general and émigré Béla Király, and of former dissidents

⁹¹ Péter Hanák, "Hungary on a fixed course: An Outline of Hungarian History, 1918-1945," in *The Columbia History of Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Péter Hanák and Joseph Held (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 182.

⁹² Lackó, "Populism in Hungary," 125-27. Trencsényi, "The Kulturkampf of the Early 2000s," 139-40.

like János Kis and Gábor Demszky as well as their *samizdat* collections, including the most influential one *Beszérlő*. Additionally, the OSA holds the archive of the International Helsinki Federation, which contains correspondence, monitoring reports, conference proceedings, press releases and international newspaper clippings. It has inherited the documents of the Soros-MTA foundation, which was the contact point for many of the Open Society Institute's branches in neighboring countries. Although much of it is still closed, it also keeps the records of the Central European University. In 2012, the OSA also acquired the archive of the 'Fondation pour une entraide intellectuelle européenne', which at the time of consultation had yet to be cataloged. I am indebted to Annette Laborey for allowing me to access these sources.

In Germany, the Rotbuch publishing house, a small, not very well-known collectively held company founded in 1973, which used to have its headquarters in Hamburg, has deposited much of its documents in 2004 at the Institute for Book Studies at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz. Amidst much controversy, the Suhrkamp publishing house sold most of its archive to the German Literary Archive in Marbach am Neckar in 2009. Although the Volkswagen Foundation has begun funding research projects, the vast amount of documents has mostly been left untouched. I am particularly grateful to the former Suhrkamp editors Elisabeth Borchers (legally represented by her son) and Christian Döring for granting permission.

György Konrád has deposited copies of his state security files in the archive of the Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin, which he headed as president between 1997 and 2003. He generously allowed me to consult these documents; similarly, György Dalos has left most of his personal archive including the files on him from the Stasi, the East German

state security, and the Hungarian Department in the Interior Ministry, in the Research Eastern Europe at the University of Bremen. Dalos, who organized much of the Forschungsstelle's Hungarian *samizdat* collection, also kindly granted permission to files.

In the U.S., the incomplete and partly accessible archive of the Institute for the Humanities has been consulted in the Elmer Bobs Library of New York University. In Croatia, those documents of the Inter University Center Dubrovnik that have survived the fire after a shelling in December 1991 have been made available without restrictions. In Prague, Barbara Day, the former secretary of the Jan Hus Foundation, opened and shared her private collection of letters, manuscripts, and accounting reports. In Austria, I have visited the *Österreichischer Rundfunk* (ORF), the Austrian Public Broadcaster, to review contemporary reports and shows about and from Hungary and Eastern Europe with the Hungarian-born journalist Paul Lendvai.

Several journals helped set the context and reconstruct the *Zeitgeist* of the events and developments discussed here. Among others, issues of the German weeklies *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit*, the Paris-based Hungarian *samizdat* *Magyar Fűzetek*, and the *New York Review of Books* are available online. Decades of these have provided the background of this project and feature as research subjects in and of themselves. The original print issues of the German-language flagship of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, *Der Monat*, is in my private collection as well as the three-volume-collection of the Hungarian *samizdat* *Beszélő* from 1981 to 1991. All of the issues of the journal, which has been legalized in 1990, have been made available in 2013 following its suspension. In the Austrian National Library, the monthly *Europäische Rundschau*, which Paul Lendvai serves as editor in chief, has been accessed and in the Hungarian

National Szechenyi Library, several years of the *HVG*, the *Weekly World Economy*, and early issues of the *Magyar Narancs*, the Hungarian Orange, have been consulted. Although not all have been used, they were important sources for the contextualization of this study.

Last but not least, over forty protagonists, experts, and eyewitnesses have generously shared their recollections and opinions in interviews. Access to some archival material is still restricted; in some areas, there had been a deliberate attempt *not* to keep written records. The interview process matured as the project progressed. The selection of interviewees followed a snowball system, in which I contacted interviewees based on recommendations and referrals. Only three have ‘postponed’ the interviews indefinitely. The interview partners decided on the length of the conversation-like interviews, which varied from half an hour and three hours. Although not all of them appear in the references, each interview has helped analyze the functions, motivations, and outcomes of the network studied here.

Necessarily, I have treated these interviews critically; where possible I tried to verify factual information. Some respondents insisted that I should use their recollections with caution; their memory might be faulty. When interviewees wished to communicate information off record or pass information as hearsay, I have respected the former and indicated the latter in the text. Interviews are not perfect recounts of the past, but exactly because they have allowed an insight into how interviewees organize and communicate their life stories, they were essential to this project. Last but not least, dealing with a loose, informal network of intellectuals and activists that relied so much on empathy,

sympathies and friendships, these interviews have been indispensable in trying to make sense of this network which scholars so far have neglected.

Organization

The trajectory of this project follows three large themes: in six chapters, it analyzes the stages of adversity, solidarity and estrangement the network of intellectuals from either side of the Iron Curtain passed through between 1973 and 1998. The first chapter “The 1960s: Revolt and Reality” analyzes the intellectual formation of those later involved in the transatlantic network; necessarily, it remains largely compartmentalized in national developments, but it provides the cultural, social and biographical “baggage,” which intellectuals from Hungary, the U.S., and West Germany already carried when they first encountered one another in the late 1970s.

The second chapter also captures the experiences from an entire decade. “The 1970s: In Search of an Identity,” illustrates the change in political commitment in the era of détente, at the end of which the critical intellectuals from either side of the Iron Curtain met face to face and recognized each other as like-minded thinkers. The mutual encounter and the consensus they arrived at about the relevance of human rights, a joint opposition to the Cold War status quo, the emphasis on learning from the past and a shared cultural appreciation for European high culture offered a safe haven after a few years of searching for a new ideological home.

The third chapter “One For All, All For One: Solidarity with Poland” is dedicated to the impact of the Polish crisis from the beginning of the strike in the Baltic shipyards in August 1981 until the declaration of martial law in December 1981. Within this short period of time, the various institutions, individuals, and organization that had emerged in

years prior rallied behind a common cause. This chapter lays out how the different actors in the West actually met. The following chapter “Reaching Out: The Network goes East” discusses the expansion and concomitantly growing influence of the network as Westerners and East Europeans coordinated their activities efficiently and purposefully. The mid-1980s represent the golden years of the network, when we witness a flurry of activities, ideas, publications and meetings, which will be analyzed in the fifth chapter “Dissent Triumphant: The End of Communism.” This chapter discusses the Alternative Forum of October 1985 not only for its success but also for the signs of the ongoing fragmentation of the domestic opposition to the Kádár regime. Here, the inherent pitfalls of the advocacy of a historicized concept of Central Europe emphasize the clash with the populist writers within Hungary and the growing resentments between them and the Democratic Opposition.

The last chapter discusses the construction and negotiation of “A New Hungary, 1987-1998.” The challenges that the former dissidents had to face, the difficulties of adjustment and their growing disappointment, the integration process of Central Europe into the European Union are the main subject of discussion. The successor wars in neighboring Yugoslavia contribute to the fragmentation of the network, while – as this chapter demonstrates – it also celebrates the establishment of the network’s lasting influence: the Central European University. The conclusion summarizes the main findings, and points to some of the developments, the further disintegration, the legacy and remainders of the network today, that exceeded the framework of this thesis.

I. Chapter. The 1960s: Revolt and Reality

I. Introduction

This chapter discusses the parallel developments in Hungary, West Germany and the U.S. in the 1960s, when the social and political structures established after the end of World War II were renegotiated. In this decade, the political views of the intellectuals who later became integral members of the East-West network analyzed here were shaped. Most of the protagonists of this study were born in the 1930s, and they identified with, reflected and amplified the concerns of the 1960s protest movements in their home countries. The experience of protest and at times radicalization in the 1960s is extremely important because it lays the foundation of their self-image as *extraordinary* intellectuals, critical thinkers and guardians of the public conscience against manipulation and deceit from the powers that be.

In the decade following the end of World War II, the three countries faced specific dilemmas that influenced their fate and fortunes in the second half of the twentieth century: in Hungary, it was the revolution of 1956. West Germany faced the challenge of coming to terms with its Nazi past and dealing with the division into two German states. The U.S. faced the new role as the hegemon over the Western bloc and guardian of what it called “the free world.”⁹³ The 1960s then represented the first caesura in post-war European history; the intellectuals involved here also had a stake in the renegotiation of their societies. The changes and reforms that were implemented, however, did not correspond to their radical and revolutionary convictions. Only

⁹³ Harry S. Truman, *President Harry S. Truman's address before a Joint Session of Congress*, Avalon Project. Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy (Yale Law School, 12 March 1947).

belatedly and reluctantly would they actually come to notice the changes that had taken place and acknowledge their own misjudgements.

The 1960s were therefore a formative experience, by the end of which dreams of revolution clashed with reality. The lessons drawn from this decade of revolt laid the foundations for the intellectuals' self-understanding and the basis for the international network of the 1980s. This decade shaped their lifelong skepticism and distrust of governments and official culture. Contemptuous of the acquiescent mainstream, for them, marginality became a badge of honor.

1. 1. Hungary: The Kádár Regime & Goulash Communism

1.1.1. The 1956 Revolution and its Aftermath

The 1960s represent the formative period for Hungarian state socialism. To understand its peculiarities, one has to turn to the country's brutally crushed revolution in 1956. The legacy of the twelve days of revolution informed the political, social, and economic system that János Kádár's post-1956 regime created. Nowhere did the popular demands for de-Stalinization in Eastern Europe take such a dramatic turn as in Hungary. The Red Army had "liberated" Hungary by April 1945, and several Hungarian Communists who had spent the interwar years in Moscow returned to orchestrate the take-over. Upon their return in 1945, a clique of Muscovites led by Mátyás Rákosi and Ernő Gerő, who had survived the Stalinist purges in Moscow in the 1930s, took over the Communist party leadership. They removed those few local Communists who had remained in Hungary in the interwar period when the KMP, Hungary's Communists' Party, was banned. These returnees from Moscow used the so-called 'salami tactics' to eliminate political opposition and consolidate the party's monopoly on power by 1948.

Four months after the death of Josef Stalin in March 1953, the chairman of the Hungarian Workers' Party (MDP), Mátyás Rákosi, Stalin's self-declared best disciple, was forced to cede the position of Prime Minister to Imre Nagy, a loyal party cadre and expert in agriculture.⁹⁴ Nagy promptly introduced economic reforms such as the abolition of compulsory deliveries and investment into improving agricultural production, a program he called the 'New Course', to amend the negative consequences of Hungary's rapid industrialization, collectivization and urbanization.⁹⁵ Rákosi, who had retained the position of First Secretary, alerted the Kremlin to the disintegrative potential of the Hungarian reforms. Upon Rákosi's instigation and with Khrushchev's consent, Nagy, who had suffered from a heart attack in December 1954, was removed from office and excluded from the party.⁹⁶ A youthful party cadre by the name of András B. Hegedüs, who many considered an instrument in the hands of Rákosi and his loyal associate Ernő Gerő, took over as prime minister. But the clique around Rákosi had underestimated the ousted prime minister's popularity and the relief his administration had brought to a country strained by the forced economic and social transformation typical of Stalinism throughout the Eastern bloc.⁹⁷

The country's cultural elite, terrorized and worn out by the Stalinist excesses, had rallied behind Nagy and welcomed his reforms. When the Rákosi Clique re-gained the upper hand, Nagy's followers found a valve for their criticism in the 'Petőfi Circle',

⁹⁴ Document No. 1: "Notes of a Meeting between the CPSU CC Presidium and a HWP Political Committee Delegation in Moscow, June 13 and 16, 1953," in Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne, and János M. Rainer, eds., *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution. A History in Documents* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 14-23.

⁹⁵ János M. Rainer, *Imre Nagy: A Biography* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 64-73.

⁹⁶ *Imre Nagy. Vom Parteisoldat zum Märtyrer des ungarischen Volksaufstands* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2006), 105-06.

⁹⁷ György Litván, *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956: Reform, Revolt, and Repression, 1953-1963*, ed. János Bak and Lyman Letgers (New York: Longman, 1996), 35. Rainer, *Imre Nagy*, 79-80.

which had originally been founded in March 1955 as the official debate club for the Communist Youth Movement.⁹⁸ The weekly meetings quickly developed into a venue to vent anger at the aborted reform process and to exchange ideas about the country's future.⁹⁹

Several protagonists of the time of Nagy's first premiership deserve closer attention because they will play the role of a historical conscience in the 1980s and thus contribute to undermining the regime. A key organizer of the Petőfi Circle was Miklós Vásárhelyi. He had been born in what was then the Austro-Hungarian port city of Fiume in 1917 into a Jewish middle class family. During the war, the highly educated polyglot Vásárhelyi had joined the illegal Communist movement. After 1945, he quickly advanced to the position of editor at the newly founded Communist party organ *Szabad Nép*.¹⁰⁰ There, he met Miklós Gimes, a son of Jewish converts who had joined the illegal Communist movement in 1942. At age 26, in the summer of 1944, Gimes escaped a forced labor camp and joined the partisans in neighboring Yugoslavia. Vásárhelyi recalls Gimes's commitment to the party in the first post-war years:

Gimes was something completely different. Of bourgeois background, the child of an intellectual family, really smart, very cultured, and in the era of Zhdanov he was one of the party's main ideologues.¹⁰¹

In 1947, a young, ambitious journalist named Péter Kende had joined the staff of *Szabad Nép*.¹⁰² Born in 1927, Kende, son of a Budapest Jewish upper class family, had

⁹⁸ Litván, *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956*, 28-31.

⁹⁹ The Magnum photographer Erich Lessing, one of the most talented and prolific chroniclers of the 1956 Revolution, has documented the meetings in detail. For his captivating images, see Erich Lessing, *Revolution in Hungary: The 1956 Budapest Uprising* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006), 84-103.

¹⁰⁰ Miklós Vásárhelyi, *Ellenzékben* (Budapest: Szabad Tér Kiadó, 1989), 10-48.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 100. Andrei Zhdanov (1896-1948) was a key figure during the Great Purge in the Soviet Union in the mid-1930s. Stalin appointed him head of cultural policies in 1946. He formulated the 'Zhdanov Doctrine,' the Soviet equivalent to the Truman Doctrine, in late 1947, at the first meeting of the Cominform.

survived the Holocaust in hiding. Against his parents' wish, he had joined the Communist Party in 1945, because as he recalls "if one believed that a new world was beginning, and one wanted to take part in it in some form, there was no other option but the Communist Party."¹⁰³

In the wake of the show trial against Interior Minister László Rajk in 1949, himself considered a Stalinist, the three journalists and others had begun losing faith in the party leadership. Rajk had been sentenced to death on charges of treason and espionage for Tito's Yugoslavia. In 1954, newly reformed intellectuals, especially the aforementioned journalists, embraced Imre Nagy and remained loyal to his reform program even beyond the prime minister's ousting. In October 1955, to undermine the Rákosi clique, Vásárhelyi and Gimes authored a daring memorandum criticizing censorship and calling for an investigation into the 'Rajk affair'.¹⁰⁴ Public criticism and protests against the regime spread. By the spring of 1956, Vásárhelyi regularly briefed Imre Nagy, isolated in his Buda home, seriously ill and exhausted from years of political struggles, on the proceedings of the Petőfi Circle.¹⁰⁵ Despite Rákosi's attempts to end its activities, by the summer, the circle's meetings drew thousands of spectators.¹⁰⁶ In July, almost in a state of panic, Rákosi tendered his resignation from the post of First Secretary, and the Central Committee elected Ernő Gerő instead, but the replacement was

¹⁰² Péter Kende, "A Magyar Füzetek nem tudott volna fönmaradni a budapesti szerzőgárda nélkül," *Oral History Archive*(2001 (1987)), http://server2001.rev.hu/oha/oha_document.asp?id=112

¹⁰³ Additionally, Kende's aunt was Miklós Gimes's mother. They knew one another since Kende had been a young boy. *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ György Litván, "A Nagy Imre csoport (Előadás konferencián, 1988. XII. 4-én)," in *Magyar Gondolat - Szabad Gondolat* (Budapest: Osiris, 2008), 322.

¹⁰⁵ *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956*, 41.

¹⁰⁶ The circle also debated the workers' protest in Poznań in June 1956 against price increases and working conditions, which was violently crushed. *Ibid.*, 39-42. Lessing, *The 1956 Budapest Uprising*. Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne, and János Rainer, "Part One: Introduction, Hungary before the Revolution," in *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution. A History in Documents*, ed. *ibid.* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 10-11.

perceived as eye washing given how close the two were. That discontent continued to simmer underneath the surface became evident when news about Nikita Khrushchev's "secret speech" during the XXth Party Congress of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union in February 1956, in which he condemned the Stalinist excesses and personality cult, arrived in Hungary.¹⁰⁷

On 6 October 1956, thousands gathered for the reburial of Hungary's most prominent Stalinist victim László Rajk, which had been one of the key demands of the Petőfi Circle. On this highly symbolic date – the anniversary of the 1849 execution of the 'Thirteen Martyrs' and Count Batthyány in Arad and Pest for their participation in the Hungarian fight for national independence from Vienna and the Habsburgs – Imre Nagy reappeared in public; on October 13, his party membership was reinstated.¹⁰⁸ 23 October 1956 marks the beginning of the Hungarian Revolution, when students took to the streets in solidarity with protesters in Poland who had been violently suppressed when they demanded an end to Stalinist rule.¹⁰⁹ Within a few hours, as students and workers set up autonomous, revolutionary councils, and printed leaflets listing political demands. Fighters battled the hated state police ÁVH in the streets, and Imre Nagy reluctantly showed up on a balcony of the parliament building to assuage the assembled crowd. Throughout the night, the Central Committee discussed personnel changes and in response to the street demands named Imre Nagy prime minister again. To reflect the

¹⁰⁷ Nikita Khrushchev, "The Secret Speech - On the Cult of Personality, 1956," *Modern History Sourcebook* (1956), <http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1956khrushchev-secret1.html>.

¹⁰⁸ Rainer, *Imre Nagy*, 119-20.

¹⁰⁹ For recent studies of the 1956 revolution, see e.g. Victor Sebestyen, *Twelve Days Revolution 1956. How the Hungarians Tried to Topple their Soviet Masters* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006). Paul Lendvai, *One Day That Shook the Communist World: The 1956 Hungarian Uprising and Its Legacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). Gati, *Failed Illusions*. Johanna C. Granville, *The First Domino. International Decision Making during the Hungarian Crisis of 1956* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2004).

new direction of the party line, the Hungarian Workers' Party MDP was renamed MSZMP, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. On 1 November, with the country in revolt, Nagy announced Hungary's neutrality and its departure from the Warsaw Pact.

The previous day, however, in Moscow, the Soviet leadership, who only a few days prior had ordered its Budapest-based forces to retreat, had decided to put an end to the revolt.¹¹⁰ Disregarding the Hungarians' desperate appeal to the UN, Soviet tanks returned to Budapest on 4 November and brutally crushed the revolution. Members of the Nagy cabinet, their friends and families sought refuge in the Yugoslav Embassy, counting on the protection of the diplomatic premises of the non-aligned neighboring country.¹¹¹ But on 24 November 1956, the group was lured out and instead of the promised safe exit the Nagy group was arrested and secretly abducted to Snagov, Romania.¹¹²

Although the "freedom fighters" put up fierce resistance, the Soviet troops crushed the Hungarian street fighters and fraternizing forces; almost 200,000 Hungarians fled the country across the borders to Austria and Yugoslavia. Among them was also the head of the revolutionary armed forces, Major-General Béla Király.¹¹³ In the following months, the People's Tribunals prosecuted 35,000 cases, ending in 22,000 prison sentences and 229 death penalties.¹¹⁴ In January, the regime declared work stoppages a crime punishable by death. In February 1958, Nagy and his associates were transferred

¹¹⁰ Document No. 53, "Working Notes and Attached Extract from the Minutes of the CPSU CC Presidium meeting, October 31, 1956," in Békés, Byrne, and Rainer, *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution. A History in Documents*, 307-10.

¹¹¹ Johanna Granville, "Josip Broz Tito's Role in the 1956 'Nagy Affair'," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 76, no. 4 (1998).

¹¹² Miklós Gimes was not with the group taking refuge in the Embassy. He had produced an underground paper until he was picked up in late November and transported to Romania to join the Nagy group. Rainer, *Imre Nagy*, 134-65. Andrea Pető, *Geschlecht, Politik und Stalinismus in Ungarn. Eine Biographie von Júlia Rajk*, trans. Béla Rasky and Zsuzsa Rózsáné (Herne: Gabriele Schäfer, 2007).

¹¹³ Sebestyen, *Twelve Days*, 275-77.

¹¹⁴ János M. Rainer, "Helyezkedés a csúcson. Kádár János néhány boldog éve 1958-1962," in *Ki volt Kádár?*, ed. Árpád Rác (Budapest: Rubicon-Aquila, 2001), 72.

back to Budapest where they awaited trial.¹¹⁵ On June 15, the final verdict, the expected death sentence, was passed; the next morning, Imre Nagy, Miklós Gimes, Pál Maléter, and József Szilágyi were hanged and hastily buried in the prison courtyard.¹¹⁶ The lives of a number of leading figures, including Miklós Vásárhelyi, Assistant State Secretary István Bibó and Nagy's cabinet member Ferenc Donáth, who had once administered the country's forced collectivization and had worked as Rákosi's secretary, were spared. Instead, they were served life or long-term prison sentences.

The installation of a new government accompanied the military clampdown. János Kádár, who had actually been the party's first secretary during the heydays of revolution but had mysteriously disappeared on 1 November 1956, followed the Soviet Politburo's order to set up a cabinet against the "counter-revolutionary," "imperialist" forces which had allegedly tried to undermine the building of socialism in Hungary.¹¹⁷ Although the first three to four years were marked by terror and repression, in the long-term, Kádár pursued a policy of 'normalization'.¹¹⁸ To stabilize the country, the regime sought to accommodate and de-politicize the population. Already in February 1957, the

¹¹⁵ Sebestyen, *Twelve Days*, 289-94. Minutes of the meeting, where criminal proceedings against Imre Nagy were decided in "Document NO. 115: Minutes of the HSWP Central Committee Meeting, December 21, 1957 (excerpts)," in Békés, Byrne, and Rainer, *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution. A History in Documents*, 532-38.

¹¹⁶ Huszár, *Kádár*, 62-85. Vásárhelyi points out that all of those executed had been committed Communists. Paradoxically, Géza Losonczy who had died in prison before the trial and József Szilágyi had been imprisoned together with János Kádár in 1951 during the Stalinist purges under Rákosi. For more see Vásárhelyi, *Ellenzékben*, 98-104. For historical analyzes, see e.g. Csaba Békés and János M. Rainer, "Hungary in the Aftermath," in *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution. A History in Documents*, ed. Csaba Békés and János M. Rainer (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 365-66, 70-74. Sebestyen, *Twelve Days*, 282-194.

¹¹⁷ Document No. 66: "Report from Yuri Andropov in Budapest to the CPSU CC Presidium, November 1, 1956," in Békés, Byrne, and Rainer, *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution. A History in Documents*, 330-31. Document No. 11: "HSWP Provisional Central Committee Resolution concerning the Evaluation of the Nagy Group's Role, February 26, 1957," in *ibid.*, 515-16.

¹¹⁸ Kádár effectively retained the position of First Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party from 25 October 1956 until 22 May 1988. He was prime minister twice, first from 4 November 1956 until 28 January 1958 and from 13 September 1961 until 30 June 1963.

much-feared ÁVH, the State Security Agency responsible for the terror under Rákosi, was dissolved. Kádár then abolished mandatory political participation and pledges of allegiance to the party. Indoctrination in schools and adult education typical of the Stalinist era were abandoned, and private lives became private again. Accelerated construction of residential housing was to compensate for the lack of urban living quarters, which had haunted the country since the end of World War II. Compulsory deliveries of agricultural produce were terminated, household farming and sharecropping re-instated, and prices adjusted to convince farmers to contribute more efficiently to the state-owned collectives.¹¹⁹ Industrial production was scaled down and the regime was granting companies more autonomy in assigning labor and resources.¹²⁰

In 1961, János Kádár captured the essence of his regime's appeasement strategy in a catchy inversion of Rákosi's Stalinist doctrine: "He who is not against us is with us."¹²¹ His friendship with Nikita Khrushchev secured him against attacks from the party's resilient orthodox faction.¹²² He despised the personality cult so characteristic of Stalinism leading historian László Kontler to suggest: "Kádár (the son of a rural labourer, born in the Adriatic port of Fiume, and a mechanic by training) [sic] came to represent the puritanical, publicity-shy and apolitical 'little man'."¹²³ Kádár's working-class background also explains his relative disinterest in high culture; he "needed someone who could sustain interaction with the intellectuals with more enthusiasm [than he],"

¹¹⁹ Rainer, "Helyeskedés a csúcson," 72-73. László Kontler, *Millenium in Central Europe. A History of Hungary* (Budapest: Atlantisz, 1999), 437. Iván T. Berend, "Contemporary Hungary, 1956-1984," in *A History of Hungary*, ed. Peter F. Sugar and et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 388-89.

¹²⁰ Gough, *A Good Comrade*, 153. Richárd M. Nagy and Csaba Zs. Varga, "43. rész: A Kádári Konzolidáció," in *Magyarország története* (Budapest 2009).

¹²¹ Gough, *A Good Comrade*, 135.

¹²² György Földes, "Barátság felsőfokon. Kádár és Hruscsov," in *Ki volt Kádár?*, ed. Árpád Rác (Budapest: Rubicon-Aquila, 2001). Gough, *A Good Comrade*, 134-49. Huszár, *Kádár*, 52-56.

¹²³ Kontler, *Millenium in Central Europe*, 430. Also Gough, *A Good Comrade*, 139. Berend, "Contemporary Hungary, 1956-1984," 386.

explains his biographer Roger Gough.¹²⁴ Aware of the intellectuals' influential role in 1956, he ceded this policy area to György Aczél, his talented "pied piper."¹²⁵

Since late 1956, Aczél had installed himself as one of Kádár's closest confidants.¹²⁶ Although 'only' a deputy to the Minister of Culture, Aczél developed and implemented the so-called 'three t-policy', which would dominate Hungarian cultural and intellectual life for following three decades.¹²⁷ As a result of Kádár's trust in him and his success, he was voted into the Central Committee in 1967 and into the Politburo in 1970. The policy was named after the categories "támogatás" [support], "tűrés" [toleration] and "tiltás" [prohibition]. In the absence of a genuine censorship office, the 'three t' were an effective system that controlled artists and intellectuals in dividing them into three groups. But since the categories were flexible, artists found themselves in a precarious atmosphere where remaining in the category of 'supported' depended often on Aczél's goodwill. Aczél employed his personal charms to sway artists, writers, and intellectuals to support (or at least not object to) the regime's taboo topics, such as the interpretation of 1956 as a counter-revolution. Personal interaction was the key to success: "It was difficult *not* to know him," explained Hungary's prominent dissident writer György Konrád later, "he was everywhere."¹²⁸

Since October 1956, Hungary had been on the agenda of the United Nations. Although the West had been caught up in the Suez crisis that simultaneously played out in the Middle East and did not intervene when Soviet troops crushed the revolution, the

¹²⁴ Gough, *A Good Comrade*, 129.

¹²⁵ Miklós Szabó, "Kádár's Pied Piper," *Hungarian Quarterly* 38, no. 147 (1997). Éva Standeisky, "Kádár és az értelmiség," in *Ki volt Kádár?*, ed. Árpád Rác (Budapest: Rubicon-Aquila, 2001), 137. László Lengyel, "A Hatalom Hálójában. Az Értelmiség és a Kádárizmus," *ibid.*, 142.

¹²⁶ Szabó, "Kádár's Pied Piper."

¹²⁷ Sándor Révész, *Aczél és korunk*, 2 ed. (Budapest: Sík, 1997), 82-86.

¹²⁸ György Konrád, interviewed by the author, 24 July 2009, Hegymagas, Hungary.

Soviet invasion was duly condemned and the new government under Kádár ostracized. In order to end the country's isolation, first amnesties for those imprisoned for their participation in 1956 had been granted in 1960; among those released were for example Ferenc Donáth and Miklós Vásárhelyi.¹²⁹ The arbitrary selection and limited number of prisoners thus pardoned fell short of assuaging international critics. Only two years later, when in March 1963 Kádár declared a general amnesty that released some 4,000 inmates, including former Minister of State of 1956 István Bibó, a leading third way advocate, was the 'Hungarian question' taken off the U.N. agenda.¹³⁰ The end of the terror, the amnesties, the changes in the cultural sphere and the international acceptance ushered in the golden era of the Kádár regime.

I.1.2. Hungary and the Constraints of the Prague Spring

The regime's economic success soon proved the most important factor contributing to the regime's acceptance and Kádár's growing popularity. Hungary soon experienced unprecedented levels of prosperity and relatively high living standards. The regime had begun introducing market economic mechanisms into the country's centrally planned economy and developed a consumer culture.¹³¹ This combination became known as 'goulash communism', a reference to Hungary's national dish 'gulyás', a savory soup of various ingredients. In 1962, the Eighth Party Congress set comparatively high goals for the production of refrigerators, washing machines and television sets in the coming five-year-plan.¹³² Economists around Rezső Nyers, the member of the Central Committee known as the "father of the Hungarian 'New Economic Mechanism'", recommended a

¹²⁹ Litván, *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956*, 137.

¹³⁰ Gough, *A Good Comrade*, 143. Huszár, *Kádár*, 139.

¹³¹ Beth Greene, "Selling Market Socialism: Hungary in the 1960s," *Slavic Review* 73, no. 1 (2014).

¹³² *Ibid.*, 113.

liberalization of the price system to better reflect the added value of a product. Correspondingly, wage incentives were introduced to stimulate productivity an increase purchasing power for domestic products and imports. Hungary came to manufacture internationally competitive products such as Ikarus buses and Lehel refrigerators, and as a result, “the Kádár era was the greatest period of *embourgeoisement* in Hungary.”¹³³

In 1964, to Kádár’s misfortune, Leonid Brezhnev replaced Nikita Khrushchev as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Brezhnev was an outspoken skeptic of the Hungarian reform course, largely because to guarantee the import of otherwise unavailable consumer goods perceived as necessary to maintain popular acceptance, Hungary had begun borrowing from the West. But according to Rezső Nyers, Central Committee member from 1957 to 1989, Kádár persisted in prioritizing efficiency over ideology.¹³⁴ To his advantage, the economic reforms coincided with significant changes in West German and Austrian foreign policy. In 1966, West Germany had elected a coalition government of Christian conservatives and Social Democrats. Under the SPD foreign minister Willy Brandt, the country revised its foreign policy. In the wake of this ‘Neue Ostpolitik’, Brandt’s strategy of open, un-dogmatic relations with the Eastern bloc, subsumed under the motto of ‘change through rapprochement’, West Germany was growing into Hungary’s most important trading partner second only to the Soviet Union.¹³⁵ More and more West Germans spent their vacations at resorts around Lake Balaton; tourism grew into one of Hungary’s most profitable industries, so that in 1978 some 12.5 million foreigners would visit the country,

¹³³ Kontler, *Millenium in Central Europe*, 437.

¹³⁴ Rezső Nyers, "Kádár János és a reformok," in *Ki volt Kádár?*, ed. Árpád Rác (Budapest: Rubicon-Aquila, 2001), 133.

¹³⁵ Egon Bahr, "'Change through Rapprochement', Evangelical Academy in Tutzing," (July 15, 1963), http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=81.

about two million more than were actually living in Hungary.¹³⁶ Simultaneously, the Austrian foreign minister Bruno Kreisky, likewise a Social Democrat, also actively sought to restore relations with his country's Eastern neighbors.

The timing of this reorientation in Western foreign policy, which dovetailed with Hungary's need for loans, could not have been better. The turnaround in the international perception of János Kádár, from one-time pariah to the West's darling, and his cordial visits to Vienna and Bonn rendered him suspicious in the eyes of other Warsaw Pact leaders. Therefore, when on 5 January 1968 Alexander Dubček was elected First Secretary of the Communist Party in neighboring Czechoslovakia, Kádár had good reason to rejoice. He and Dubček had known each other for twenty years; both sought to resolve their countries' economic woes in not dogmatic, but pragmatic ways. Kádár had reason to believe he had found a comrade-in-arms who would help strengthen his own position in the Eastern bloc.¹³⁷

Throughout the spring of 1968, the majority of East European leaders had limited themselves to verbal objections to the Czechoslovak reforms about decentralization, plurality of opinions, freedom of the press and popular sovereignty. Kádár was the only one who had explicitly supported the so-called 'Prague Spring' and tried to mediate between Dubček and the other heads of state in the Warsaw Pact, most notably Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev and Walter Ulbricht of the GDR, who considered the reforms a threat to the stability of the entire bloc.¹³⁸ But Dubček seemed less and less in a

¹³⁶ In 1965, that number was still 'only' one million. Kontler, *Millenium in Central Europe*, 442. In 1978, Hungary had a population of about 10.4 million.

¹³⁷ István Vida, "Kádár és Dubcek. Kísérlet a csehszlovák válság békés megoldására," in *Ki volt Kádár?*, ed. Árpád Rácz (Budapest: Rubicon-Aquila, 2001), 96.

¹³⁸ For more on Kádár's initial approval and his relatively isolated stand among the Eastern bloc leaders, when they met in Dresden on March 23rd and 24th to discuss the Czechoslovak situation, see Huszár, *Kádár*,

position to reconcile Moscow's requests with the popular demands at home.¹³⁹ In June 1968, Ludvík Vaculík, a reform Communist writer, articulated demands for 'socialism with a human face' – more civic engagement, popular emancipation, and more local, grassroot politics – in the *Two-Thousand Word Manifesto*, which 70 leading intellectuals co-signed.¹⁴⁰ In fear of jeopardizing the Kremlin's tenuous support for his own reform program and worried about the growing freedom of expression in the neighboring country, Kádár began to distance himself from the Czechoslovak leader.¹⁴¹

The similarities between Hungary 1956 and Prague 1968 did not escape attention.¹⁴² As twelve years earlier, one single country threatened to destabilize the entire Eastern bloc.¹⁴³ In August, Kádár consented to the collective decision to forcibly summon the Czechoslovak leadership. On 21 August 1968, Hungarian troops participated in the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, which put a brutal end to the Prague Spring.¹⁴⁴ The West German Foreign Office hypothesized at the end of the year:

The Hungarian economic reforms initiated at the beginning of the year at great costs require increased cooperation with the West. Hungary thus emphasizes its commitment to the status quo. The already minimal wiggle room in foreign policies however seems in reality to have been constricted [by the invasion].¹⁴⁵

173. György Földes, "Kötélhúzás felsőfokon. Kádár és Brezsznev," in *Ki volt Kádár?*, ed. Árpád Rácz (Budapest: Rubicon-Aquila, 2001), 107-08.

¹³⁹ "Doc. 39: Letter from Leonid Brezhnev to Alexander Dubček Proposing Another Bilateral Meeting, June 11, 1968," in Jaromír Navrátil, ed. *The Prague Spring. A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998), 158-59.

¹⁴⁰ "Doc. No. 44: The 'Two Thousand Words' Manifesto, June 27, 1968," in *ibid.*, 177-83.

¹⁴¹ Vida, "Kádár és Dubček," 100. "Doc. 53: The Warsaw Letter, June 4-15, 1968," in Navrátil, *The Prague Spring*, 234-38. Katalin Miklóssy, "The Helsinki Process from Small States' Perspective: Cold War Strategies of Hungary and Romania in Comparison," in *Hungary and Romania Beyond National Narratives: Comparisons and Entanglements*, ed. Anders Blomqvist, Constantin Iordachi, and Balázs Trencsényi, *Nationalisms across the Globe* (Peter Lang), 497-500.

¹⁴² Huszár, *Kádár*, 175. Navrátil, *The Prague Spring*, 37-41.

¹⁴³ Huszár, *Kádár*, 178-79.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 180-81. Gough, *A Good Comrade*, 171-73.

¹⁴⁵ AA Abteilung III, Bonn, 7 October 1968, "Lage in Osteuropa (außer Sowjetunion und CSSR)," in Political Archive, Foreign Office, B42 (Ref. IIA5) Osteuropa, Ostasien, 156. István Vida claims that there is evidence Kádár played a crucial role in the decision *not* to prosecute Dubček but reinstall him as First Secretary after the invasion was completed. Vida, "Kádár és Dubček," 101.

Kádár did not only feel the pressure from the other East European leaders, but domestic discontent also surfaced over the August invasion. In response to the brutal end of the Prague Spring, a small number of young Hungarian scholars signed a collective protest letter drafted by the participants in an international workshop on the Yugoslav island of Korčula in the Adriatic Sea. The signatories had all been students of the renowned philosopher György Lukács.

The dramatic twists of Lukács's biography and his repeated adaptations to changes in the party line represent the backdrop to the skepticism a younger generation of Hungarian thinkers demonstrated regarding involvement in politics. Born in Budapest in 1885 to wealthy, assimilated Jewish parents, Lukács counts as one of Europe's most notable thinkers of the twentieth century. During his studies in Berlin and Heidelberg, he had befriended Ernst Bloch, Max Weber, Stefan George and Georg Simmel, and at home the sociologist Karl Mannheim, the composer Béla Bartók, the economist Karl Polányi and the film theoretician Béla Balázs.¹⁴⁶ Today, these individuals count among the cultural avant-garde of pre-1914 Europe to which Lukács also belongs.

During World War I, Lukács had joined the Communist movement and became a Commissar in the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic 1919, which in 133 days sought to replicate the Bolshevik revolution in Hungary including the secret police and executions of class enemies. In response to the counter-revolution and 'White Terror' under Admiral Miklós Horthy, he fled to Vienna, Berlin and then on to Moscow. Lukács

¹⁴⁶ György Lukács, *Georg Lukács. Record of a Life* (London: Verso, (1983)), 49-52, 55. László Percz, "The Background Scenery: "Official" Hungarian Philosophy and the Lukács Circle at the Turn of the Century," *Studies in East European Thought* 60, no. 1/2 (2008). S. A. Mansbach, "Confrontation and Accommodation in the Hungarian Avant-Garde," *Art Journal* 49, no. 1 (1990). András Karácsony, "Soul-Life-Knowledge: The Young Mannheim's Way to Sociology," *Studies in East European Thought* 60, no. 1/2 (2008).

did not see Budapest again until it was 'liberated' by the Red Army in 1945. He soon clashed with Mátyás Rákosi, finding himself expelled from the party and the Academy of Sciences. Rehabilitated during Nagy's first time as premier, he had joined those frustrated by Nagy's ousting. In 1956, he had prominently participated in the Petőfi Circle, and on 24 October 1956, Nagy had appointed him to his cabinet.

Initially, Lukács had been among those who had sought refuge in the Yugoslav Embassy but were abducted to Romania. His international fame protected him from a predetermined court trial. On the condition that he stayed away from politics, the Kádár regime allowed Lukács to withdraw to his academic interests: studying, writing and teaching. In the end, the deal proved mutually beneficial: while Lukács pursued his work, the Kádár regime could pride itself with one of the world's most famous living philosophers. Lukács's students enjoyed wide-ranging scholarly freedom. Although banned from publishing at home, Lukács's writings appeared in the West: in West Germany, the books appeared in the German original, the language of his manuscripts.¹⁴⁷

In 1967, the regime had officially welcomed Lukács back into the party. Later, the philosopher told his assistant István Eörsi, a convicted participant of 1956 himself, that he would recognize the late re-validation of his party membership not for his own, but his students' sake.¹⁴⁸ Shielded by Lukács's fame, they could take part in international conferences, such as the annual summer school on Korčula. This series of workshop, which took place between 1965 and 1974, were organized by a group of critical thinkers

¹⁴⁷ Lukács, *Georg Lukács. Record of a Life*, 132-33. István Eörsi, "The Right to the Last Word," in *Georg Lukács. Record of a Life* (London: Verso, 1983 (1981)), 10-11.

¹⁴⁸ "The Right to the Last Word," 9-10. Révész, *Aczél és korunk*, 102-03.

around the Yugoslav journal *Praxis*.¹⁴⁹ It became a meeting place of intellectual heavyweights from East *and* West. In August 1968, concomitant with the rising tensions between Prague and Moscow, the German philosopher Ernst Bloch, the German-American Herbert Marcuse, the American Richard Bernstein, the British Robin Blackburn, and the West German Jürgen Habermas attended the Korčula summer school. When news of the invasion reached Korčula, however, the participants reacted promptly:

We consider that the intervention of certain countries of the Warsaw Pact constitutes a serious danger to the process of the renaissance of socialism and to the renaissance of Marxist theory, which has been taking place in recent times. Regardless of the consequences, our duty is to try everything possible in order to further the development of authentic socialism and genuine social democracy.¹⁵⁰

Although Lukács in private opposed Hungary's participation in the intervention, he refrained from articulating this view publicly.¹⁵¹ In contrast, Lukács's protégés Ágnes Heller, Vilmos Soós, Mária and György Markús did not hesitate signing the joint letter of protest. Heller and her husband Ferenc Fehér, the couple Mária and György Márkus as well as the sociologist Mihály Vajda and the slightly younger Mária Ludassy make up what is commonly known as the Lukács School or in recognition of the fact that only Heller and Fehér were students of Lukács, the Budapest School.¹⁵² The name is actually a misnomer, because they have never represented a coherent school of thought; however,

¹⁴⁹ Ana Devic, "Ethnonationalism, Politics, and the Intellectuals: The Case of Yugoslavia," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 11, no. 3 (1998): 393-96.

¹⁵⁰ Zdenko Antić, "Leading Marxist Philosophers Protest Against the Invasion of Czechoslovakia," 26 August 1968, Radio Free Europe Research: Yugoslavia. HU OSA RFE 78-1-20. Also see Ágnes Heller, *A Short History of My Philosophy* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2011), 23. Juliane Fürst Rebecca Clifford, et al., "Spaces," in *Europe's 1968. Voices of Revolt*, ed. James Mark and et al. (Oxford Oxford University Press, 2013), 176-77.

¹⁵¹ Lukács, *Georg Lukács. Record of a Life*, 135. According to Árpád Kadarkay, Lukács entrusted his friend György Aczél with handing a personal letter to Kádár. Árpád Kadarkay, *George Lukács: Life, Thought, and Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 460-61.

¹⁵² Heller, *A Short History of My Philosophy*, 1-20. Mária Márkus was a sociologist at the Academy's Institute under András B. Hegedűs, the former prime minister. Lukács, *Georg Lukács. Record of a Life*, 140. Ervin Csizmadia, "Márkus György," in *A Magyar Demokratikus Ellenzék (1968-1988). Interjúk* (Budapest: T-Twins, 1995), 15.

they shared Lukács's influence on their understanding of philosophy and very similar experiences. They had identified themselves as Marxist revisionists and had sympathized with the Czechoslovak reform movement; the invasion of Prague crushed also their hopes.¹⁵³ In response to the public protest, they were dismissed from the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and banned from teaching.

Regardless of this very clear warning, György Márkus began holding weekly meetings with some of his students in his apartment.¹⁵⁴ Márkus had been a popular, unconventional and approachable teacher at the Eötvös Lóránd University (ELTE) in Budapest, Hungary's largest university. Participants in his private seminar read copies of their own scholarly works as well as essays by Hungarian and foreign writers, which had been officially banned.¹⁵⁵ Together with his most talented students János Kis and György Bence, Márkus was working on a study about the basic tenants of Marxist economics and the contradictions of existing state socialism. Another student of Márkus, Éva Karadi, recalls the leading role Bence and Kis played in their cohort:

They would always meet us in the Academic Library. They sat there, every day, desk no. 17 was János Kis' and in front of him: Bence. [...] [You] could talk in the cafe, you brought your manuscripts with you and then we debated. It was like being received in audience... like meeting the General Staff [chuckles].¹⁵⁶

Since there was little hope of the Lukács School returning to ELTE, Lukács worried about his protégés' precarious living situation. A life-long smoker, he was suffering from lung cancer. In the summer of 1970, while Márkus, Kis and Bence worked on the manuscript for what in 1973 was to appear as *Is a Critical Economy Actually*

¹⁵³ György Dalos, *Archipel Gulasch. Die Entstehung der Demokratischen Opposition in Ungarn* (Bremen: Donat and Temmen, 1986), 25. Also see János Kis recollections about 1968 and its impact: Csizmadia, "Kis János," 100-01.

¹⁵⁴ "Márkus György," 17.

¹⁵⁵ Éva Karadi, interviewed by the author, 7 January, 2012, Budapest, Hungary. János Kis, interviewed by the author, 24 April 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

Possible?, he was already so sick that he could no longer travel to Germany to accept an award; the award money he distributed among his students.¹⁵⁷ A year later, on June 4, 1971, Lukács died age 86, leaving his students to fend for themselves.

By the end of the 1960s, Hungary was a remarkably stable country, something hardly anyone could have expected in early 1957. The terror that had followed the defeat at the hands of the Soviet troops in November 1956 crushed any hopes for changing the system along popular demands. Despite the execution of several leading politicians, intellectuals, and participants, a core of Fifty-Sixers survived, and will play the role of the moral conscience of the Democratic Opposition in the 1980s. Within a few years, János Kádár transformed into a benevolent authoritarian leader who offered Hungarians a new social contract: prosperity and relative freedom in return for social acquiescence and acceptance of the one-party-state. Western leaders accepted a reformed and reforming Kádár, who cautiously kept his unorthodox policies within the limits of toleration by other Eastern bloc leaders. Because of 1956, opposition to the Kádár regime was absent except for a glimpse of dissent from the Lukács School. But for many, the defeat of the Prague Spring was only a confirmation of the lessons learned twelve years earlier.

1.2. West Germany: Politics of the Past and Present

1.2.1. German Culture and Society Facing its Nazi Past

In the Federal Republic of Germany, too, the 1960s represented a sea change for the intellectual milieu that would lay the foundation for debates well into the 1980s and 1990s. To grasp the significance of 1968, the year of revolt, in West Germany, it is most

¹⁵⁷ Révész, *Aczél és korunk*, 169-71. Mihály Vajda for instance used the money to buy an apartment. Kadarkay, *George Lukács: Life, Thought, and Politics*, 466.

instructive to return to the difficult new beginning for West German culture after the end of the Second World War. In 1947, two writers, Alfred Andersch and Hans Werner Richter, invited like-minded novelists, poets and essayists to a meeting to discuss the future of their profession. They discussed possible avenues to overcome the complicity of many artists and writers in the Nazi regime. They aspired to reconstitute German literature free from and opposed to its 'brown' past.¹⁵⁸ Apart from a few older writers who had lived through years of 'inner emigration', persecution, exile or internment under the Nazis, most of the members were in their twenties.¹⁵⁹ The objection to the creation of two German states, the beginning of the Cold War, and the re-establishment of West German conservatism united this eclectic group. The group's cause célèbre was the integration of former Nazis in the Federal Republic and the alleged unwillingness of the majority as well as the political establishment to face the country's past.¹⁶⁰

The most influential intellectual pondering over the possibilities and limits of reconstituting German culture after the Second World War was Theodor Adorno, one of the leading theorists of what is known since the 1930s as the 'Frankfurt School.' Adorno influenced not only the Group 47 but especially the generation who experienced their political formation in the 1950s and 1960s. Born in 1903, Adorno had frequented the circles of Europe's cultural and philosophical avant-garde in the interwar period; in Berlin, Vienna and Frankfurt, he had studied and worked with the likes of Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, György Lukács and Siegfried Kracauer. During his studies, he

¹⁵⁸ Hans-Georg Golz, "Editorial," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. 25 'Gruppe 47' (2007).

¹⁵⁹ For a very timely and balanced analysis of the early years, see Helmut Böttiger, *Die Gruppe 47: Als die Deutsche Literatur Geschichte schrieb* (Munich: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 2012), 42-121.

¹⁶⁰ For a short and very critical re-assessment of the founders and the group's founding principles, see Rhys W. Williams, "Der Wiederaufbau der deutschen Literatur," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. 25 'Gruppe 47' (2007).

met his lifelong friend Max Horkheimer. In 1933, both found employment at the independent Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt. Together they formulated key principles of ‘Critical Theory’, which not only analyzed society and culture within their specific historic contexts, but also implied recommendations to improve existing conditions. Inspiration came from Enlightenment thinkers as well as Karl Marx. With the rise of the Nazis and Hitler’s seizure of power in 1933, however, Adorno, whose father was a converted Protestant, was stripped of his position. Due to its leftist outlook, the Institute was closed down. In 1934, Adorno reluctantly immigrated to England; three years later, he joined the Institute for Social Research in New York, where it had been refounded as New School for Social Research.¹⁶¹

Regardless of the Frankfurt School’s acclaim and the company of fellow émigrés, Adorno and Max Horkheimer never really felt at home in their American exile.¹⁶² In 1949, they returned to West Germany, where they resumed work at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt. Almost immediately, Adorno’s lectures at the University of Frankfurt were overcrowded. Within six years, he published his most important works, mostly manuscripts he had written in exile. The Frankfurt School with its Marxist-inspired social research and public criticism of contemporary affairs revolutionized academia in West Germany.¹⁶³ The Institute for Social Research quickly re-established itself as a prolific and influential center of study.

¹⁶¹ Müller-Doohm, *Adorno*, 67-165.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 169-323. After New York, Adorno moved to California to teach at Berkeley. There he helped his friend and fellow exile Thomas Mann working on *Doctor Faustus*. *Ibid.*, 318. Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus: The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkühn as Told by a Friend* (New York: Alfred. A. Knopf, 1947).

¹⁶³ Müller-Doohm, *Adorno*, 374-87.

Adorno's and Horkheimer's co-written monograph, *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, published in German in 1947, inspired particularly the generation that would later stage the student revolt of 1968.¹⁶⁴ The authors criticized the persistence of the Enlightenment paradigm, which suggests that man's actions are guided by reason. They also objected to the Marxist claim that individual interests have to be sacrificed for the greater good of the collective and for the progress of history. Both paradigms had failed, they argued, and one had to reconsider the unrealistically progressive narrative of modern society since in fact it had degenerated to fascism and anti-Semitism.¹⁶⁵ In 1951, Adorno published *Minima Moralia. Reflections from a Damaged Life*, his personal and philosophical response to the fascist terror he had witnessed.¹⁶⁶ Within a few years of their return, Adorno and Horkheimer had become two of the most widely read contemporary philosophers in the Federal Republic.

In 1951, a statement that Adorno had originally formulated in 1949, when he had just returned from exile, stirred a long-lasting controversy: "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric," he had claimed.¹⁶⁷ The validity of this contentious declaration inspired heated debates when a year later, in 1952, Paul Celan's poem, *The Death Fugue*, was published in German. Celan had written it in 1944 and 1945 under the immediate impression of the extermination of European Jewry.¹⁶⁸ He had been born in 1920 to German-speaking Jewish parents in Czernowitz in the Bukovina, what is part of today

¹⁶⁴ Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1947).

¹⁶⁵ Müller-Doohm, *Adorno*, 278-87.

¹⁶⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1951).

¹⁶⁷ For a re-assessment of the controversy, see Klaus Laermann, "Die Stimme bleibt. Theodor W. Adornos Diktum – Überlegungen zu einem Darstellungsverbot," *Die Zeit* (27 March 1992), <http://www.zeit.de/1992/14/die-stimme-bleibt/komplettansicht>.

¹⁶⁸ The poem was republished in: Paul Celan, *Mohn und Gedächtnis* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1952).

Ukraine. Celan had survived forced labor, but his parents had been killed in the Holocaust. In 1947, he had fled the rise of Communism and ultimately settled in West Germany, where he joined the Group 47.¹⁶⁹ *The Death Fugue* stirred controversy not only for its unusual use of imagery in describing the industrialized killing of Jews, but exactly because it contested Adorno's claim about the adequacy of poetry in a world after Auschwitz.

Adorno was often invited to share his thoughts on the radio, at the time the most modern means of mass communication.¹⁷⁰ Alfred Andersch, one of the founders of the Group 47 and a preeminent radio journalist, for instance, hosted him regularly. In 1955, Andersch hired a young, ambitious writer named Hans Magnus Enzensberger. At the radio, Enzensberger met Theodor Adorno face to face. Adorno, whose philosophical excursions he had followed for years, was one of his role models.¹⁷¹ That same year, Enzensberger joined the Group 47, and his outspokenness quickly made him one of the "chief ideologists" in the group.¹⁷² In 1957, his first collection of poems appeared in the Suhrkamp publishing house, which propelled him to literary fame.

In 1955, only ten years after the end of the Second World War, despite popular protests, the Federal Republic began to rebuild its army and joined NATO as part of its Western integration and common front against Communism. Rearmament and the ensuing debate about equipping the 'Bundeswehr' with nuclear weapons suggested to many intellectuals that the political establishment was disregarding the essential lessons

¹⁶⁹ On Celan's difficult start West Germany and in the Group 47, see Böttiger, *Die Gruppe 47*, 132-37.

¹⁷⁰ Radio was the new media that made many of the new generation intellectuals famous. For a contemporary assessment, see Horst Krüger, "Fröhlich herein, sachlich zur Kasse. Schriftsteller als Rundfunk-Mitarbeiter," *Der Spiegel*, no. 50 (1964).

¹⁷¹ Lau, *Enzensberger*, 39-40.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 40-48. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *verteidigung der wölfe* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1957); Böttiger, *Die Gruppe 47*, 323-38.

of German history, German guilt and German militarism. Officially, rearmament was justified by West Germany's geo-strategic position as cornerstone in Western Europe's defense system against the Eastern bloc.

The Adenauer administration's anti-Communism and West Germany's re-militarization contrasted starkly with the language and ideas of the Frankfurt School. West German intellectuals and scientists were much more vocal in their opposition to the country's re-militarization than West European leaders, who hoped to contain West Germany through its integration in a common military alliance and economic market. In 1957, Western integration proceeded with the Treaties of Rome, signed by France, West Germany, Italy and the Low Countries, creating the common European Economic Community and European Atomic Energy Community. In April 1957, eighteen West German scientists, among them Max Born, Otto Hahn and Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker, signed the so-called Göttingen Manifesto against the use of atomic weapons.¹⁷³

Most of the critical theorists, like-minded philosophers and writers – many who were members of the progressive Group 47 – found a literary home in the Suhrkamp publishing house. Like the Frankfurt School, Suhrkamp is key to understanding the West Germany's intellectual history. The publishing house has been named after Peter Suhrkamp, who had learnt the trade in the interwar period at the prestigious S. Fischer publishing house, established in 1886. The founder, Samuel Fischer, had created one of Germany's most progressive publishing houses. Fischer had learnt about the young

¹⁷³ For Jürgen Habermas' formative reception and participation in these debates, see Müller-Doohm, *Jürgen Habermas*, 77-82. In 1972, Habermas joined von Weizsäcker, a member of Werner Heisenberg's nuclear research team during World War II and later one of West Germany's best-known pacifists, as co-director of the prestigious Max Planck Institute in Starnberg.

Suhrkamp from the famous writers Bertolt Brecht and Hermann Hesse, who were common friends. On their advice, Fischer hired Suhrkamp in 1932 and asked him to edit the publishing house's new literary magazine *Die Neue Rundschau*.

After Hitler's rise to power, the Nazis attacked the Fischer house because of its Jewish ownership and 'un-German' repertoire of authors – many of its publications went up in flames during the book burning in March 1933. To protect the business, Samuel Fischer made Suhrkamp co-director and went into exile. When Fischer died in 1936, Suhrkamp became the sole director, initially in lieu of the Fischer owners.¹⁷⁴ By then, most of Fischer's authors, including Brecht and Hesse, had fled the country. In 1944, the Gestapo, the Nazis' State Security Police, arrested Suhrkamp on charges of high treason. He was detained in the concentration camp Sachsenhausen, where he fell seriously ill. Not expected to survive, he was released – and recovered miraculously shortly before the end of the war.¹⁷⁵

In 1950, encouraged by Hermann Hesse, Peter Suhrkamp abandoned the Fischer publishing house and founded his own.¹⁷⁶ Many authors whom S. Fischer had published before the war, most prominently Hesse and Brecht, joined Suhrkamp's new venture turning it an almost instant success. Suhrkamp invested in 'untainted' German and foreign writers and representatives of the European avant-garde such as Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Norbert Elias, Paul Feyerabend, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. In 1957, Suhrkamp recruited Siegfried Unseld, a young bookseller, who had written his

¹⁷⁴ For a controversial view on the transfer, see Ingo Langner, "Wie Peter Suhrkamp sich seinen Verlag ergaunerte," *Cicero* (2011).

¹⁷⁵ Siegfried Unseld, *Peter Suhrkamp. Zur Biographie eines Verlegers in Daten, Dokumenten und Bildern* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 16-20.

¹⁷⁶ Ingo Cornlis, "A Model European? Hermann Hesse's Influence on the Suhrkamp Verlag," *German Life and Letters* 68, no. 1 (2015): 60.

dissertation on Hermann Hesse.¹⁷⁷ Suhrkamp died only two years later in 1959. The publishing house was already profitable, but Unseld then transformed it into a cultural institution of its own right. Later, Unseld explained that his motivation rooted in the “chaos of 1945, the ensuing shock and trauma.”¹⁷⁸ Like his mentor Suhrkamp, Unseld considered it a publisher’s responsibility to promote critical reflection and social progress. He believed in publishing books “for the liberation of mankind from social constraints.”¹⁷⁹

In addition to such idealism, Unseld’s own experiences in the Third Reich have to be taken into account. In 1933, then nine years old, Unseld had joined the Hitler Youth like the majority of German boys at that age. In 1942, as soon as he had graduated from high school, he was drafted into the Wehrmacht, the German army. Trained as radio operator, he was sent to the Eastern front, where he spent roughly a year in the Crimea, in Bulgaria and Greece fighting the Red Army. Although only a teenager in the 1930s, Unseld’s literary interests and publishing ambitions in the 1950s and 1960s could also be seen as an attempt to redeem his past role as small element in the Nazi state and war effort. As publisher, he made a name for himself as *the* patron of exactly those Jewish, pacifist, and exiled writers the Nazis had sought to purge as defeatist, degenerate, and un-German.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Unseld, *Peter Suhrkamp. Zur Biographie eines Verlegers*; “Wer war Peter Suhrkamp?,” in *Die Geschichte des Suhrkamp Verlages, 1950- 2000.*, ed. Siegfried Unseld (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000).

¹⁷⁸ *Der Autor und sein Verleger* (Frankfurt am Main: suhrkamp, 1978), 18.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁸⁰ The first collection of poems that Suhrkamp published was Paul Celan, *Atemwende* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967). Celan died in 1970. Suhrkamp has been publishing his collected works, including *The Death Fuge*, posthumously in multiple editions. *Gedichte*, 2 vols., Bibliothek Suhrkamp (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975).

Unsel'd's unparalleled talent in attracting and courting Suhrkamp writers allowed the publishing house to develop a distinct profile that held great influence over the generation coming of age in the 1960s and early 1970s. He created what has become known as the 'suhrkamp culture'. The critic George Steiner coined this term in a review of Theodor Adorno's collected works:

Like Bloch and Walter Benjamin, Adorno has profited formidably from what one might call 'the Suhrkamp culture' which now dominates so much of German high literacy and intellectual ranking. Almost singlehandedly, by force of cultural-political vision and technical acumen, the publishing firm of Suhrkamp has created a modern philosophic canon. In so far as it has made widely available the most important, demanding philosophical voices of the age, in so far as it has filled German bookshelves with the presence of that German-Jewish intellectual and nervous genius which Nazism sought to obliterate, the Suhrkamp initiative has been a permanent gain.¹⁸¹

A stroke of genius was certainly the 'edition suhrkamp', a series of paperback books focusing on 'theoretical texts', which Unsel'd initiated in 1963. For the first time, university students – a majority who were first generation academics – could afford the most relevant and latest scholarly works. In this series, Unsel'd also published Adorno's lectures, newspaper essays and radio broadcasts, including his 1959 lecture "What does working through the past mean?" in which he laid out the significance of a public recognition of the Nazi past for the recovery of German democracy.¹⁸²

The synergy between the philosopher and the publisher elevated one another's influences: Adorno contributed to Suhrkamp's fame, and thanks to the widely distributed and affordable Suhrkamp publications, Adorno's large treatises as well as his countless

¹⁸¹ George Steiner, "Adorno: Love and Cognition," review of *Gesammelte Schriften*, vols V - XIII by Theodor W. Adorno, *Times Literary Supplement*, no. 3705 (1973): 254.

¹⁸² Theodor W. Adorno, "Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Klaus Schultz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977).

essays inspired a new generation of West German readers.¹⁸³ These intellectual developments were crucial for the 1968 generation that repudiated their parents' silence and complicity in the Third Reich and was almost by default drawn to the opposition to and opposite of Nazism.

I.2.2. A New Generation: 1968 in West Germany

In the 1960s, in West Germany, as elsewhere in Europe, unprecedented numbers of students enrolled in university; most of them were born at the end or after the Second World War. Universities were unprepared to accommodate the sheer numbers as well as the changes in attitude and values these students brought along.¹⁸⁴ For many, the Suhrkamp authors and particularly the Frankfurt School represented the antidote to the political culture of the Federal Republic. The future “crown prince of the Frankfurt School,” Jürgen Habermas was leading the social criticism in a country struggling to come to terms with its Nazi past and contemporary situation as an integral member of the West. Adorno had first noticed Habermas when in 1953 the then twenty-four-year old had written an article condemning the persistent reverence of Martin Heidegger in West Germany despite his alignment with the Nazis and the unchanged republication of his lectures from the 1930s, a time when the philosopher aligned himself with the Nazis.¹⁸⁵ In 1956, Habermas had joined the Institute for Social Research and Adorno and Habermas entertained a relationship based on trust and mutual respect; but in May 1958 the rising star gave a passionate speech at a rally of one hundred thousand against West

¹⁸³ See the two volumes of collected works published by Suhrkamp posthumously: *Band 10.1: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft I: Prismen, Ohne Leitbild*, 20 vols., vol. 10.1, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977). *Band 10.2: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II: Eingriffe. Stichworte.*, 20 vols., vol. 10.2, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977).

¹⁸⁴ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A history of Europe since 1945* (London, New York: Penguin, 2005), 390.

¹⁸⁵ Thomas Assheuer, "Das Leben Jürgen Habermas'," *Die Zeit*, no. 25 (17 June 2009), <http://www.zeit.de/2009/25/Habermas-box-1>. Müller-Doohm, *Jürgen Habermas*, 64.

German rearmament. Max Horkheimer, intervening from his adopted home in Switzerland, vehemently opposed such activism and eventually affected Habermas' departure from Frankfurt in 1959.¹⁸⁶

In 1961, Habermas submitted his habilitation thesis in Marburg instead of Frankfurt. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Its analysis of political participation in nineteenth-century bourgeois society and the restraints on non-hierarchical discourses in the early stages of capitalism system seemed to contain a warning for the present.¹⁸⁷ Siegfried Unseld was impressed, and although his competitor Luchterhand published the book, he soon won Habermas as an editor and author for Suhrkamp. Habermas's biographer Stefan Müller-Doohm summarizes the worrisome contemporary conclusion many contemporary readers drew about political manipulation and disenfranchisement: "In as far as mass media, which primarily focuses on the sale of its product, constitutes the public in a mass democracy, the public will increasingly be depoliticized."¹⁸⁸

Such looming concerns about the role of the media and the state of German democracy peaked in the so-called 'Spiegel Affaire' of 1962. The incident galvanized a new generation of students, who were avid readers of the affected journal *Der Spiegel*, the country's largest weekly. The weekly had led the charge against the 'reactionary' political establishment and the seemingly deliberate de-politicization of the public by the dominant Springer Press, the Hamburg-based publishing enterprise, and its rival

¹⁸⁶ Adorno, 416-17.

¹⁸⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *Der Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1962).

¹⁸⁸ Müller-Doohm, *Jürgen Habermas*, 141-42, 52.

tabloids.¹⁸⁹ In October, the editor of *Der Spiegel*, Rudolf Augstein, was arrested and accused of treason, because barely a year after the building of the Berlin Wall, the weekly had published an investigative article containing confidential information that questioned Germany's military readiness. Investigative journalism, still in its infancy in Germany at the time of the weekly's founding in 1947, was *Der Spiegel's* hallmark. A few days after the publication, police raided the offices of *Der Spiegel* at the behest of the controversial defense minister Franz Josef Strauss. Writers, journalists and critics objected to the search as a violation of the freedom of the press since many considered it a cornerstone in the country's democratization.¹⁹⁰ Several compared the campaign to the intimidation techniques of the Nazis in the 1930s.¹⁹¹ The outcry proved successful: charges were dropped and the responsible minister of defense resigned.¹⁹²

By the early 1960s, civic protests in West Germany were focusing on key issues such as rearmament, popular sovereignty, the country's state of democracy, German division into two states and the West's role in the Cold War. In 1963, two years after the Berlin Wall had gone up, the popular, youthful American President John F. Kennedy charmed West Germans with the phrase "Ich bin ein Berliner," while at the same time many still eyed his foreign policies with suspicion because of the Cuban Missile Crisis the year before. In July, the Social Democrat Egon Bahr presented a very different approach to the Cold War in his speech on 'change through rapprochement', a reorientation that Willy Brandt was to pursue during his time as foreign minister and

¹⁸⁹ For Rudolf Augstein's contemporary view on the media mogul Axel Cäsar Springer, see Rudolf Augstein, "Lex Springer," *Der Spiegel*, no. 32 (1966).

¹⁹⁰ "Die einzige wirksame Opposition.' In- und ausländische Presse über den Spiegel," *ibid.*, no. 48 (1962). Lau, *Enzensberger*, 80-92, 150-53.

¹⁹¹ Theodor Eschenburg, "Man traut Strauß alles zu," *Der Spiegel*, no. 47 (1962). Böttiger, *Die Gruppe 47*, 309-22. Lau, *Enzensberger*, 150-53.

¹⁹² "Franz-Josef Strauß. Der Mann am Draht," *Der Spiegel*, no. 48 (1962).

chancellor.¹⁹³ In August, a delegation of West German writers, mostly members of the Group 47, including Enzensberger, travelled to Leningrad. On 15 October, the German chancellor of fourteen years Konrad Adenauer resigned in response to the ‘Guillaume Affaire’, the revelation that his personal assistant was an East German spy.

Four days later, Enzensberger received the Georg-Büchner-Prize from the German Academy for Language and Poetry, making him the youngest recipient of the distinguished award. In his acceptance speech, he grappled with the meaning of being German: “We actually do not know what this means: We. [...] I am a Federal, West, East, Central German. A citizen of certain markets, certain pacts; inhabitant of this or that bloc, satellite or zone.”¹⁹⁴ The ambitious poet looked at the debate about the German national in West Germany with increasing contempt. Enzensberger considered German nationalism obsolete and most discussions of one nation divided into two states as mere lip service.

Like other German writers of his age, Enzensberger, who also called Italy and Norway his homes, cherished a distinctly cosmopolitan outlook and frequently corresponded and met with like-minded activists and leftist thinkers in neighboring countries. Like several contemporaries, he considered the German-German divide the only cure – even an appropriate punishment – for the country’s destructive nationalism. The Germans only had themselves to blame, he argued, since “the cornerstone [of the Berlin Wall] [...] was laid on June 22, 1941,” the day Nazi Germany had attacked the Soviet Union.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Bahr, "Change through Rapprochement', Evangelical Academy in Tutzing".

¹⁹⁴ Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Gespenstisch aber wirklich. Eine Frage der deutschen Identität. Die Rede bei der Annahme des Georg-Büchner-Preises," *Die Zeit*, no. 43 (25 October 1963).

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

Meanwhile, Siegfried Unseld had decided to endow Suhrkamp with its own cultural magazine. Since 1960, Enzensberger had been working for him as literary editor. In 1965, although Habermas, member of Suhrkamp's advisory board for a year, had opposed the idea vehemently, Unseld granted Enzensberger his own monthly, the *Kursbuch*.¹⁹⁶ Habermas thought Unseld was making a mistake in granting the hothead full editorial autonomy. Indeed, several skirmishes preceded the first issue, for which Enzensberger had recruited Günter Grass, Uwe Johnson, and other younger members of the Group 47.¹⁹⁷ The first issue set the tone early with two interviews with the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, followed by two contributions on the 'Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials'. These legal proceedings, which had started in 1963, were the largest, longest lasting, and most publicized trial of former guards, doctors and staff of the concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau in the history of the Federal Republic. One author remarked about the two years of court hearings, which led to 17 lifelong and long-term prison sentences:

We know the faces of the defendants, we remember single witnesses and we especially remember the gruesome details. The unimaginable has left the deepest mark. [...] Everybody at present knows the horrific instruments, can recite words from the jargon of the perpetrators, from the language of the victims, knows certain buildings and locations in Auschwitz and the murderous practices exercised there; one can imagine the removal of corpses, of the mistreated and violated bodies.¹⁹⁸

In these years, the shorthand 'Auschwitz' – only later replaced by the term 'Holocaust' – turned into the rallying call against a presumably complacent, self-absorbed Federal Republic. More and more often, left-leaning intellectuals and younger

¹⁹⁶ Müller-Doohm, *Jürgen Habermas*, 145. Lau, *Enzensberger*, 206-09.

¹⁹⁷ *Enzensberger*, 208-09. See *Der Spiegel*'s about the first issue: "Enzensbergers Zeitschrift. Gullivers Erbe," *Der Spiegel*, no. 24 (1965).

¹⁹⁸ Martin Walser, "Unser Auschwitz," *Kursbuch* 1, no. 1 (1965): 189.

demonstrators named Auschwitz in one breath with 'Hiroshima' and nuclear war, the Western arms race, and American imperialism.¹⁹⁹

In April 1966, the Group 47 travelled to Princeton for a conference on "The Writer in Affluent societies," reflective of its ambiguous relation to the U.S.: on the one hand, the political establishment was the intellectuals' nemesis; on the other hand, the civil rights movement and in particular the anti-Vietnam War protests in the U.S. represented a role model for subversion and cultural alternatives.²⁰⁰ In Princeton, Enzensberger, Günter Grass, Uwe Johnson and others met the stars of the Beat Generation such as Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac.²⁰¹ Despite the transatlantic solidarity between the intellectuals, the trip was embroiled in growing discord. Some had refused to join "the literary national team" on its way to the U.S. Questioning the trip's purpose, *Der Spiegel* sneered: "The group would never have gotten so far, if the general atmosphere in the Federal Republic would not be so reactionary, that the compromise-group 47 [sic], which does not have a defined political profile, is under constant attack from the right."²⁰² Indeed, disagreements surfaced clearly when Enzensberger and two others joined protesting Princeton students for an anti-Vietnam War teach-in. Several senior writers reprimanded them severely for violating the host's hospitality.²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ Jörg Lau outlines a dispute about the simplistic equation of Auschwitz with Hiroshima in the correspondence between Hannah Arendt and Enzensberger: Lau, *Enzensberger*, 191-95. Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker, "Die Illusion der Sicherheit," *Die Zeit*, no. 52 (1964). Karl Jaspers, "Wohin treibt die Bundesrepublik?," *Der Spiegel*, no. 19 (1966).

²⁰⁰ Philipp Gassert, "Atlantic Alliances. Cross-Cultural Communication and the 1960s Student Revolution," in *Culture and International History*, ed. Jessica Gienow-Hecht and Frank Schumacher (New York: Berghahn, 2003).

²⁰¹ Böttiger, *Die Gruppe 47*, 378-95.

²⁰² Erich Kuby, "Ach ja, da liest ja einer. SPIEGEL-Reporter Erich Kuby mit der "Gruppe 47" in Amerika," *Der Spiegel*, no. 19 (1966): 154.

²⁰³ Böttiger, *Die Gruppe 47*, 384.

Back in West Germany, to end the control of the conservative Christian Democrats (CDU) in federal elections, several intellectuals, most notably Günter Grass but not Enzensberger, supported the Social Democratic candidate and former mayor of West Berlin, Willy Brandt (SPD).²⁰⁴ Despite Adenauer's resignation, however, the CDU retained the office of the chancellor in 1965. In early October 1966, however, the government was forced to step down when the junior partner in the coalition, the FDP, the Free Democratic Party, quit over budget disputes. A few weeks later, as the CDU negotiated a new coalition with the SPD, until then largest protests in West Germany took place against the government's most controversial bill: On 30 October 1966, demonstrations against a bill introducing the so-called 'Notstandsgesetze' (state of emergency acts) took place in several major cities. The provision had been left out of the West German constitution, because Adolf Hitler had passed such acts under the veil of reacting to the Reichstag fire from February 1933 suspending civil freedoms and claiming dictatorial powers. Union leaders, students and intellectuals joined hands on that day declaring: "Never again 1933" and "Resist the beginnings."²⁰⁵ In Frankfurt, in front of 20,000, Enzensberger gave a speech in which he called out the undemocratic potential of the bill: "We demand that the parliament, in bright daylight, put an end to this in spook. We still need the Republic that we have."²⁰⁶ Regardless of the popular demands, the SPD, previously a pacifist bastion against the conservative consolidation and

²⁰⁴ Unlike Hans-Werner Richter, Günter Grass and others, Enzensberger abstained from the public campaign on Brandt's behalf. Lau, *Enzensberger*, 216-19.

²⁰⁵ "Generalstreik gegen die Nostandsgesetze? SPIEGEL-Interview mit dem Vorsitzenden der IG Metall, Otto Brenner," *Der Spiegel*, no. 21 (1966). "Kriegsrecht in Friedenszeiten," *Der Spiegel*, no. 21 (1966).

²⁰⁶ "Was da im Bunker sitzt, das schlottert ja. Hans Magnus Enzensberger auf dem Frankfurter Kongreß "Notstand der Demokratie", " *ibid.*, no. 46.

unquestioned Western integration under the CDU, entered the coalition government in December, paving the way for the ratification of the emergency acts.

Protesters and intellectuals alike were shocked to see that the SPD would make the CDU politician Kurt Georg Kiesinger chancellor. Kiesinger had joined the NSDAP in February 1933, shortly after Hitler's rise to power. Although he would always claim to have maintained an "oppositional attitude" to the Nazis, it was known that during the war he had worked as liaison between the Foreign Office and Joseph Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry.²⁰⁷ Günter Grass commented sarcastically:

Of course he has never been a real Nazi; someone with such pretty hands, simply cannot be one. [...] Contrary to less prudent resistance fighters, who have been tortured, beaten, murdered, he managed to salvage his energy, his spirit and again his prudence for the good of the German people.²⁰⁸

Many considered the SPD's assistance in the election of Kiesinger the last nail in the coffin of West German democracy. The CDU-SPD coalition held a two-thirds majority in parliament, which allowed amendments to the constitution, and it was clear that in entering the coalition the SPD had consented to ratifying the 'Notstandsgesetze'.

In the absence of a proper parliamentary opposition, the protest movement gave itself the name of the 'APO', the extra parliamentary opposition. In March 1967, Enzensberger received the Award of the City of Nurnberg, his hometown. In the acceptance speech, he declared the "Federal Republic is irreparable."²⁰⁹ To the dismay of many more moderate thinkers, Enzensberger warned the establishment to take the protest seriously. Enzensberger's call for revolution was radical: "Actually today we are not

²⁰⁷ For contemporary article on Kiesinger's election, see "Triumphant Outsider: Kurt Georg Kiesinger," *New York Times*, 11 November 1966. A recent biography in Philipp Gassert, *Kurt Georg Kiesinger, 1904–1988. Kanzler zwischen den Zeiten* (Munich: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 2006).

²⁰⁸ Günter Grass, "Die melancholische Koalition," *Der Monat* 19, no. 220 (1967): 10.

²⁰⁹ Lau, *Enzensberger*, 230-31.

confronted with Communism, but with revolution. [...] We can consent or we have to replace it with a new system. Tertium non dabitur [There is no third option].”²¹⁰

The APO protested not only against the government, but also against delayed university reforms and the Vietnam War, which also for West German students epitomized the recklessness of the Cold War. Like their American counterparts, students in Frankfurt, Hamburg, West Berlin and other big cities, led by the Socialist German Student Union SDS, were occupying universities and research institutes as expression of political emancipation and ‘basic democracy’. Even the Suhrkamp publishing house came under pressure as its staff, inspired by the manuscripts it edited, likewise demanded its emancipation and a stronger voice in editorial and administrative matters.²¹¹ Baffled by the effect of the Suhrkamp publications in his own house, Unseld refused.

The situation escalated in June 1967, when the Shah of Iran visited West Berlin. To the protestors it signaled the fateful alliance of the West German establishment with American imperialism and an un-democratic, authoritarian regime. Riot police confronted students who were trying to flee the assault from undercover Iranian agents planted in their midst. In the ensuing chaos, a police officer shot dead a student named Benno Ohnesorg, sending shock waves through the German public.²¹²

In the fall, Hans Magnus Enzensberger left for the U.S, where he had received a fellowship at Wesleyan College in Connecticut.²¹³ In the meantime, his wife and brother set up the radical ‘Kommune 1’ in his Berlin apartment, where they practiced widely

²¹⁰ Latin in original. "Ist Revolution unvermeidbar? Schriftsteller antworten auf eine SPIEGEL-Umfrage," *Der Spiegel*, no. 15 (1968).

²¹¹ Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, "Die APO und der Zerfall der Gruppe 47," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. 25 'Gruppe 47' (2007).

²¹² Judt, *Postwar*, 390–421; "Staatsbesuche. Schah. Tod vor der Oper," *Der Spiegel*, no. 24 (1967).

²¹³ Ulrich Enzensberger, *Die Jahre der Kommune 1: Berlin, 1967- 1969* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2004).

publicized, scandalous “alternative” ways of living.²¹⁴ In January 1968, Enzensberger took a trip to Cuba and return enchanted. At the end of the month, Enzensberger wrote an open letter to the college’s president, which was reprinted in the *New York Review of Books*. He declared that the Vietnam War and preceding proxy wars the U.S. had been involved in were not simply “tragic errors on the part of an otherwise peaceful, sane, and well-intentioned world power.” Most Americans, however, would be unaware of “what they and their country look like to the outside world,” so he declared “the class which rules the United States of America, and the government which implements its policies, to be the most dangerous body of men on earth.” Not to be complicit in American crimes, but to participate in the real world revolution, Enzensberger announced, he would quit Wellesleyan and move to Cuba.²¹⁵

At home, Enzensberger had propelled himself to a leader of the student protests and his *Kursbuch* turned into a “mandatory reading for the movement of 1968.”²¹⁶ In the June 1967 issue, he had published contributions by Herbert Marcuse, Uwe Johnson and Martin Walser, drumming up support for the revolution at home and abroad. Enzensberger also reprinted the article by Noam Chomsky on “Vietnam and the Intellectuals” and an appeal by the Polish Jacek Kuroń to the Workers’ Party of Poland.

Meanwhile, Jürgen Habermas who had sympathized with the students on multiple occasions, felt deeply alienated by the radicalization and escalating violence. In August 1967, he had relocated to New York for a visiting professorship at the New School for Social Research. Watching from a distance, earlier qualms about the unscrupulous

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "On Leaving America," *New York Review of Books* 10, no. 4 (1968). Lau, *Enzensberger*, 242-47.

²¹⁶ *Enzensberger*, 207. Jürgen Kaube, "Nachruf auf eine Zeitschrift," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12 June 2008.

activism – teach-ins demanded ‘Weapons for the Vietcong’ – of a movement he had once supported deepened.²¹⁷ He accused the charismatic student leader Rudi Dutschke, who was calling for the expropriation of the media mogul Axel Springer, of reckless provocation and “leftist fascism.”²¹⁸ As militant groups began terrorizing the public with department store bombings and the disruption of everyday life seemed to become the goal in and of itself, the student movement started losing sympathizers.²¹⁹

In May 1968, Habermas returned to West Germany for a congress to which the SDS had invited him. He did not mince words as he mocked the organizer as “agitator” in pursuit of “temporary narcissistic satisfaction” and Enzensberger as “itinerant harlequin at the court of would-be revolutionaries.”²²⁰ The rest of the movement, ignorant of the living conditions in real dictatorships, he accused of “confusing reality with wishful thinking.” Habermas’ attack was scathing, and the response it elicited no less so.²²¹ In December 1968, the Institute for Social Research was also temporarily occupied and disruptions of Adorno’s and Habermas’ lectures ensued for months. On one occasion, Adorno called the police to have students removed. In response, flyers circulated declaring “Adorno as an institution is dead!”²²²

Enzensberger was among those who dismissed the former mentor. While still in the U.S., he had prepared the *Kursbuch II*, the first issue of 1968. With the title

²¹⁷ Klaus Große Kracht, *Die Zankendeunft. Historische Kontroversen in Deutschland nach 1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 70-75.

²¹⁸ For the interview with Dutschke, see “Wir fordern die Enteignung Axel Springers’. SPIEGEL-Gespräch mit dem Berliner FU-Studenten Rudi Dutschke (SDS),” *Der Spiegel*, no. 29 (1967). “Soziologie/ Revolutionäre. Können und Wollen,” *Der Spiegel*, no. 9 (1969).

²¹⁹ Rudolf Augstein, “Warum sie demonstrieren,” *ibid.*, no. 26 (1967).

²²⁰ Jürgen Habermas, “Scheinrevolution unter Handlungszwang,” *ibid.*, no. 24 (1968).

²²¹ Wolfgang Abendroth and Oskar Negt, eds., *Die Linke antwortet Habermas* (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1968). For a contemporary report on the publication, see “Soziologie/ Revolutionäre. Können und Wollen.”

²²² For the protests in April 1969, see “Personalien,” *Der Spiegel*, no. 18 (1969). For an interview with Horkheimer about Adorno’s passing, see “Himmel, Ewigkeit und Schönheit. SPIEGEL-Interview mit Max Horkheimer zum Tode Theodor W. Adornos,” *Der Spiegel*, no. 33 (1969).

“Revolution in Latin America,” it was meant as inspiration for the revolution at home.²²³ In May 1968, Enzensberger participated in a panel discussion “Democracy in a state of emergency”, which was broadcast on the radio. Unlike Enzensberger, Theodor Adorno had also declared his opposition to the emergency laws but then expressed his concerns about the escalating violence: simultaneously with the passing of the emergency laws in April 1968, Rudi Dutschke was seriously wounded in an assassination attempt.²²⁴ Shortly thereafter, the student protests in neighboring France initiated a state crisis. In May, strikes and barricades paralyzed Paris. The French President Charles De Gaulle sought refuge in a military base in Baden-Baden. The pictures from Paris and West Berlin looked strikingly similar, and the *Kursbuch* 12 on ‘The undeclared state of emergency’ described West Berlin as a city under siege – not from the students, but the police and a repressive state apparatus. The issue sold out at over 50,000 copies.²²⁵

As students considered the generational rift in West German society unbridgeable, politics actually changed fundamentally. In the fall of 1969, the Social Democrat Willy Brandt was elected chancellor with the help of the FDP.²²⁶ Brandt’s novel approach to the Eastern bloc escaped most of the protesters who continued to call for revolutionary socialism.²²⁷ Contrary to the previous CDU administrations, Brandt was an outspoken advocate of social and political reforms. Habermas found himself in opposition to the students and on the side of the new chancellor. He disapproved of the students’

²²³ *Vermutungen über die Revolution. Kontroversen über den Protest*, *Kursbuch* 9 (1967). Hans Magnus Enzensberger, ed. *Revolution in Lateinamerika*, *Kursbuch* 11 (1968).

²²⁴ Müller-Doohm, *Adorno*, 451. For the *Kursbuch* view on the summer of 1968, see Hans Magnus Enzensberger, ed. *Der nicht erklärte Notstand. Dokumentation und Analyse eines Berliner Sommers*, *Kursbuch* 12 (1968).

²²⁵ Lau, *Enzensberger*, 255.

²²⁶ "Bonn/ Wahl. Willy, Willy, Willy," *Der Spiegel*, no. 40 (1969).

²²⁷ "Wir wollen nicht wild herumfuchteln. SPIEGEL-Gespräch mit dem Vorsitzenden der Jungsozialisten, Karsten Voigt," *Der Spiegel*, no. 52 (1970).

revolutionary romanticism and exoticized idea of Latin America, which contrasted so starkly with the violent suppression of the Prague Spring in nearby Czechoslovakia of which he felt to have a much clearer understanding of than the students.

In August 1968, at the time of the invasion, he was among the participants in the international summer school on Korčula. There he signed the protest letter together with the Polish philosopher Leszek Kołakowski, and Ágnes Heller and the other Hungarians. When Kołakowski was fired from the University of Warsaw in October as part of the purges taking place in Poland that year, Habermas tried to effect his appointment as professor at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt. But because of the opposition to Habermas himself at the Institute, the latter eventually withdrew and moved to Berkeley instead.²²⁸ In 1972, Habermas left Frankfurt for Starnberg in Bavaria to co-direct the prestigious Max Planck Institute with the physicist-activist Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker, one of the signatories of the Göttingen Manifesto in 1958. In support of the decision, Siegfried Unseld extended a loan from Suhrkamp to Habermas. In return, Unseld hoped to convince a reluctant Habermas to take on more editorial responsibilities at his publishing house.²²⁹

In October 1968, Enzensberger set out to be part of the Cuban revolution. An honorary guest of Fidel Castro, he insisted on contributing to the building of socialism by living and working among common people. What he found, however, was not paradise, but discontent, corruption, repression and exploitation. Cured from revolutionary romanticism, at the end of 1969, Enzensberger's contribution to the *Kursbuch* 18 on "Cuba" revealed his deep-seated dismay at the reality of his revolutionary dream. In

²²⁸ Müller-Doohm, *Jürgen Habermas*.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 141-48.

1971, his friend, the Cuban poet Heberto Padilla, whose poems he had translated, was arrested.²³⁰ Along with other prominent intellectuals like Italo Calvino, Simone de Beauvoir, and his American friend Susan Sontag, whom he had met and become friends with in 1966 and who experienced a similar disillusionment as he did in those years, Enzensberger co-signed an open letter to Fidel Castro. The signatories worried the arrest would not only represent political persecution, but jeopardized a decisive historical moment when “the installation of a socialist government in Chile and the new situation in Peru and Bolivia help make it possible to break the criminal blockade imposed on Cuba by North American imperialism.”²³¹ The dream of a socialist world revolution clashed with the realities.

To conclude, the student generation of the 1960s and a vocal part of the intellectual milieu of the early Federal Republic positioned themselves to the left of the political establishment. The role of the Suhrkamp publishing house in the making of West Germany’s literary and political culture as much as possible the opposite of its Nazi past and Germans’ alleged penchant for right-wing authoritarianism cannot be overstated. Criticism of the parent generation for not facing its ‘guilt’ merged with discontent over West Germany’s supposedly persistent anti-democratic, nationalist traditions and a repudiation of American dominance and interventionism in the Cold War. Fascism became the much used and abused magic word, and Auschwitz the symbol of evil that was readily applied to the war in Vietnam. But while students pinned their hopes on far-

²³⁰ Lau, *Enzensberger*, 258-61.

²³¹ "Open letter to Fidel Castro," *New York Review of Books* 16, no. 8 (1971). The protests did affect Padilla’s release, but he was not allowed to leave the country. Only in 1980, Padilla was put on a plane to the U.S. – without his consent. Having arrived in New York, Heberto Padilla joined the Institute for the Humanities. See Aryeh Neier, letter to Mr. S.I. Newhouse, dated October 2, 1980. NYU Archive, NYUI – group 27.4 – series I: A Box 2.Foler 28: Roger Straus – Board of Trustees.

away socialist revolutions, the country's foreign policy was actually about to embark on a significant make-over with Willy Brandt's 'Neue Ostpolitik.'

1.3. The United States: The Intellectual Cold War

1.3.1. The Post-War Temptations of American Intellectuals

In the U.S., the generational divide in attitudes towards the U.S. was even more complicated than in West Germany in the 1960s because of America's role as superpower and self-ascribed mission of defender of "the free world." To analyze the complex relations of American intellectuals towards their home country, it is conducive to look at the establishment of the *New York Review of Books* as leading, culturally liberal journal.

The *Review* sought to restore liberal anti-Communism in a decade that witnessed extreme tensions between the Eastern and Western blocs and deep division within American society. The magazine became a new home for intellectuals who sought to dethrone an older generation that had abandoned their earlier liberal anti-Communism in favor of a neo-conservatism. The latter had issued the U.S. administration a blank check for foreign interventions – all justified by the country's triumphant victory in World War II. To understand the alienation between the generations, one has to revisit the history of the 'New York intellectuals' and their anti-Communist front organization, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, at the beginning of the Cold War.

Those most commonly associated with the term 'New York intellectuals' had been born between 1900 and the late 1920s. They grew up in the poorer immigrant neighborhoods of New York, visibly affected by the Great Depression. In the 1930s, the majority attended the City College of New York, where they discovered Marxism and its

antagonistic variants of Stalinism and Trotskyism. Their ideological convictions as well as their Jewish roots rendered them largely marginal in an American society still relatively unsympathetic to both. In European culture, in modern art and the stories of the avant-garde artists – likewise marginalized characters in their lifetime – they saw an explanation for their own isolation. Through their affinity to European culture, they came to see their marginality as asset, as sign of their distinctiveness from the anonymous masses and low culture.²³²

In the late 1930s, they distanced themselves from the one-time role model of the Soviet Union and became opponents of the Soviet leader Josef Stalin as they sympathized with the exiled Leon Trotsky. Their love for intellectual and political arguments spilled over onto the pages of a journal, the *Partisan Review*, which they had re-founded in 1937 as independent from the international Communist movement and the American Communist party.²³³ The signing of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact in 1939 and the assassination of Trotsky in Mexico in 1940 swept away remaining sympathies for the USSR. While the New Yorkers initially retained the opposition to the status quo in the U.S., their debates about cultural exquisiteness and intellectual independence were soon surpassed by events on the ground. The Second World War tested the bonds and political convictions of the erstwhile friends. Some opposed participation in what they considered a capitalist war and advocated for non-intervention; others aspired to fight fascism in

²³² Neil Jumonville, *Critical Crossings. The New York Intellectuals in Postwar America* (Berkeley: University of California, 1991), 151-68.

²³³ For more: Alexander Bloom, *Prodigal Sons. The New York Intellectuals & Their World* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). Wald, *The New York Intellectuals. The Rise and Decline*. Hugh Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals: From vanguard to institution* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 1995). Joseph Dorman, "Arguing the World,"(1997).

Europe.²³⁴ By the end of the war, the last traces of the New Yorkers' youthful radicalism had vanished, although their rhetorical acuteness and the ferocity with which they defended their ideological positions persisted.

The vast majority of New York intellectuals no longer perceived the U.S. as a threat, but as a bulwark of intellectual freedom, defender of 'Western democracy' and the 'free world.'²³⁵ The persecution of European Jewry had mattered little in the way of mobilization and war aims during the war. But with hindsight America's contribution to the wartime alliance was recast as liberator of Europe's free peoples, who put an end to the extermination of Jews – neglecting the fact that the Red army had liberated most of the concentration camps. This narrative inspired a sense of gratitude and a strong identification of many New York intellectuals with the United States as the only bastion against totalitarianism. Based on Hannah Arendt's concept of totalitarianism, Nazism was summarily equated with Stalinism making both equally evil ideologies.²³⁶ This form of American Jewish patriotism found expression particularly in the monthly *Commentary*, founded in 1945, which articulated very clearly U.S. responsibilities for defending freedom and supposed American values in the world.

The beginning of the Cold War in the late 1940s ushered in the “*embourgeoisement* of the American intelligentsia,” when the former radicals became university professors, professional publishers, critics and journalists.²³⁷ Even *Partisan*

²³⁴ Dwight Macdonald and Clement Greenberg wrote the anti-interventionist “10 Propositions on the War.” Dwight Macdonald and Clement Greenberg, “10 Propositions on the War,” *Partisan Review* 8(July-August 1941). In the same issue, Philip Rahv repudiated their position in Philip Rahv, “10 Propositions and 8 Errors,” *ibid.*(July- August 1941).

²³⁵ Wald, *The New York Intellectuals. The Rise and Decline*, 269- 70.

²³⁶ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 19-61. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1951).

²³⁷ Neil Jumonville, ed. *The New York Intellectuals Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 6.

Review increasingly affirmed American exceptionalism.²³⁸ As the New York intellectuals became established scholars and journalists, several drifted to the right. Friendships deteriorated, and their circles fell apart. In the 1950s, some emerged as apologists of McCarthyism, the witch-hunt of suspected Communists associated mostly with Senator Joseph McCarthy. They considered the political persecution deplorable, but necessary. At least, Irving Kristol argued, “there is one thing that the American people know about Senator McCarthy: he, like them, is unequivocally anti-Communist.”²³⁹ The conviction and execution of the ‘atom spies’ Ethel and Julius Rosenberg in 1953 found similarly sounding approval; the defendants’ counter-claim of anti-Semitism was vigorously rejected as Soviet propaganda.²⁴⁰ The few who opposed such views of the righteousness of the American cause founded yet another magazine, again with a fitting title: *Dissent*.²⁴¹

In addition to these domestic issues, with the onset of the Cold War, the New Yorkers realized they urgently had to internationalize their anti-Communist struggle, if they did not want to cease the ground to Communists and fellow travellers. The Soviet Union had been dominating the international peace movement. When in 1949 the Moscow-backed so-called World Congress for Peace took place in New York, the anti-Communist New Yorkers felt attacked on home turf. As response, they staged a counter-rally in the same venue, which drew such a crowd that loudspeakers had to transmit the

²³⁸ Philip Rahv, “‘American Intellectuals in the postwar situation (A contribution to the Partisan Review symposium, ‘Our Country and Our Culture,’ May-June 1953),” in *Essays on Literature and politics, 1932-1972*, ed. Arabel J. Porter and Andrew J. Dvosin (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 330.

²³⁹ Irving Kristol, “‘Civil Liberties,’ 1952 – A Study in Confusion,” *Commentary* 13/3 (March 1952),” in *The New York Intellectuals Reader*, ed. Neil Jumonville (New York: Routledge, 2007), 262. For a voluntary call to dismiss “politically unreliable” university staff, see Sidney Hook, *Heresy, Yes - Conspiracy, No* (New York: The John Day Co., 1953).

²⁴⁰ L. Dawidowicz, “‘Anti-Semitism’ and the Rosenberg Case: The Latest Communist Propaganda Trap.” *Commentary* 14 (1952), no. 7, pp. 41–44. N. Janssen, “‘An Audacious Act of Appropriation.’ Jewish Intellectuals, the Legacy of the Second World War and the Emergence of Neoconservatism,” in: *Journal of Social Sciences* 2 (2012) no. 9, p. 37.

²⁴¹ For a discussion of the debates surrounding the founding of *Dissent*, see Jumonville, *Critical Crossings*, 76-86.

proceedings to outside the hotel. Enthusiastically, the intellectuals founded the 'Americans for Intellectual Freedom' committee.²⁴² A year later, that same group was instrumental in organizing the 'Congress for Cultural Freedom' in Berlin, the frontline city of the Cold War. With the financial support of the U.S. High Commissioner of Germany and the mayor of West Berlin, Lasky invited internationally well-known anti-Stalinists and anti-Communists to show their opposition to the Moscow-backed meetings in those years and to call out the persecution of writers and artists in the Soviet Union.²⁴³

In Berlin, the participants decided to turn the Congress into a permanent organization and henceforth, the Congress served as *the* international umbrella organization in the fight against Soviet propaganda and cultural repression in the Eastern bloc.²⁴⁴ At its headquarter in Paris, the American Michael Josselson was in charge of operations.²⁴⁵ Quickly, the Congress established various national chapters and published influential journals such as the French *Preuves*, the German *Der Monat*, the Italian *Tempo Presente*, and the London-based flagship *Encounter*, which by the 1960s would have a circulation of 34,000.²⁴⁶ In coming years, the Congress held its annual meetings in

²⁴² Ibid., 1-48.

²⁴³ To name but a few: Golo Mann, Franz Borkenau, Raymond Aron, Ignazio Silone, Arthur Koestler, Hugh Trevor-Roper, Eugen Kogon, François Bondy, Benedetto Croce, John Dewey, Karl Jaspers, and Bertrand Russell. Jan-Werner Müller, "Fear and Freedom: On 'Cold War Liberalism'," *European Journal of Political Theory* 7, no. 1 (2008).

²⁴⁴ Peter Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy. The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 21-22. Bruno Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont. Une biographie intellectuelle. Combat pour la liberté. Le journal d'une époque*, vol. III (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1996).

²⁴⁵ Josselson was born in Estonia in 1908. He went to university in Berlin and Freiburg, before moving to Paris. He fled the rise of fascism in Europe in 1937 and became a U.S. citizen. In 1942, he was drafted into the army; after the war, he stayed in Berlin as part of the U.S. military administration. There, he befriended Melvin Lasky, and supposedly entered the services of the Office for Strategic Service, the C.I.A.'s predecessor.

²⁴⁶ Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 82-102. Melvin Lasky later replaced Irving Kristol as editor of *Encounter*. Walter Allen, "From the First it was a Successful Anglo-American Encounter," *New York Times*, 10 November 1963. Marko Martin, "Ein Fenster zur Welt. Der Monat – Eine kritisch-subjektive Würdigung," *Die Horen, Zeitschrift für Literatur, Kunst und Kritik* 58, no. 250 (2nd quarter 2013).

Paris, Milan, Oslo, Salzburg and similar attractive destination, generating a jet set of anti-Communist intellectuals.

Much of the funding came from the Ford Foundation. Under the Presidency of Paul Hoffman, from 1950 to 1953, it became the Foundation's declared goal to support the American effort in the cultural Cold War, secure international loyalty to the U.S. and to that end promote West European integration. Henry Ford Jr., the grandson of the Ford motor company's founder, had professed that "the Foundation ought not to represent the interests of a single family but the national interest."²⁴⁷ In consultation with General John J. McCloy, the U.S. High Commissioner of Germany until 1952, the Ford Foundation had identified the Congress for Cultural Freedom as a worthy investment, particularly for its connections within Western Europe needed as bulwark against Soviet communism.²⁴⁸ Nevertheless, strong disagreement arose between Western European intellectuals and their American counterparts in the Congress. Differences regarding McCarthyism, the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, and the political persecution of the nuclear physicist Robert Oppenheimer drove a wedge into the transatlantic organization.²⁴⁹

I.3.2. Crisis in the 1960s: the CIA, the Congress and its Critics

The embourgeoisement of the New York intellectuals and their success in the international fight against Communism followed a rapprochement with the administrations of John F. Kennedy and, after his assassination in 1963, of Lyndon B. Johnson. They had mostly supported both presidents, and they used their numerous

²⁴⁷ Quote in Francis X. Sutton, "The Ford Foundation: the early years," *Daedalus* 116, no. 1 (Winter 1987): 46.

²⁴⁸ For more on the changes under Paul Hoffman at the Ford Foundation, see *ibid.*, 53- 71.

²⁴⁹ Many Europeans considered Oppenheimer, the former director of the Manhattan Project, who had contributed to the development of the atomic bomb in 1945, a friend and were shocked when he was dismissed from the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission based on the mere suspicion of Communist sympathies. Bertrand Russell, "The Mind of Robert Oppenheimer," *The New Republic* (20 November 1951).

magazines to articulate their preferences and to influence public opinion. The administrations of JFK and LBJ appointed some intellectuals, including a few from New York, to public posts. Such access to the circles of power could be seen as the New York intellectuals' triumph over their underprivileged background and previous marginalization. But the strong identification with America first aggravated the ideological tensions that had emerged in the 1950s. As President Johnson's "War on Poverty" did not produce the Great Society the intellectuals had envisioned and the sixties became instead a decade of race riots and recalcitrant students, leading New Yorkers founded *The Public Interest*. Originally founded in support of LBJ's policies, by the 1970s, it became besides *Commentary* one of the key publications of neo-conservatism.²⁵⁰ The editorial of the first issue highlights the generational divides and the intellectual vanity of the project:

Unfortunately, there are always more adolescent minds than adolescents around. [...] Young people tend to be enchanted by glittering generalities; older people are inclined to remember rather than to think; middle-aged people, seasoned by life but still open to the future, do seem to us – in our middle years – to be the best of all political generations.²⁵¹

Meanwhile, the younger generation that came of age in the late fifties and sixties considered the intellectuals' alignment with the political establishment a "moral failing, personal irresponsibility and intellectual treason".²⁵² Just as in West Germany and France, students used teach-ins and sit-ins, university occupations and demonstrations as means to express their discontent over the existing social structure, which they perceived

²⁵⁰ David Brooks, "40 Years of Character," *New York Times*, 5 March 2005. Edward Rothstein, "Mission Accomplished, a Journal Folds," *ibid.*, 9 May.

²⁵¹ Irving Kristol and Daniel Bell, "Editorial" *The Public Interest* 1, no. 1 (1965): 4.

²⁵² Wilford, *From vanguard to institution*, 193.. Irving Kristol vehemently opposed any suggestion at cooptation. Until he left for London in 1951, he insisted: "I had never seen a congressman or senator [...]; no agency of the American government [had] ever asked me for my opinion on anything." Irving Kristol, "Memoirs of a 'Cold Warrior' (originally 1968)," in *Neoconservatism: the autobiography of an idea* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 463.

as rigid, undemocratic, and reactionary. The majority of New York intellectuals thought the students naïve and ungrateful for a social system, which they had helped built:

The young radical guerillas now engaged in the sabotage of social organization take it for granted that they will be provided with complex means of transportation and communication, and with food, clothing, shelter, and medical care. The easy availability of these things is based on a system they deride and which in their confusion they want to bring down, not realizing that they themselves and all those they wish to help would thereby be reduced to misery.²⁵³

They could not comprehend how a generation that had reaped the benefits of *their* struggle could protest against the status quo and idealize socialist revolutions in Latin America. The breaking point was the Vietnam War, which escalated under President Johnson so that by 1968, the end of his term, over half a million U.S. troops were “fighting Communism” half way around the globe. Many anti-Communist intellectuals considered it an unpleasant but necessary intervention to prevent the first domino from falling.²⁵⁴ Only a minority sided with the students and opposed the government, which repeatedly had appeared to act recklessly imperialist and against the public interest as incidents like the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 had already suggested.²⁵⁵

When in early 1963, only months after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, printers in New York City went on a strike, two editors at *Harper's Magazine* and *Partisan Review*, Robert Silvers and Barbara Epstein, seized the moment. The

²⁵³ Nathan Glazer, "On Being Deradicalized," in *The New York Intellectuals Reader*, ed. Neil Jumonville (New York: Routledge, 2007), 400. Similarly dismissive views in Daniel Bell, "Columbia University & the New Left," *The Public Interest* (Fall 1968). Sidney Hook, "Barbarism, Virtue & the University," *ibid.* (Spring 1969). Melvin Lasky, "Revolutions-Tagebuch," *Der Monat* 20, no. 239 (August 1968).

²⁵⁴ Norman Podhoretz, *Why we were in Vietnam* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982). President Eisenhower first formulated the domino theory in 1954, which served as justification for American intervention to stop the spread of Communism.

²⁵⁵ Paul Goodman, *Growing Up Absurd* (New York: Random House, 1960). Irving Howe, "'Problems in the 1960s,' excerpt from *A Margin of Hope* (1982) " in *The New York Intellectuals Reader*, ed. Neil Jumonville (New York: Routledge, 2007).

original idea behind the *New York Review of Books* had been to overcome the low quality of book reviewing in the U.S.²⁵⁶ In the first issue, the editors declared: “Neither time nor space [...] have been spent on books which are trivial in their intentions or venal in their effects, except occasionally to reduce a temporarily inflated reputation or to call attention to a fraud.”²⁵⁷ Epstein and Silvers had planned to model their magazine on the *London Times Literary Supplement*, but quickly developed their own style.²⁵⁸ From the start, the *Review* was distinctly political and “unashamedly elitist.”²⁵⁹ The list of authors, which “read like a who’s who of contemporary letters,” contributed to its instant success.²⁶⁰ By 1965, due to the intuition and skill of its founding editors Robert Silvers and Barbara Epstein, the *Review* had grown into a profitable enterprise.²⁶¹ Quickly, it became a safe haven for those who still upheld liberal anti-Communism but were also highly critical of the U.S. government’s actions.²⁶²

The *New York Review of Books* led the charge against those intellectuals who had promoted and defended the recent U.S. foreign policy failures. Although support for the student movement and its revolutionary demands was not unequivocal, the *Review* never wavered in supporting the anti-Vietnam War protests.²⁶³ In February of 1967, it published an article by Noam Chomsky, who asserted: “It is the responsibility of intellectuals to

²⁵⁶ Elizabeth Hardwick, "The Decline of Book Reviewing," *Harper's Magazine* (October 1959).

²⁵⁷ Robert Silvers and Barbara Epstein, "To the Readers," *New York Review of Books* 1, no. 1 (1963).

²⁵⁸ Hardwick, "The Decline of Book Reviewing."

²⁵⁹ Andrew Brown, "The writer's editor," *The Guardian*, 23 January 2004.

²⁶⁰ Without pay, Robert Lowell, Dwight McDonald, Mary McCarthy, Robert Lowell, Philip Rahv, Elizabeth Hardwick, Alfred Kazin, the thirty-year-old Susan Sontag and even a young Midge Decter contributed to the inaugural issue. Bloom, *Prodigal Sons*, 326.

²⁶¹ For more, Stephen Fender, "The New York Review of Books," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 16(1986); Brown, "The writer's editor."

²⁶² Scott Sherman, "The Rebirth of the NYRB," *The Nation* (20 March 2004).

²⁶³ Exemplary: Stephen Spender, "The Young in Berlin," *New York Review of Books* 11, no. 4 (1968). Mary McCarthy, "Letter from London: the Demo," *ibid.*, no. 11. Ivan Morris and Dwight Macdonald, "An Exchange on Columbia," *ibid.*, no. 1. Noam Chomsky et al., "Protest," *ibid.* 10, no. 5 (1968). Susan Sontag et al., "A Special Supplement: The Meaning of Vietnam," *ibid.* 22, no. 10 (1975).

speak the truth and to expose lies. This, at least, may seem enough of a truism to pass over without comment. Not so, however. For the modern intellectual, it is not at all obvious.” In the case of Vietnam, Chomsky insisted, intellectuals had utterly failed to expose the “deceit and distortion surrounding the American invasion.”²⁶⁴ The *Review* did live up to that responsibility. Starting April 1967, it ran a series of articles by Mary McCarthy about the realities of the Vietnam War, the military *and* civilian casualties, and the demoralizing and traumatizing impact the war had on U.S. soldiers.²⁶⁵

1967 also marked the year when unambiguous evidence proved that the Congress for Cultural Freedom received funding not only from the Ford Foundation, but also from the C.I.A. In February, simultaneous with Chomsky’s indictment of intellectuals, the magazine *Ramparts* and the *New York Times* revealed an elaborate funding scheme of so-called ‘dummy foundations’ that channeled money to the Congress.²⁶⁶ Several leading members, such as the *Encounter* editors Melvin Lasky and Stephen Spender – the latter subsequently resigned from his position – insisted on their innocence.²⁶⁷ Irving Kristol, the magazine’s founding editor who had resigned in the midst of a political controversy involving an “anti-American” contribution, considered the assumption the C.I.A. had any say in editorial decisions absurd. Lasky claimed editorial policies had never been manipulated from the outside. Trying to disperse the doubters, he emphasized the

²⁶⁴ Noam Chomsky, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals," *ibid.* (1967).

²⁶⁵ Mary McCarthy, "Report from Vietnam I. The Home Front," *ibid.* (1967). "Report from Vietnam II. The Problems of Success," *New York Review of Books* (1967). "Report from Vietnam III. Intellectuals," *New York Review of Books* (1967).

²⁶⁶ *New York Times*, "Triple Pass: How the C.I.A. shifts secret funds," (19 February 1967), 1 & 26. Kristol believed his claims, as he found the idea of the C.I.A. influencing the Congress, which hardly bothered meddling with *Encounter*'s editorial policies, absurd. Kristol, "Memoirs of a 'Cold Warrior' (originally 1968)," 459.

²⁶⁷ "Stephen Spender quits *Encounter*," *The New York Times*, 8 May 1967. "Memoirs of a 'Cold Warrior' (originally 1968)." Volker Berghahn suggests that Spender most likely knew about the connection, see Volker Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe. Shepard Stone between Philanthropy, Academy and Diplomacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 247.

integrity of *Encounter* indicating it no longer accepted grants from “suspicious” American foundations.²⁶⁸

The damage, however, was done. Investigations revealed that the C.I.A. had been involved in the Congress for Cultural Freedom since its beginnings in New York in 1949. The Executive Director in Paris, Michael Josselson, had actually signed up with the Office for Policy Coordination, the C.I.A.’s predecessor, during the war and, in 1950, had been assigned to the Congress’s headquarters.²⁶⁹ The whole affair was an embarrassment for the Ford Foundation, too. In April, Jason Epstein, Barbara Epstein’s husband and vice president of Random House, summarized the inherent contradiction between an organization that carried cultural freedom in its name but accepted money from the secret intelligence service:

the CIA and the Ford Foundation, among other agencies, had set up and were financing an apparatus of intellectuals selected for their correct cold-war positions, as an alternative to what one might call a free intellectual market where ideology was presumed to count for less than individual talent and achievement [...].²⁷⁰

Epstein put the blame squarely on the New York intellectuals, who had moved across the entire political spectrum starting on the extreme left and, by the 1960s, arrived at neo-conservatism. Epstein outlined the long-lasting inherent problem:

The hysteria of the early Fifties [McCarthyism] and the killing that goes on today are not isolated and discrete symptoms but aspects of a larger sickness whose signs became unmistakable as the Fifties wore on. Toward the end of the decade it became clear to many of us that the evils of Stalinism did not guarantee a corresponding virtue in one’s own country.²⁷¹

²⁶⁸ New York Times, “Lasky will stay with Encounter,” (9 May 1967).

²⁶⁹ A redacted study by the C.I.A. made public available in 2007 explores Josselson’s career: “The Origins of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1949-1950,” <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/95unclass/Warner.html>.

²⁷⁰ Jason Epstein, “The CIA and the Intellectuals,” *New York Review of Books* (1967).

²⁷¹ Ibid.

Unable to silence the doubters, the Congress was dissolved in September 1967 but was promptly re-founded as 'International Association for Cultural Freedom'. In West Germany, the publishing house S. Fischer and the foundation of *Die Zeit*, the leading German intellectual weekly edited by Gerd Bucerius and Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, took over *Der Monat*.²⁷² The former assistant to the High Commissioner in Berlin, Shepard Stone, who had managed the ties between the Ford Foundation, the Congress and probably the C.I.A., too, became the Association's new president. The Ford Foundation agreed to continue sponsoring the organization as it was resurrected as a reformed Association. However, the budget was significantly lower than when it had come out of the pockets of the C.I.A. "Ironically," Stone's biographer Volker Berghahn argues, "the [Ford] foundation [...] intervened in the affairs of the IACF and would continue to do so at levels the CIA had never even contemplated during the years of its largest covert support for the CCF."²⁷³

While the International Association slowly began its retreat from the limelight, the *Review* was about to enter a new era, in which it would play a leading role in shaping intellectual debates. In 1968, the protests and the escalation of the Vietnam War backfired: President Johnson, the incumbent, decided not to run for office again. The election campaign was marred by the assassination of Democratic hopeful Robert Kennedy. In the end, the Republican nominee Richard Nixon was elected president.²⁷⁴ In the meantime, the *Review* championed the rescue of liberalism in an era that was hardly inclined to continue a tradition that seemed obsolete.

²⁷² The monthly was eventually discontinued in 1971. It was temporarily revived from 1981 to 1986. Martin, "Ein Fenster zur Welt. Der Monat – Eine kritisch-subjektive Würdigung," 68.

²⁷³ Berghahn, *America and the intellectual Cold Wars*, 260.

²⁷⁴ Dennis Wainstock, *Election Year 1968. The Turning Point* (New York: Enigma, 2012).

I. Conclusion

The preceding chapter has outlined a number of similar developments in the 1960s that have shaped the minds and attitudes of those intellectuals who twenty years later would constitute a network of dissent bridging national and bloc boundaries. They experienced the sixties as a decade of great political and personal upheaval. They played an active role in the renegotiations of the post-war social and political status quo.

The year 1956 looms large in Hungarian history, as this chapter has demonstrated. First of all, it is the reminder of the illegitimacy of the regime under János Kádár. Second, it stifled any form of opposition for over a decade. Third, it strong-armed Kádár into buying popular loyalty and political stability with Western loans. He consolidated his power not only through terror, but also more lastingly with high living standards, which resulted from the economic reforms of the early sixties. Fourth, the success of this new 'social contract' lasted for decades, and would stall the emergence of a popular protest movement until the late 1980s. Last but not least, the surviving members of Imre Nagy's circle later turned into the country's historical moral conscience that boosted the Democratic Opposition and undermined the regime in 1989.

Whether in Hungary, West Germany or the U.S., the intellectuals introduced here became acutely aware of their own marginality, but they perceived their distinctiveness from the mainstream and the political establishment as a badge of honor. It was a prerequisite for their role as independent, upright social critic and public intellectual. Examples of intellectuals in their immediate environs, who had traded their moral integrity and social responsibility as 'public conscience' for political influence, inspired their skepticism towards political authorities. In Hungary, this was the case with György

Lukács, who was a patron and inspiration to his own students and theirs before turning into a symbol of acquiescence and accommodation. In West Germany, the intellectuals around the Group 47 cast themselves in opposition to those historians, writers, poets, legal scholars who had put their expertise into the service of the Nazis. In opposition to these, the generation coming of age in the 1950s and 1960s looked to the Suhrkamp authors as moral authorities and inspiration. Intellectuals like Theodor Adorno were the survivors, the persecuted, and the uncompromised, yet they would not assume the role of victims or hateful avengers.

In the U.S., the New York intellectuals, who founded the Congress of Cultural Freedom, particularly those who would become the godfathers of neo-conservatism, represented the nemesis of those intellectuals who gather around the *New York Review of Books*. McCarthyism, the Vietnam War and the 1967 scandal around C.I.A. funding of the Congress proved that they had betrayed their very own liberal ideals and principles of intellectual freedom. These experiences of intellectual ‘treason’ were the cause for the skepticism towards the powers that be for the members of the later network. The perceived threat of reaction, the restoration of fascist elements in West Germany and the U.S. felt like a real and imminent possibility. Starting in 1963, the *New York Review of Books* and the contributors it groomed would soon hold up the banner of cultural liberalism and anti-totalitarianism.

Although the degree of the radicalization in this international selection varies, all positioned themselves to the left of the political center and criticized their governments from the left, including those in Hungary. In this decade, their identities revolved around protest and opposition to existing orders and dominant ideas: they were against the status

quo, against conservatism, against totalitarianism, against governmental paternalism, against the Vietnam War, against militarization and escalation of the Cold War. A distinct concern that their parents' generation had failed to set up the right kind of government and society after the war drove them to criticism and protest.

However, while they were in Cuba, Hanoi, or China (at least emotionally) and indulging in revolution, their governments passed significant reforms and society underwent great changes. In Hungary, the sixties were comparatively calm, because of the experience of the crushing of the 1956 revolution and the reforms of the New Economic Mechanism. It laid the foundation to Hungary's 'goulash communism', which initiated an unprecedented embourgeoisement and the highest standards of living in the bloc. In return, the country was nicknamed 'the happiest barrack in the Eastern bloc.'

In West Germany, the fundamental change did not come immediately with the Grand Coalition, but the election of Willy Brandt, the first Social Democratic Chancellor. Brandt's "Neue Ostpolitik" – paralleled and reinforced in Vienna by Bruno Kreisky's "Gute Nachbarschaftspolitik" (policy of friendly neighbors) – actually allowed the Federal Republic to become a serious player in Cold War politics and set the stage for détente as well as a self-retrained emancipation of Western Europe from the U.S. regarding Cold War relations.²⁷⁵ The opening towards the East under the motto of 'change through rapprochement' dovetailed with Hungary's opening, and paved the way for János Kádár's international rehabilitation, which was the premise for Western loans and investments, the basis for the economic reform to take full effect. Nevertheless, the Prague Spring of 1968 showed the limits of Hungary's sovereignty and dismissed any

²⁷⁵ Giovanni Bernardini, "Forced to Cooperate: The Brandt Government and the Nixon Administration on the Road to Helsinki," in *Perforating the Iron Curtain*, ed. Odd Arne Westad and Poul Villaume (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 2010).

hopes for ‘socialism with a human face.’ Last but not least, the Warsaw Pact invasion as well as the personal experience of existing socialist experiments are the reasons why especially the Western intellectuals introduced here, within a few years shed their radicalism and would never become part of the New Left.

Although the starting positions for Hungary, West Germany and the U.S., varied greatly at the beginning of the 1960s, intellectuals in all three countries identified with the worldwide protest movements of the decade. All of them were distinctly cosmopolitan, politically on the left, if not extreme left, and highly educated, erudite elitists. They were deeply skeptical of their governments and sought to reform if not revolutionize the philosophical and social premises of their home societies. But as they looked to far-away lands for revolutionary solutions, they were forced to acknowledge the pitfalls of their ideological commitments. Having failed to win over the majority population, they were forced to acknowledge the changes that had taken place, which Tony Judt has dubbed the “Social Democratic Moment,” while they had been enthralled in the romanticism of revolts and revolutions.²⁷⁶ The peak of 1967 and 1968 was soon followed by disillusionment, when the reality of economic, political and foreign policy reforms shattered utopian dreams of revolution.

²⁷⁶ Tony Judt, “The Social Democratic Moment,” in *Postwar. A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005).

II. Chapter. The 1970s: In Search of an Identity

II. Introduction

“In the 1970s the political landscape of western Europe started to fracture and fragment,” claims Tony Judt.²⁷⁷ That is no less true for Eastern Europe. Whereas the Western intellectuals drifted towards ever more radical positions in the 1960s, the 1970s stand out as a decade of reflection at the end of which they will divest themselves of their radical leftist past, an ideological moderation that was the prerequisite for a friendly encounter with the new opposition movements in Eastern Europe. These years represented a time of ideological maturing and searching for a political identity for all of those involved, including the Hungarian non-conformists. The world economic crisis and the beginning of détente politics altered the existing framework of the Cold War and their beliefs. This chapter investigates how the intellectuals experienced and re-positioned themselves within this new context.

The rejection of revolutionary socialism and the ideological moderation in the West is reflected in the biographies of Susan Sontag and Hans Magnus Enzensberger. In the late 1960s, the former vehemently rejected the U.S. as her intellectual and cultural home. A visit to Hanoi, however, made her realize the grain of truth in the mantra of ‘the enemy of my enemy is my friend’. Similarly, her friend Enzensberger returned from his stay in Cuba a changed man. This chapter discusses his support not for far-away social experiments, but for East European, mostly Hungarian dissidents.

Meanwhile, the Hungarian non-conformists bore the brunt of the political tensions between the Eastern bloc leaders. The economic crisis put the Kádár regime

²⁷⁷ *Postwar*, 484.

under enormous pressure, which contributed to the crackdown of its domestic critics, evidenced in the so-called Philosopher's Trial in May, the trial against Miklós Haraszti in October 1973, and the arrest of the sociologists Iván Szelényi and György Konrád for drafting a manuscript criticizing the socialist state bureaucracy in 1974. But only in response to the repression, and the courage of the Polish and Czech opposition groups did the Hungarian non-conformists begin to form a community.

Instead of incarceration, the authorities resorted to exporting its critics, which initiated the internationalization of the Hungarian opposition. Most prominently, György Konrád was allowed to go to West Germany, where he paved the way for the Western reception of dissident writers and dissident thought from Hungary. His stay in the West illustrates the attempts to find a common language to understand 'dissent' in the East and render it comprehensible for a Western audience. Not only the geographic proximity between West Germany and Hungary, but also the Holocaust, the Nazi occupation of Eastern Europe, the establishment of a predominantly left-leaning intellectual milieu in the early Federal Republic made West German intellectuals receptive for writers from Hungary.

European détente, crowned in 1975 with the Helsinki Final Act, made such transfers of ideas and intellectuals between East and West possible. Some intellectuals around the *New York Review of Books* were already invested in the cause of Soviet dissidents, before they discovered East European dissidents and President Jimmy Carter made human rights agenda a mainstay in U.S. politics. The pivotal meeting for the transatlantic network occurred at the Biennale in Venice in December 1977, where Konrád first met the intellectuals from New York. Encouraged by the Carter

administration and recent grass root developments in the East, they founded the two monitoring organizations in 1978, Americas and Helsinki Watch, which would become instrumental in monitoring compliance with international agreements, as well as the Institute for the Humanities at New York University (NYU). In conjunction with meeting East European dissidents like Konrád, the New Yorkers came to reconstruct the classic anti-totalitarian liberalism, which had seemed to have lost validity with the Congress for Cultural Freedom.

II.1. Giving up Revolution: Reorientation in the 1970s

II.1.1. An Empire in Crisis: the U.S. in the early 1970s

1968 had proven a challenging and busy year for the *Review*. Although it had rallied against the Congress for Cultural Freedom the year before, it did not disavow its original political cause. On the contrary, champions of anti-Communist liberalism, like Stephen Spender and George F. Kennan, became regular contributors to the *Review* in the following years just as Dwight Macdonald, founder of *Dissent* and Philip Rahv, founder of *Partisan Review*, became cherished authors.²⁷⁸

The assassinations of Martin Luther King in April and of the presidential hopeful Robert Kennedy in June, only five years after the fatal shooting of JFK, shook the very basis of American self-understanding.²⁷⁹ The elections in the fall of 1968 then pitched the Democratic nominee Hubert Humphrey against the Republican Richard Nixon and the former Governor of Alabama, George Wallace, who ran as independent. For many,

²⁷⁸ "Stephen Spender quits Encounter."

²⁷⁹ Mary McCarthy, "King's Apotheosis," *New York Review of Books* 10, no. 10 (1968).

including intellectuals around the *Review*, the 1968 election spelled the end of liberalism.²⁸⁰ The *Review*, unsure on whom to put its money on, explained the break:

Today the call for a “new politics” is sounded not only by radicals but by liberals opposed to the war and increasingly alarmed by the breakdown of representative government and the drift toward violence. Even though the Left itself has failed to put together a movement capable of revolutionizing American society, it has communicated to many people a sense of crisis, an awareness of the system’s unresponsiveness to their needs, which has turned them from admirers of American democracy into harsh critics.²⁸¹

Richard Nixon, a staunch Cold Warrior, went on to become the first U.S. president to visit the People’s Republic of China in 1970. His friendly ties with the Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev were a novelty in the superpower standoff. The arms limitations talks between the two in fact ushered in a decade of détente. But the relations between the two superpowers remained ambivalent, as conflicts erupted elsewhere around the globe. Generally, the 1970s were a trying time for most Americans: in 1972, although burglars in the Democratic National Committee headquarters in D.C. were arrested, Nixon still carried the election with the largest margin in U.S. history. Regardless of campaign promises, Nixon delayed the withdrawal from Vietnam, further feeding the canons of intellectuals. By 1973, the *Review* published a series of articles about the Watergate investigation, the involvement of Nixon’s aides, and the possibilities of impeaching the president.²⁸²

In October 1973, the Yom Kippur War between Israel and its Arab neighbors temporarily suspended ongoing negotiations with Moscow over further arms limitations

²⁸⁰ Christopher Lasch, "The New Politics: 1968 and After," *ibid.* 11, no. 1. More recently, the declension narrative of liberalism in Jeffrey Bloodworth, *Losing the Center. The Decline of American Liberalism, 1968-1992* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 2013).

²⁸¹ Lasch, "The New Politics: 1968 and After."

²⁸² I.F. Stone, "A Special Supplement: Impeachment," *ibid.* 20, no. 11 (1973). Mary McCarthy, "Lies," *ibid.*, no. 13. "Watergate Notes," *New York Review of Books* 20, no. 12 (1973). I.F. Stone, "Why Nixon Fears Resigning," *ibid.*, no. 19. Noam Chomsky, "Watergate: A Skeptical View," *ibid.*, no. 14.

agreements. Soon after, oil prices skyrocketed and resulted in the deepest economic crisis in the U.S. since the Great Depression, further shaking the confidence of the American way of life.²⁸³ In 1974, President Nixon resigned over his personal involvement in the Watergate Scandal, leaving the presidential office tarnished.²⁸⁴ The backlash against civil rights and feminism, particularly against the Black Power movement and the Equal Rights Amendment, fueled the crisis of confidence.

In those years, the *Review* showcased the essayistic brilliance of Susan Sontag, whose career had started at the *Partisan Review* and who is often hailed as the “last New York intellectual.” Born in Arizona in 1933, Sontag had arrived in New York in the 1950s. In 1957, a scholarship had taken her to Oxford University from where she explored Western Europe. She spent several formative months in Paris, which reinforced her love for European culture that she had previously only devoured as avid reader of Franz Kafka, Thomas Mann, George Orwell, Albert Camus and André Gide. In 1970, returning from one of her many trips to Europe, she would note: “I’m in exile (America) from my exile (Europe).”²⁸⁵ Although Sontag is known for having made pop culture a legitimate subject of intellectual inquiry, she personally embraced the elitist preference for European high culture typical of the *Review*’s circle; her son, David Rieff, asserted: “No American writer of her generation was more associated with European tastes than was my mother.”²⁸⁶

When Silvers and Epstein founded the *Review* in 1963, Sontag had contributed an essay on Simone Weil, the radically committed French intellectual, to the first issue.

²⁸³ Emma Rothschild, "Illusions about Energy," *ibid.* 2, no. 13.

²⁸⁴ Henry Steel Commager, "The Presidency After Watergate," *ibid.* 20, no. 16.

²⁸⁵ Diary entry February 17, 1970 in Sontag, *Journals and Notebooks, 1964-1980*, 273.

²⁸⁶ David Rieff, "Preface," in *Susan Sontag, Reborn. Journals & Notebooks 1947-1963*, ed. David Rieff (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008), x.

Fascinated and revolted at the same time by Weil's "contempt for pleasure and for happiness, her noble and ridiculous political gestures, her elaborate self-denials, her tireless courting of affliction," Sontag wrote:

The culture-heroes of our liberal bourgeois civilization are anti-liberal and anti-bourgeois; they are writers who are repetitive, obsessive, and impolite, who impress by force—not simply by their tone of personal authority and by their intellectual ardor, but by the sense of acute personal and intellectual extremity.²⁸⁷

Sontag's article on Weil, one of her cultural heroines, reveals crucial aspects from which one can deduct her understanding of what it takes to be genuine intellectual: anguish, passion and absolute dedication are essential. The following year, in 1964, she published her controversial signature essays "Against Interpretation" and "Notes on Camp."²⁸⁸ That she considered popular culture a legitimate topic of intellectual inquiry attracted the scorn of many older New York intellectuals. Unlike them, Sontag regularly showed up at student and anti-war protests. Her public stand and political convictions of the age resembled those of her friend, the West German Hans Magnus Enzensberger. As cosmopolitan leftist intellectuals, both cherished a deep-seated skepticism towards the political establishment, resented U.S. military intervention and cultural domination, and the Cold War status quo.

However, as an American, issues such as racism, the Civil Rights Movement and the role of the U.S. as the Western superpower weighed more heavily on Sontag. Philipp Gassert has pointed out the strong affinities between the West German and American

²⁸⁷ Sontag, "Simone Weil."

²⁸⁸ "Against Interpretation, (1964)," in *A Susan Sontag Reader*, ed. Susan Sontag (New York: Picador, 1982), 101. The famous closing line: "In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art." "Notes on camp, (1964)," *ibid.*, ed. Susan Sontag, 105- 19, quote 15.

student protest movements.²⁸⁹ Sontag and Enzensberger's friendship is a case in point. At a symposium in 1967, she denounced the U.S.:

Our main hope, and the chief restraint on American bellicosity and paranoia, lies in the fatigue and depoliticization of Western Europe, the lively fear of America and another world war in Russia and the East European countries, and the corruption and unreliability of our client states in the third world. It's hard to lead a holy war without allies. But America is just crazy enough to try to do it.²⁹⁰

Sontag's contempt for American power at the height of the Vietnam War radicalized into a form of self-hatred when she denounced the historical attempts of Jewish assimilation: "liberal intellectuals, like Jews, tend to have a classical theory of politics, [...] hoping that those in positions of authority may prove to be enlightened men, wielding power justly, they are natural, if cautious, allies of the 'establishment.'"²⁹¹ And she arrived at an apocalyptic and controversial conclusion:

If America *is* the culmination of Western white civilization, as everyone from the Left to the Right declares, then there must be something terribly wrong with Western white civilization. [...] The truth is that Mozart, [...] Shakespeare parliamentary democracy, baroque churches, Newton, the emancipation of women, Kant, Marx, Balanchine ballets, *et al.*, don't redeem what this particular civilization has wrought upon this world. The white race *is* the cancer of human history; it is the white race and it alone [...] which eradicates indigenous civilizations wherever it spreads, which has upset the ecological balance of the planet, which now threatens the very existence of life itself.²⁹²

In response to such declarations in which she exclusively charged the U.S. with warmongering, Sontag received an invitation from the North Vietnamese government. In the spring of 1968, she travelled to Hanoi. A year before Enzensberger had a comparable awakening in Cuba, Sontag returned home a changed woman: In her soul-searching report about a trip that had awoken her to the fact that her solidarity with the Vietnamese

²⁸⁹ Gassert, "Atlantic Alliances."

²⁹⁰ Susan Sontag, "What is happening to America? A Symposium," *Partisan Review* 34, no. 1 (1967): 57.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.* compare: Epstein, "The CIA and the Intellectuals."

²⁹² Sontag, "What is happening to America? A Symposium," 57-58.

people had rooted in her ideological opposition to the U.S., she declared in a more moderate tone in December: "It's my patriotism that makes me oppose my country's foreign policy; I want to preserve the honor of the country I cherish above all others."²⁹³

The experiences during her trip fundamentally challenged Sontag's political view. Comparable to Enzensberger's evolution, Sontag spent the following years searching for a new political home. In 1972, the *Sunday Times Magazine* had commissioned Leni Riefenstahl, the former producer of the Nazi propaganda films "Triumph of the Will" (1935) and "Olympia" (1936), to document the Olympic Games in Munich; the photographs appeared with the controversial title "Leni Riefenstahl's Second Olympics," which implied a controversial public rehabilitation of an unrepentant Riefenstahl who had never admitted to any wrongdoing as Hitler's favorite director.²⁹⁴ In 1974, when Leni Riefenstahl published *The Nuba of Kau*, a collection of exoticizing pictures of a warrior tribe in central Sudan, Sontag wrote a scathing analysis for the *New York Review of Books*, which concluded: "in fascist and communist politics [alike], the will is staged publicly, in the drama of the leader and the chorus."²⁹⁵

Sontag's review was one among many articles in the mid-1970s that debated the perseverance of fascist elements in contemporary culture, the fascist legacy, and historical studies of fascism. The fortieth anniversary of Hitler's rise to power in 1933 had sparked a surge in scholarly and fictional works about National Socialism as well as Italian Fascism.²⁹⁶ Whereas the *Review* had dedicated only one article to the Frankfurt

²⁹³ "Trip to Hanoi (*Esquire* (December 1968)), in *Styles of Radical Will* (New York: Farrer, Straus & Giroux, 1969), 273.

²⁹⁴ "Leni Riefenstahl's Second Olympics," *Sunday Times Magazine*, 1 October 1972.

²⁹⁵ Leni Riefenstahl, *The Last of the Nuba* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974). Susan Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism," *New York Review of Books* (1974).

²⁹⁶ Neil Ascherson, "Triumph of the Will," *ibid.* 21, no. 6 (1974). Hugh-Trevor Roper, "Bormann's Last Gasp," *ibid.*, no. 18; Geoffrey Barraclough, "Farewell to Hitler," *ibid.* 22, no. 5 (1975); Neil Ascherson,

Auschwitz Trials in the sixties, the change warrants attention.²⁹⁷ The trend went hand in hand with contributions about anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and the so-called 'Refuseniks', Jewish citizen who were denied the right to emigrate.²⁹⁸

Apart from its fierce opposition to the presidential pardon of Richard Nixon, the *Review* ignored Gerald Ford's short-lived presidency from 1975 to 1976. Instead, it pursued topics that had been close to the heart for longer: the Vietnam War, the economic crisis, and civil rights. But it also discovered the cause of Soviet dissidents, a novel phenomenon that Mary McCarthy first introduced with a historical review in 1972.²⁹⁹ Simultaneously, it sympathized with the Soviet poet Vladimir Bukovsky, who had been incarcerated in a psychiatric hospital, the isolated nuclear physicist Andrei Sakharov and the gulag chronicler Alexander Solzhenitsyn.³⁰⁰

The *Review's* interest had begun in 1971, when Robert Bernstein, the CEO of Random House, had travelled to Moscow as part of a delegation of the 'American Association of Publishers,' which was trying in vain to convince Soviet publishers to sign the Universal Copyright Convention. Deeply irritated by his experiences, Bernstein

"The Homecoming," review of "Spandau: The Secret Diaries," by Albert Speer, *ibid.* 23, no. 3 (1976); Robert Craft, "'Winnie' and 'Uncle Wolf,'" *ibid.*, no. 18; A.J.P. Taylor, "The Great Pretender," review of "Mussolini's Roman Empire," by Denis Mack Smith, *ibid.*; Stephen Spender, "Melancholic and Magic History," review of "History: A Novel," by Elsa Morante, *ibid.* 24, no. 7 (1977); Neil Ascherson, "Triumph of the Will," *ibid.* 21, no. 6 (1974).

²⁹⁷ A.J.P. Taylor, "Crimes Beyond Punishment," *ibid.* 8, no. 3 (1967).

²⁹⁸ E.g. Leonard Schapiro, "The Soviet Jews," *ibid.* 20, no. 12 (1973).

²⁹⁹ Mary McCarthy, "A Guide to Exiles, Expatriates, and Internal Emigrés," *ibid.* 18, no. 4 (1972).

³⁰⁰ I. F. Stone, "Betrayal by Psychiatry," *ibid.*, no. 2. Andrej Sakharov, "Why I Dissent," *ibid.* 21, no. 4 (1974). George F. Kennan, "Between Earth and Hell," review of Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation, Parts I and II, by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *ibid.* Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Peter B. Reddaway, "A Letter from Vladimir Bukovsky," *ibid.* 18 (1972). "Vladimir Bukovsky: An interview," *ibid.* (1977). Al Alvarez, "Bread and Kvass," review of "For the Good of the Cause" and "We Never Make Mistakes" by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *ibid.* 3, no. 3 (1964). Philip Rahv, "In Dubious Battle," review of August 1914 by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *ibid.* 19, no. 5 (1972). Jeri Laber describes how she came to realize Solzhenitsyn's questionable quest for the "spiritual Russia" and his deep-seated anti-Semitism: Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 55-65.

founded the International Freedom to Publish Committee in 1975.³⁰¹ Bernstein became personally invested in the case of Andrei Sakharov, who went on to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 1975 for his warnings of nuclear weapons.³⁰² Impressed by the outspokenness of critical thinkers in the USSR, several small activist groups, for example a branch of Amnesty International and the 'Chekhov Press', which published Soviet writers like Brodsky, sprang up in New York.³⁰³ The *Review* relied particularly on Bernstein's activism and, in subsequent years, support for critics of "totalitarian" regimes became a hallmark of the *New York Review of Books*.³⁰⁴

The seventies were a time of disorientation and insecurity that questioned the essence of the American way of life.³⁰⁵ In June 1975, two months after the fall of Saigon, in which the U.S. Army hastily evacuated the city fleeing from the rapidly advancing North Vietnamese, Susan Sontag claimed:

The Sixties made political life interesting again, restored its urgency. But awakening to the recklessness, cynicism, and ingenuity of power would mean understanding, finally, how long and difficult a task it is to effect real political change. The Seventies could be a more serious time of political education, with a growing and history-minded distrust of all slogans of historical optimism, a respect for the implacableness of cultural diversity, a lessening of affection for our own innocence, an awareness of the perils of self-righteousness – "liberal" virtues, all, but no less necessary if the anger that still burns in America is to have political meaning.³⁰⁶

³⁰¹ Robert Bernstein, "A Publisher Looks at Helsinki," *Index on Censorship* 6, no. 6 (November 1977).

³⁰² I.F. Stone, "The Sakharov Campaign," *New York Review of Books* 20, no. 16 (1973). Sakharov was put under house arrest in Gorky (today's Nizhny Novgorod). Bernstein was later instrumental in acquiring a temporary exit visa for Sakharov's wife, Elena Bonner, in 1986, to receive medical treatment in the U.S. See "Bonner attends New York dinner," *The New York Times*, 13 February 1986.

³⁰³ On Amnesty International's Riverside group, see Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 75-78.

³⁰⁴ Chomsky et al., "Protest." In December 1976, Bukovsky was released in exchange for a Chilean Communist leader. The *New York Review of Books* reprinted the first television interview when he arrived in the U.K. "Vladimir Bukovsky: An interview," *ibid.*(1977). Support for East European dissidents played a big role in the self-conception of the *Review* as the 'best-of' selection re-published on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary in 2013 affirms. Robert Silvers, ed. *The New York Review Abroad. Fifty years of international reportage* (New York: The New York Review of Books, 2013).

³⁰⁵ Christopher Lasch, "The Narcissist Society," *New York Review of Books* 23, no. 15 (1976).

³⁰⁶ Susan Sontag et al., "A Special Supplement: The Meaning of Vietnam," *ibid.*22, no. 10 (1975).

Representative for her circle, Sontag had woken from her past radicalism, which had failed to bring about real social change. In light of the news of a city abandoned and overrun, her erstwhile apologetics for the North Vietnamese appear outlandish and absurd. With hindsight, it is obvious that the intellectuals' fascination with the victims of American interventionism was more about themselves than about those affected. They took the moral high ground in carrying the banner of the unknown and far away victims of policies they opposed at home. By default, those that confronted or suffered from American interventionism abroad appeared to fight a just battle. But once the veneer of exoticism had worn off, the New Yorkers were still left searching for moral salvation and solutions for the problems at home. They could not identify with the romanticization of the Soviet Union the New Left articulated, which seemed to echo their own mistakes and misperceptions.

The *Review* took the opposite stand and protested the oppression of criticism in the Eastern bloc while still remaining deeply skeptical about American power. As Sontag's statement reflects, it sought to recreate *cultural* liberalism and *liberal* anti-Communism. Not only frustration with domestic politics but also the arrival of the Soviet poet Joseph Brodsky in New York City in 1972 illustrate this trend. Sontag and Brodsky became instant friends, and through him she and the circles around the *Review of Books* became attuned to the cause of the Soviet dissidents. David Rieff later remarked about his mother's relationship to the Soviet poet: "Brodsky's importance to her [...] cannot be overstated, whether aesthetically, politically, or humanly."³⁰⁷

³⁰⁷ David Rieff continues: "On her deathbed in Memorial Hospital in New York, [...] she spoke of only two people – her mother and Joseph Brodsky." Rieff, "Preface," xi-xii.

Then in November 1976, the Democratic candidate Jimmy Carter won the presidential elections. The appearance of Carter and the concomitant turn to a very different – Southern Baptist – type of ‘morality’ in politics caught the New Yorkers off guard.³⁰⁸ Perplexed by the new man in the White House, they soon recognized that Carter’s reassessment of foreign policies and the inclusion of human rights opened up new opportunities to substantiate their support for dissidents in the Soviet Union. In May 1977, Carter announced:

For too many years, we’ve been willing to adopt the flawed and erroneous principles and tactics of our adversaries, sometimes abandoning our own values for theirs. We’ve fought fire with fire, never thinking that fire is better quenched with water. This approach failed, with Vietnam the best example of its intellectual and moral poverty. But through failure we have now found our way back to our own principles and values, and we have regained our lost confidence.³⁰⁹

In August, Carter created the position of Assistant Secretary for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs in the State Department recognizing human rights as inherent to the U.S. agenda. In October 1977, the first Helsinki Review Conference opened in Belgrade. Only then did the New Yorkers recognize the potential of the Helsinki Final Act guaranteeing civic freedoms, human rights and exchanges between East and West, which passed unmentioned in the *New York Review of Books* in the summer of 1975, despite vocal opposition in the U.S. to President Gerald Ford’s signature on the document. In 1977, however, Robert Bernstein joined forces with Michael Scammel and the British *Index on Censorship*, which Scammel, the Columbia graduate and Russian

³⁰⁸ Garry Wills, "The Carter Question I: Love and Profit," *New York Review of Books* 23, no. 15 (1976); Elisabeth Hardwick, "The Carter Question II: Piety and Politics," *ibid.*, no. 13; Garry Wills, "Carter on His Own," *ibid.*, no. 19. George Wills, "Carter and the End of Liberalism," *ibid.* 28, no. 8 (1977).

³⁰⁹ Jimmy Carter, "Address at Commencement Exercises at the University of Notre Dame," (22 May 1977), <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/human-rights-and-foreign-policy/>.

translator, had founded in 1971.³¹⁰ Long-time friends, Bernstein and Scammel quickly put together information about violations of the Helsinki Final Act for the U.S. delegation. However, the first review conference disappointed many who had hoped to bring about change through rapprochement. The conference dragged on and closed almost inconclusively in March 1978.

Additionally, in the same year, the Institute for the Humanities at NYU was founded, which within a few years joined the efforts on behalf of East European dissidents. A sociology professor by the name of Richard Sennett aspired to revive New York's creative and intellectual potential, and re-connected with European, primarily German and French, intellectuals.³¹¹ Comparing the contemporary state of public culture with the Italian renaissance, his field of expertise, he believed urban culture and innovation in New York to be in a crisis.³¹² In 1976, he presented his ideas at a meeting in Bellagio at Lake Como in Italy, which friends and fellow scholars Carl Schorske, Clifford Geertz, Anthony Giddens, and Shmuel Avineri attended, too. Following their positive reactions, he gave a talk at NYU on "The Future of the Intellectual Community in New York City," which convinced the president of New York University, John Sawhill, to support his initiative.³¹³

In June 1977, after a series of dinner meetings, the Institute for the Humanities was formerly founded as a tax-exempt not-for-profit corporation affiliated with NYU.

Sennett explained its purpose:

³¹⁰ Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 174.

³¹¹ For a short biographical summary, see "Richard Sennett: Inner-city scholar," *The Guardian*, 3 February 2001.

³¹² Richard Sennett, *The Fall of the Public Man. On the Social Psychology of Capitalism* (New York: A. Knopf, 1977). A few years earlier, *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity & City Life* (New York A. Knopf, 1970).

³¹³ NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group 37.4, Series I: A Box 3, Folder 13: Ten Year Report.

Since the middle of the 19th century, New York has been the cultural center of the United States. The diversity of the city's culture has been its strength; New York is a center for artists, diplomats, publishers, journalists, college professors, and writers. But this diversity has created a problem. It is a problem of fragmentation. Diplomats and painters may live in the same city, yet find it hard to meet. Since the Second World War, university life in New York has become increasingly isolated from the arts and from the concerns of independent writers. A number of worlds, each intense and inward-turned, define the city's culture.³¹⁴

NYU president John Sawhill shared Sennett's concerns as well as his enthusiasm. The two managed to win the support of several influential New Yorkers from the political, legal, and academic establishment.³¹⁵ They received initial funds from National Endowment for the Humanities, Exxon Foundation and the Ford Foundation, while the university covered office space and operational costs.³¹⁶ The plan was to set up a community of permanent fellows who would independently organize seminars and lectures and select visiting and long-term fellows.³¹⁷

With the help of the Princeton historian Carl Schorske, Sennett recruited renowned personalities from among the city's publishers, scholars and writers. Roger Straus of Farrer, Straus & Giroux, the *New York Review's* editor Robert Silvers, and Thomas Bernstein, Robert Bernstein's son, joined the Institute's Board of Trustees.³¹⁸ Carl Schorske himself, the historian Thomas Bender, Susan Sontag and her son David

³¹⁴ Taken from a history of the NYUIH, written by Sennett for fundraising purposes. NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group 37.4, Box 1, Series I: A, Folder 13: NYUIH, Board of Trustees, Fund-raising 1979-1983.

³¹⁵ Among them was Bayless Manning, the former the Dean of Stanford Law School and first president of the 'Council on Foreign Relations,' Gerald Piel, founder of the magazine *Scientific Magazine*, and Daniel Rose, a prominent lawyer.

³¹⁶ Richard Sennett's memo to Dean Stuart, 7 April 1977, NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group 27.4, Series I: A, Box 2, Folder 29: Early correspondence 1977. For an update, see Toni Greenberg's memorandum, dated 15 February, 1978, to the Advisory Committee, NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group No. 37.4, Series No I:A, Box. No. 1, Folder 5 – Advisory Board 1978-79.

³¹⁷ See a copy of the by-laws in NYU Archive, NYUI, Group 37.4, Series I: A, Box 2, Folder: Board of Trustees – Meeting 1/15/1981. While originally funded by NYU's Humanities Council, the Ford Foundation sponsored the James and Gallatin Lectures directly with a \$50,000 grant for 1983-1985. See NYU Archive, "Annual Report 1982-83," NYUIH, Group 37.4, Series I: A, Box 2, Folder 14: Board of Trustees—Meeting 5/6/1983.

³¹⁸ NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group 37.4, Series I:B, Box No 7, Folder 21: Roger Straus.

Rieff, then editor at Random House, as well as Michael Scammel, the founder of the *Index on Censorship*, became the Institute's first fellows. Two famous Soviet exiles then living in New York, Joseph Brodsky and the economist and Nobel Prize laureate Vassily Leontieff, also joined. Members of the Academic Advisory Board were Schorske, the Princeton anthropologist Clifford Geertz, and the literary critic Elizabeth Hardwick, who had published the 1963 article that had inspired the foundation of the *New York Review of Books*.³¹⁹

To “counter the isolationist leaning of American culture in the wake of the Vietnam War” and to attract a public audience, Sennett convoked the James and Gallatin Lectures.³²⁰ In their first year, Sennett, enthralled with European, particularly French, culture, invited his personal friend Michel Foucault, Paul Ricœur, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, and a young Bernard-Henri Levy to speak on these monthly occasions.³²¹ For many of these French scholars, the lectures were a welcome yet unusual opportunity to present in front of an American audience.³²² Oftentimes the *New York Review of Books* ran corresponding articles, mutually reinforcing one another in their joint effort to reinvigorate and expand the city's intellectual culture. Robert Silvers' secretary remembered those times:

In the controlled chaos of an ordinary day, there was a sense that anyone and everyone might walk through the door and they did. A very young Bernard-

³¹⁹ Memorandum from Toni Greenberg to the Advisory Committee, 15 February 1978. NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group No. 37.4, Series no I:A, Box. No. 1, Folder 5, Advisory Board 1978-79.

³²⁰ NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group 37.4, Series I: A, Box 3; Folder 13—Ten Year Report.

³²¹ A list of the presenters, in NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group 37.4, Series I: A Box 3. Folder 13—Ten Year Report. *The Guardian* claims that Sennett had met Michel Foucault during earlier musical tours through Western Europe. "Richard Sennett: Inner-city scholar." See Toni Greenberg's memorandum, dated 15 February, 1978, to the Advisory Committee, NYU Archive, NYUIH, Box. No. 1, Group No. 37.4, Series no I:A, Folder 5 – Advisory Board 1978-79

³²² Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Thought in Twentieth-Century Europe*, 208-10.

Henri Levy, even then with an unbuttoned shirt and a beautiful girlfriend in a peasant skirt, Emma Rothschild, Joseph Brodsky, and [...] Susan Sontag.³²³

With the founding of the Institute for the Humanities, New Yorkers could combine their interest in European culture with their growing concern about human rights violations in Eastern Europe, which attacked what they considered the very essence of intellectual culture: freedom of thought and expression.

II.1.2. Marxist revisionism, Maoism and Moderation in Hungary

Like their counterparts in New York, a new generation of former radicals and critical thinkers in Budapest searched for a common goal and new identity. Despite the rebuke and dismissal following the Korčula protest against the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, Lukács' protégé György Márkus defied the attempt to silence him by holding weekly study meetings in his apartment.³²⁴ During these private seminars, manuscripts by banned writers – foreign and Hungarian – circulated.³²⁵ Studying at ELTE, often under Markús' guidance, was formative for the cohort that in the 1980s would form the Democratic Opposition. In 1973, Márkus and his students János Kis and György Bence circulated their study *Is a Critical Economy Actually Possible?*. It represented a decisive caesura: It did not only dismiss the foundations of real existing state socialism, but deconstructed the basic tenets of Marxism altogether.³²⁶

Separate from these developments, the Kádár regime was fighting its own woes. The crisis of 1968 had barely passed, when events in Poland again highlighted the

³²³ Shelley Wagner to The 50 years blog, special issue: 50 years on... 17 April 2013, <http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/50-years/2013/apr/17/shelley-wanger-it-was-1975/>.

³²⁴ Csizmadia, "Márkus György," 17.

³²⁵ Éva Karadi, interviewed by the author, 7 January, 2012, Budapest, Hungary. János Kis, interviewed by the author, 24 April 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

³²⁶ Officially, the study was not published until after the change of regimes. György Bence, János Kis, and György Márkus, *Hogyan lehetséges kritikai gazdaságtan?* (Budapest: T-Twins, 1993 (1973)). For Kis's recollections about the study's background and impact, see Csizmadia, "Kis János," 103-04.

structural shortcomings of the system. In December 1970, after Władysław Gomułka had ordered protests against recent price hikes to be suppressed violently, the Polish leader, who had come to power with Kádár in 1956, was removed from office. Simultaneously, Moscow's criticism of Hungary's New Economic Mechanism grew harsher. The tensions peaked in September 1971, when Kádár was to appear in front of the KGB chairman Yuri Andropov, the former Soviet advisor to Budapest during the revolution of 1956. In February 1972, Brezhnev invited Kádár to a "friendly chat."³²⁷ Under pressure, Kádár offered to resign, and although the offer was rejected Kádár was asked to rollback some of his reforms.³²⁸

When Lukács passed away in 1971, the regime no longer had any reason to go easy on its critics. In January 1973, a public smear campaign vilified Ágnes Heller, Ferenc Fehér, Márkus, Kis, Bence as well as a group of sociologists around the former prime minister András B. Hegedüs, then the head of the Academy of Science's Institute of Sociology.³²⁹ Presumably, the so-called *Überhaupt*-study, which Márkus had submitted a publishing house, had been one of the triggers.³³⁰ The scholars were offered the opportunity to defend themselves in front of party officials. They refused and demanded a public hearing instead.³³¹ The so-called 'Philosophers' Trial', which started in May 1973, intended to reassert the regime's authority over the rowdy scholars.³³² *The Times* explained:

³²⁷ Huszár, *Kádár*, 228-38. Gough, *A Good Comrade*, 178-84.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*; Révész, *Aczél és korunk*, 166.

³²⁹ Hegedüs had employed Ágnes Heller after she had lost her university post in 1968. Mária Márkus also worked under Hegedüs at the Institute and was likewise implicated. Dalos, *Archipel Gulasch*, 21-23.

³³⁰ Révész, *Aczél és korunk*, 199.

³³¹ János Kis, "Filozófusper a Kádár-rendszerből," *Ötvenentül* (2009).

³³² "Intellectual renegades" is the label Aczél used against the Lukács School. Révész, *Aczél és korunk*, 195-96.

‘I will take the pen out of their hands.’ With these words, reportedly spoken behind closed doors [...], Hungary’s leader Janos Kadar moved against the last group of independent scholars still active in the Soviet bloc and perhaps the most original theoreticians, philosophers and critics that there has been in any Communist country since the Stalinist period.³³³

The former Prime Minister András Hegedüs, the philosopher Mihály Vajda and János Kis were stripped off their party membership; Kis could no longer teach or publish. But in defiance of the verdict, the critical thinkers continued their weekly meetings and independent research trying to support their families with freelance work.

With the Lukács School formally silenced, the authorities also aspired to rid themselves of another unruly character. Only five months after the Philosophers’ Trial, a young writer by the name of Miklós Haraszti was put on trial for a critical report he had written about his work in a tractor factory in Budapest. Haraszti had long been known to the authorities: In 1964, the literary magazine *Új Írás* had published his defense of Che Guevara in form of a poem, “Che’s Mistakes”; the Cuban revolutionary had fallen from grace because of his very public criticism of the Soviet Union.³³⁴ Complicating matters, Haraszti’s parents were high-ranking party member. He had been born in Palestine in 1945, where his parents had taken refuge from the rise of fascism in Europe. They had returned to Hungary in 1948 to assist in the building of socialism. Their son, however, would grow up to be the regime’s “enfant terrible.”³³⁵

In 1968, Miklós Haraszti and his friend György Dalos, known for their Maoist convictions, founded the ‘Vietnam Solidarity Committee’. Since the Sino-Soviet split in 1961, Maoism was considered an unacceptable ideological infraction; organizing

³³³ A Special Correspondent, “How the Budapest School lost the power of the pen,” 27 July 1973, *The Times*. Newspaper clipping in HU OSA 300-40-1, Box 252.

³³⁴ Miklós Haraszti, “Che hibái,” *Új írás*, no. 12 (December 1964).

³³⁵ Zoltán Iván Denes, “Diákmozgalom Budapesten 1969-ben,” *Kétezer*, no. 7-8 (2008), <http://ketezer.hu/2008/07/diakmozgalom-budapest-1969-ben1/>.

independently from KISZ, the Communist Youth Movement, was also prohibited. The group demonstrated solidarity with the Vietnamese people by assisting Vietnamese immigrants in Hungary and holding ‘informational meetings.’³³⁶ To silence the two and other student members, the regime decided to set an example.³³⁷ The ‘Maoist Trial’ of 1968 highlights the fragmentation of the critical intelligentsia into various ideological camps and partly explains the delayed consolidation of an active opposition to the regime. Dalos admits that he had believed in “[overthrowing] the revisionist, bourgeois-bureaucratic system” in Hungary and in establishing a Maoist society.³³⁸ Haraszti held on to his preferred revolutionary Che Guevara, a likewise subversive commitment.³³⁹ Both defendants in the Maoist trial were put on probation for conspiring against the state. Haraszti was expelled from university and Dalos lost his job in the Workers’ Movement Museum.³⁴⁰

Originally, the Marxist revisionism of the “Lukács kindergarten,” the students of Lukács’ students, and the Maoism of the student splinter groups were incompatible.³⁴¹ In defiance of the authorities, Haraszti and Dalos started holding ‘reading sessions’ in their own apartments, about which – since Budapest is a small world – the circle of Kis and Bence quickly learned.³⁴² On 11 February 1971, Haraszti and Dalos were arrested again.

³³⁶ Éva Karadi, interviewed by the author, 7 January, 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

³³⁷ Denes, "Diákmozgalom Budapesten 1969-ben".

³³⁸ György Pór was the defendant in the Maoist trial of January 1968. He and two co-defendants were sentenced to two and a half years in prison. His citizenship was revoked, when he emigrated in 1975. Pór did not return to Hungary until 1988. Only recently have Hungarian scholars started investigating this topic. György Dalos, "Kommentár (Éhségstrájk anno 1971)," *Mozgó Világ* 26, no. 3 (2000), <http://epa.oszk.hu/01300/01326/00003/marciu3.htm>.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ For more about the 1969 Maoist student groups, its members and the proceedings against them, see Denes, "Diákmozgalom Budapesten 1969-ben".

³⁴¹ Éva Karadi, interviewed by the author, 7 January, 2012, Budapest, Hungary. János Kis, interviewed by the author, 24 April 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

³⁴² Sándor Szilágyi, "Dalos György," in *A Hétfői Szabadegyetem és a III/III. Interjúk, dokumentumok* (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 1999), 74. Éva Karadi, interviewed by the author, 7 January, 2012, Budapest,

Because of their continued subversive activities, they were sentenced to twenty-five days in an internment camp.³⁴³ In protest, Dalos and Haraszti declared they would go on a hunger strike until they would be released. On February 15, 1971, György Lukács, terminally ill, intervened on their behalf sending a two-page-letter to János Kádár. Although he disagreed with the defendants' Maoist leanings, he found the measures against them exaggerated. He pleaded for leniency, because as misguided as their ideological passions might be, a rebellious mind was the prerogative of the young, he argued.³⁴⁴

Since he did not receive a response within a few days, Lukács picked up the pen again. He had learnt from an "anonymous" source that eight days into their hunger strike Haraszti and Dalos had been taken to an internment camp. Lukács evoked Kádár's own experience as ÁVH prisoner in the 1950s and urged immediate action, signing off "with trust in your political morality and with comradely greetings."³⁴⁵ Two days later, Kádár composed a five-page-response. In a friendly tone, he corrected the philosopher's misleading assumptions. Lukács was wrong to draw parallels between his own, Kádár's case, which had represented a grave injustice, and Haraszti's and Dalos', which had attested to them violating the law. Since they refused to cooperate, the verdict should be

Hungary. János Kis, interviewed by the author, 24 April 2012, Budapest, Hungary. György Konrád, "Foreword (October 1986)," in *The Velvet Prison* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988).

³⁴³ The BM (Interior Ministry) built up a lengthy record full of denunciations and 'real' cases of obstruction; in Haraszti's case, it began in 1965 and in Dalos's in 1967 when he befriended the actual key person in the Vietnam Solidarity Committee, György Péter. Belügyminisztérium, "Jelentés," 29 January 1971. Dalos, personal archive, box: F.186, 'Politikai Archivum 1968-1973, (Haraszti)' (copy) Forschungsstelle Osteuropa, University of Bremen.

³⁴⁴ Letter by Lukács to Kádár, 15 February 1971. Dalos, personal archive, box: F.186, 'Politikai Archivum 1968-1973, (Haraszti)' (copy) Forschungsstelle Osteuropa, University of Bremen.

³⁴⁵ That source Lukács was referring to was Rimma, Dalos reveals, who had gone to see Lukács and ask for his help. Letter by Lukács to Kádár, not dated (indicates eight day of hunger strike; handwritten note (Kádár's?) states II.20.). Dalos, personal archive, box: F.186, 'Politikai Archivum 1968-1973, (Haraszti)' (copy) Forschungsstelle Osteuropa, University of Bremen.

upheld. Apart from that, Lukács's and the party's position were in fact compatible, Kádár surmised.³⁴⁶

The two imprisoned were unaware of such actions in their defense. As their health deteriorated, Dalos's wife Rimma and Haraszti's brother Péter were permitted to visit. Otherwise, they were denied books and consistent medical attention. The prison guards mocked what they perceived to be stubborn, pretentious, Budapest intellectuals – Jewish at that – who disturbed the prison routine.³⁴⁷ Close to collapse, on 8 March 1971, after 25 days, the two were reprimanded and released; they had served their sentence. They were transferred to a civilian hospital. Traumatized by the experience, Dalos appealed to the Interior Minister:

I do not ask for anything but to live the life of a law-abiding citizen and work and it is far from my intention, that I should continue further the status of opposition to the domestic organs. Now that I am slowly approaching the thirtieth year of my life, I would finally like to consolidate the relations around me, because it would be better, if I could focus all my energy on my freelance literary work, in the belief, with this service I can best serve my communist convictions.³⁴⁸

The surrender offered in the letter has remained without a documented response. Dalos withdrew for several years to recover a 'normal' life.³⁴⁹

Two months after their release, Haraszti's mother pleaded with the Interior Minister to end her son's surveillance.³⁵⁰ But the latter had resurfaced from prison with

³⁴⁶ János Kádár: "Tájékoztató a Politikai Bizottság tágjai részére," 24 February 1971. Dalos, personal archive, box: F.186, 'Politikai Archivum 1968-1973, (Haraszti)' (copy) Forschungsstelle Osteuropa, University of Bremen.

³⁴⁷ Almost thirty years later, after he had consulted the Lukács-Kádár correspondence in the Historical Archive, Dalos published his recollections about those days in February and March. Dalos, "Kommentár (Éhségstrájk anno 1971)".

³⁴⁸ Letter by Dalos to András Benkei, 8 March 1971. Dalos, personal archive, box: F.186, 'Politikai Archivum 1968-1973, (Haraszti)' (copy) Forschungsstelle Osteuropa, University of Bremen.

³⁴⁹ Szilágyi, "A Hétfői Szabadegyetem," 74.

³⁵⁰ Letter by Haraszti Józsefné to Comrade András Benkei, 8 May 1971. Dalos, personal archive, box: F.186, 'Politikai Archivum 1968-1973, (Haraszti)' (copy) Forschungsstelle Osteuropa, University of Bremen.

his rebellious attitude undiminished. He continued holding and attending private seminars, which had grown into popular social events in which a new generation of artists inspired by American happenings participated.³⁵¹ A dynamic underground culture was emerging.³⁵² Authorities struggled to put an end to it. With times changing, Aczél's control policies were becoming less and less effective.³⁵³

At one of those meetings, Haraszti met the sociologist György Konrád. Due to his short, though insignificant involvement in the Hungarian revolution in 1956, Konrád had struggled to find work and eventually ended up in the office for social services.³⁵⁴ He had written about his experiences during the home visits to the underprivileged and disadvantaged – often Roma families – in the novel *The Case Worker*, which the state publishing house Magvető published in 1969.³⁵⁵ The fact that such a critical account on poverty and inequality, theoretical impossibilities under socialism, could be published, illustrates the contradictions of the Hungarian system. Konrád shielded himself against potential critics by disguising the location of his semi-fictional account. Although any reader can easily guess that the “city in Central Europe” is Budapest, the text does not mention the Hungarian capital explicitly.

Hungary was not exempt from the worldwide crisis of 1973. The spike in oil prices in the wake of the Yom Kippur War in the Middle East also throttled the

³⁵¹ The earliest and most formative apartment seminar took place at Péter Donáth's home; these meetings ended in 1970. For more, see e.g. Sándor Szilágyi, "Kenedi János," in *A Hétfői Szabadegyetem és a III/III* (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 1999). Also see Imre Barna et al., eds., *A Napló, 1977-1982* (Budapest: Minerva, 1990), 5.

³⁵² For more, see Júlia Klaniczay and Edit Sasvári, eds., *Törvénytelen Avantgárd. Galántai György Balatonboglári Kápolnaműterme 1970-1973* (Budapest: Artpool-Balassi, 2003). For a historical assessment of the neo-avant-garde groups at the time, Hans Knoll, ed. *Die zweite Öffentlichkeit. Kunst in Ungarn im 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Philo, 1999). For Aczél's struggle with the rise of the neo-avant-garde and his own adversaries in the party leadership, see Révész, *Aczél és korunk*, 206-11.

³⁵³ *Aczél és korunk*, 200. Gough, *A Good Comrade*, 191-94.

³⁵⁴ From 1960 to 1965 he worked for the Hungarian Helikon Publishing House, editing classics like Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, and Balzac. Helga Balikó, "Életrajzi adatok," <http://konradgyorgy.hu>.

³⁵⁵ György Konrád, *A látogató* (Budapest: Magvető, 1969). *Der Besucher* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1969).

Hungarian economy as the Soviet Union was forced to adjust oil exports to the east European satellites. The renewed East-West tensions over the conflict and the worldwide economic slump cast a shadow on Hungary's economy and endangered Kádár's friendly relations with the West. Already the West had benevolently noticed the Hungarian leader's tight-rope walk; the West German Embassy in Budapest commented:

High-ranking Hungarian functionaries (a significant part of the Hungarian leadership has Jewish roots) has expressed in face to face conversations that 'personally' they sympathize with Israel and that they would deeply regret it getting caught up in the tensions between East and West.³⁵⁶

The crisis put further strain on the already tense relations between Moscow and Budapest and threatened Kádár's hold on power at home. Previously, Kádár had successfully defended Aczél against inner party *and* Moscow's opposition. As a former Zionist and a 'liberal', he was regarded with great suspicion.³⁵⁷ In return for a ten-year-loan from Moscow, which was meant to resolve Hungary's predicament of dramatically rising debt to the West, Aczél had to give up his post in the Central Committee, compensated with the post of deputy prime minister. However, the father of the Hungarian reform program Rezső Nyers had to go.³⁵⁸ Hungary's debt to the Soviet Union for raw material and oil imports skyrocketed, but at least Kádár could circumvent austerity measures and maintained Hungary's comparatively high living standards.³⁵⁹

The upcoming trial against Haraszti exemplifies the insecurities of the Hungarian regime in the year of crisis. Only a few months after the Philosophers' Trial of May 1973,

³⁵⁶ Encrypted telex from Budapest, No. 92, 5 June 1967, Political Archive, Foreign Office, B42 (Ref. IIA5) Osteuropa, Ostasien, 156.

³⁵⁷ Note that György Aczél had been a member of a leftist Zionist movement in the interwar period, and he was well aware of the anti-Semitic undertones coming from Moscow and particularly Poland in 1968. Révész, *Aczél és korunk*, 219-20

³⁵⁸ Within a few years, all of the main reformers, including Rezső Nyers, Lajos Fehér (agriculture), Jenő Fock (President of the Ministers' Council 1967-75) and György Aczél had had to vacate their decision-making positions. Révész, *Aczél és korunk*, 221. Huszár, *Kádár*, 239-45.

³⁵⁹ Gough, *A Good Comrade*, 192-94.

Haraszti was again charged with subversion. Since his release in 1971, he had been working at the Red Star Tractor Factory. The state publisher Magvető, led by the influential, rather liberal-minded director, György Kardos, had commissioned a report on the workplace, a common literary policy in the Eastern bloc.³⁶⁰ Close to Aczél, Kardos had some leeway in publishing controversial authors as he had already demonstrated with Konrád's *The Case Worker*. Haraszti's report was a devastating account of physical and mental exhaustion resulting from impossible quotas and a lack of solidarity between workers. He portrayed an inhumane work place reminiscent of early capitalism. Instead of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Haraszti's manuscript, *Piece-Rates*, testified to socialism's exploitation and disenfranchisement of workers.³⁶¹ It was a pivotal moment for Haraszti, who later described the findings:

[...] real exploitation takes place in communist countries, in the sense, that it happens without the workers' consent. Because in the West you could at least argue that workers have the possibility to approve of or disagree with their working conditions through unions. In Hungary, [...] the pressure of the living conditions forces you to accept the existing conditions.³⁶²

When Haraszti submitted it, Magvető – under the impression of the recent Philosophers' Trial – refused to publish it.³⁶³ Apparently, the publisher did not appreciate his newly discovered preference for social democratic mechanisms and Western-style labor representation. György Konrád was sitting in Haraszti's apartment, when the police stormed in to arrest the author.³⁶⁴

³⁶⁰ See for example the works by the GDR writer Brigitte Reimann, such as Brigitte Reimann, *Ankunft im Alltag* (Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1961).

³⁶¹ The original title of the book was simply *Darab-bér* [Piece-Rates]. Miklós Haraszti, *A Worker in a Worker's State: Piece-Rates in Hungary*, trans. Michael Wright (New York: Universe Books, 1975).

³⁶² Hans-Henning Paetzke, "Der Kádárismus ist kein Weg zur Demokratisierung.' Interview mit Miklós Haraszti," in *Andersdenkende in Ungarn* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 152.

³⁶³ Dalos, *Archipel Gulasch*, 28.

³⁶⁴ Konrád, "Foreword (October 1986)," xi.

The key to Haraszti's indictment in the trial that opened in October 1973 was the unauthorized distribution of copies of the manuscript. He was also charged with having planned to smuggle it abroad.³⁶⁵ The prosecution called thirteen fellow writers and sociologists into the witness stand, hoping the trial would silence the critical intelligentsia and put an end to the apartment seminars.³⁶⁶ Among the witnesses were András B. Hegedüs, the semi-tolerated writer Miklós Meszöly, György Konrád and his friend, the sociologist Iván Szelényi. Only months after their own trial, Heller, Fehér and Vajda as well as Lukács's former assistant István Eörsi attended the hearings, too. Contrary to the authorities' intention, all of the character witnesses confirmed the validity of Haraszti's report. Konrád even applauded *Piece-Rates* as one of the best sociographic studies in Hungary to date. His colleague, the sociologist Iván Szelényi rejected the prosecution's claim that *Piece-Rates* was 'subversive material': he found nothing unusual in Haraszti's report; earlier scholarly analyses had already ascertained the dismal conditions, he contended.³⁶⁷

Moreover, the trial has achieved legendary status because of the presence of three women: Júlia Rajk, Ilona Duczyńska, and Countess Károlyi took a seat in the upper gallery, as if presiding over the courtroom. Duczyńska was the widow of the world-famous economist Karl Polányi, Countess Károlyi the widow of Mihály Károlyi, the Hungarian prime minister in 1918, and Júlia the widow of the former Interior Minister László Rajk, who had been executed on trumped up charges in 1949.³⁶⁸ One of those

³⁶⁵ Authorities alleged Haraszti had wanted to smuggle it to Yugoslavia. Dalos, *Archipel Gulasch*, 28.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 29. Hans-Henning Paetzke, interviewed by the author, 24 November 2011, Budapest, Hungary.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁶⁸ Júlia Rajk and Countess Károlyi were not necessarily close friends, but on good terms. The latter helped Rajk convince her son to go to university *and* helped her to secure a study place at the University of Montreal for him. Pető, *Júlia Rajk*, 151.

presented during the hearings recalled: “The three were simply sitting there and rumor has it that the entire clique around Kádár was shaking. [...] The three were unquestioned moral authorities.”³⁶⁹ They were the survivors of past persecution, untouchable by the virtue of their biographies. Under their steady gaze, the regime’s attempt at dealing a decisive blow collapsed. Actually, it had the opposite effect as János Kis remembers: “A huge audience came together; among those attending, without exception, were all of those who in the second half of the seventies came to initiate the Hungarian opposition.”³⁷⁰ On January 8, 1974, Haraszti was sentenced to eight months on probation – not quite the intimidating verdict authorities had hoped for.

Only a few months after the conclusion of the trial, another scandal erupted. For four years, the sociologists György Konrád and Iván Szelényi had been working together in the Urban Construction and Planning Office. In 1969, they had published a critical study on Hungary’s development projects. To write their next study in 1974 about the rise of a new class of state bureaucrats, György Konrád and Iván Szelényi withdrew to a village north of Budapest, Csobánka, with which Konrád had been familiar since his days as social worker.³⁷¹ They used five different typewriters to confuse authorities in case the manuscript would be discovered prematurely. They hid copies of their work in four different places, one of them with the artist Tamás Szentjóbi. On 18 October 1974, Szentjóbi was arrested, and so were the authors four anxious days later. Their houses

³⁶⁹ Hans-Henning Paetzke, interviewed by the author, 24 November 2011, Budapest, Hungary. *Ibid.*, 152.

³⁷⁰ Csizmadia, "Kis János," 106.

³⁷¹ György Konrád, interviewed by the author, 24 July 2009, Hegymagas, Hungary.

were searched.³⁷² During the following interrogations, Konrád insisted on the scholarly character, the sound empirical sociological research of their work.³⁷³

Contrary to the botched Haraszi trial less than a year before, the authorities proposed a deal: if they wanted to avoid criminal charges, Konrád and Szelényi were free to emigrate. The compromise represents the Hungarian version of the Soviets' more ruthless handling of the Nobel Prize laureate Alexander Solzhenitsyn. The idea was not without its charm because like Solzhenitsyn Konrád had already established a reputation in the West. He would not be left stranded. The West German publishing house Luchterhand had published his first novel, *The Case Worker*, and was preparing the publication of *The City Founder*, Konrád's fictional elaboration of the 1969 urban planning study he had written with Szelényi. Konrád believes that the Munich-based publishing house was interested in his novels, because it associated them with György Lukács and the Lukács School, who it also brought out.³⁷⁴

During the volatile weeks following their seven-day-detention, dozens of friends, family members and colleagues were summoned for questioning to demonstrate the seriousness of the case. Szelényi and Konrád were weighing their options as rumors surfaced that they might have to face a bigger trial than Haraszi's.³⁷⁵ Worried about the repercussions for loved ones, Konrád revealed the location of the presumably last

³⁷² The search warrant in: "Legfőbb ügyészség: Határozat," Politikai osztály, Belügyminisztérium, R. 15.000/166/1974, copy of Történelmi Hivatal, p. 119, in: Konrád, personal archive, Akademie der Künste Berlin-Brandenburg.

³⁷³ "Jegyzőkönyv: Konrád György gyanúsított kihallgatásáról," Budapest, 1974. Október 23, Belügyminisztérium, 34-Bü 317/25/1974, Történelmi Hivatal, p. 90, in: Konrád, personal archive, Akademie der Künste Berlin-Brandenburg.

³⁷⁴ György Konrád, interviewed by the author, 24 July 2009, Hegymagas, Hungary. György Konrád, *Der Stadtgründer* (Munich: List, 1975).

³⁷⁵ Dalos, *Archipel Gulasch*, 33.

existing manuscript.³⁷⁶ Whereas Konrád took his time, Szelényi agreed to leave. He departed to teach in the U.K., and then immigrated to Australia in 1976.

In response to the arrest, a number of intellectuals around Konrád considered going into exile collectively. But the idea was dismissed as Konrád decided to stay in Hungary. The investigating officers were flustered: allegedly, no one had even thought this could happen. György Aczél stepped in and offered Konrád a deal: He could stay and continue working – but he advised the writer to show some common sense and lay low. Magvető then published *The City Founder*, which was already available in West Germany, but in the Hungarian version unacceptable sections had been removed. The Budapest underground turned to a simple, yet ingenious trick: it printed the censored excerpts on snippets so they could be added where they had been censored.³⁷⁷

Meanwhile, János Kis and György Bence, although they were struggling to make ends meet continued to revise their philosophical foundations.³⁷⁸ The trial in 1973 had had a tremendous impact on their worldview, as Kis explained:

The fact that we were dismissed from our jobs for political reasons, that was an experience you could feel that [...] your right was being violated – even though that right was not written in the law books! People had a very strong sense that it is morally unacceptable.³⁷⁹

Previously, Kis had not given much thought to individual rights. But between 1973 and 1975, he discovered the American Civil Rights Movement, which allowed him to re-assess his own situation. The struggle of blacks in the U.S. taught Kis “the

³⁷⁶ Although officials promised impunity for those involved, this was “a step that Konrád regrets until this day,” György Dalos explained later. After the change of regimes in 1989, anti-Semites resurrected that story as alleged proof of Konrád’s collaboration with the socialist regime. “György Konrád und seine Akten,” *Berliner Zeitung*, 9 August 2001.

³⁷⁷ György Dalos, interviewed by the author, 9 June 2009, Berlin, Germany.

³⁷⁸ Csizmadia, “Kis János,” 106.

³⁷⁹ János Kis, interviewed by the author, 24 April 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

conceptual tools to make sense of the feeling that [...] I did possess [individual rights].”³⁸⁰

II.2. Arriving in the West: Hungary’s Critical Thinkers Abroad

II.2.1. Two Hungaries: The Happy Barrack and the Critics

With the Hungarian thinkers re-assessing their ideological priorities in Budapest, in West Germany Hans Magnus Enzensberger’s worldview also underwent a makeover. Eager to draw his lessons from the ‘Revolution tourists’ he had criticized so harshly in the *Kursbuch* no. 30 of 1972, Enzensberger turned his attention away from Latin America and closer to home to Eastern Europe. Shortly before Dalos and Haraszti’s arrest the year before, Enzensberger had met Dalos at an international convention of translators.³⁸¹ For Dalos, Enzensberger – the student leader and radical critic – was a role model: “Back then his cultural critical essays appeared to offer me the chance to free myself from the rotting clichés of Soviet Marxism.” He was jubilant that Enzensberger would consider some of his work for publication in the *Kursbuch*.³⁸²

In the fall of 1972, with the travel ban to fraternal socialist states lifted, Dalos visited friends in East Berlin. Once there, he benefitted from the divided city’s recently liberalized travel regime.³⁸³ At the Friedrichstraße train station, Berlin’s main transit point between East and West, he met up with Hans Magnus Enzensberger and handed

³⁸⁰ Kis emphasizes Richard A. Wasserstrom’s influence on his thinking. János Kis, "10 x 10," *I-CON* 8, no. 3 (2010): 456. Richard A. Wasserstrom, "Rights, human rights, and racial discrimination," *Journal of Philosophy* 61, no. 20 (1964).

³⁸¹ For details, Dalos, "on Berlin nach Berlin und zurück," 232.

³⁸² "Meine deutsche Frage. Überlegungen zu einem Jahrestag," *Transit* 1(Fall 1990). Also György Dalos, interviewed by the author, 9 June 2009, Berlin, Germany.

³⁸³ As part of Willy Brandt’s Neue Ostpolitik, the Allies and the two German states signed the so-called ‘Viermächte-Abkommen,’ which regulated the status of West Berlin and eased transit travel through the GDR to the insular city. The agreement came into effect on June 2, 1972.

him his latest poems, which Enzensberger then placed in a special issue of the *Kursbuch*. Dalos also claims that Haraszti owed the German publication of *Piece-Rates* to Enzensberger. Supposedly, Suhrkamp had rejected the manuscript, because Unseld and the editors did not want to jeopardize their cooperation with the Hungarian state publishers.³⁸⁴ However, it is also possible that Unseld did not think the author's revolutionary zeal would fit into Suhrkamp's program. Already in 1970, he had given up *Kursbuch*, which the Rotbuch publishing house took over in 1973. The latter also accepted Enzensberger's proposal to publish Haraszti's manuscript.³⁸⁵

Rotbuch was a brand-new publishing house, which a few editors had founded in 1973, after they had split from Klaus Wagenbach, who had founded his own publishing house in 1964 to give a voice to radical leftist ideas and represent the APO, the extra parliamentary opposition. Wagenbach, an expert on Franz Kafka, had received support from some members of the Group 47, such as its founder Hans-Werner Richter and Günter Grass. In 1970, he had taken over the *Kursbuch*. In 1973, some of his employees founded Rotbuch, West Germany's first and only collectively held publishing house.³⁸⁶ Since Klaus Wagenbach had been banned from East Germany for his support of the controversial singer Wolfgang Biermann, Rotbuch specialized in publishing unknown East German and East European writers, many of whom would become popular years later.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁴ György Dalos, interviewed by author, 9 June 2009, Berlin, Germany.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ For the contemporary reports, see "Wagenbach. Orte der Zufälle," *Der Spiegel*, no. 13 (1965). Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Dichter mit trockener Hand. Hans Magnus Enzensberger über: Tintenfisch 3," *ibid.*, no. 37 (1970).

³⁸⁷ Rotbuch authors are among others the Romanian-German Herta Müller and the East Germans Thomas Brasch, Sascha Anderson, Kurt Bartsch, and Heiner Müller. See the official history on <http://www.rotbuch.de/ueber-uns-3.html>.

Dalos remembers that Enzensberger had asked him for suggestion about who should write the foreword for *Piece-Rates*. Reaching for the stars, Dalos proposed Heinrich Böll, who was known for his solidarity with repressed writers and had just been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in October 1972. Dalos was stunned when Böll agreed and in 1975 *Piece-Rates* appeared with his foreword.³⁸⁸ An excerpt from the book appeared in the weekly *Die Zeit*, and parts were read out on radio stations like Deutschlandfunk, NDR and WDR. Big newspapers, like the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Frankfurter Rundschau*, printed positive reviews. To convey the book's content and significance to an audience probably unfamiliar with Hungary, many German reviewers compared it to the maverick investigative journalist Günter Wallraff, whose revelations of exploitation and labor law violations in German industries had recently stirred controversies.³⁸⁹ The French newspaper *Le Monde* and the British *The Guardian* also ran laudable critiques. As a result, *Piece-Rates* made it into several lists of top-ranked book recommendations among authors like Vladimir Nabokov, Franz Kafka and Thomas Mann.³⁹⁰ All the articles emphasized the uniqueness of Haraszti's report, an indictment of workers' exploitation in state socialism. Scandalized, they pointed to Haraszti's trial as an obvious case of political persecution. Feelings of injustice and empathy, but also a sense of exoticism and adventure emanated from the media response.

³⁸⁸ Heinrich Böll, "Vorwort," in *Miklós Haraszti, Stücklohn* (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1975); "Der gute Deutsche," *Der Spiegel*, no. 44 (1972).

³⁸⁹ For example: Günther Wallraff, *13 unerwünschte Reportagen* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1969). "Werkschutz. Jawohl, hammse," *Der Spiegel*, no. 6 (1975). "Am Tag der Menschenrechte. SPIEGEL-Reporter Gerhard Mauz zur Verurteilung von Günter Wallraff in Köln," *Der Spiegel*, no. 51 (1975).

³⁹⁰ "Bericht aus der Fabrik 'Roter Stern.' Das in Ungarn umstrittene Buch eines Philosophiestudenten," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 22 May 1975. "Eine authentische Fabrikreportage aus einem sozialistisch geführten Staat. Verbotene Kritik. Miklós Haraszti's systemkritisches Buch 'Stücklohn' erschien erstmals im Westen," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 1 March 1975. "Miklós Haraszti. Buchbesprechung," (Deutschlandfunk, 10 April 1975). "Miklós Haraszti," (NDR, 22 March 1975). "Un témoignage impitoyable sur la vie des ouvriers dans une usine hongroise," *Le Monde*, 12 August 1976. "About the workers," *The Guardian*, 29 September 1977. Transcripts and clippings in Institut für Buchwissenschaften, Folder: Rotbuch Presse 1975-1991 (12) – 130 Haraszti.

Rotbuch went to great lengths to provide for its two Hungarian authors. By February 1975, it had presented the manuscript to 25 foreign publishing houses; in Paris it was negotiating with the renowned publishing house Du Seuil. One of Rotbuch's editors told the French translator that they had asked Jean-Paul Sartre to write the foreword.³⁹¹ However, the Rotbuch staff could not communicate with Haraszti directly, convinced he would not receive their mail – or he would get into even more trouble. His brother Péter, who had immigrated to Stockholm, served as liaison.³⁹²

Dalos, too, became a Rotbuch author. Enzensberger worked on the translation into German with Thomas Brasch, a Rotbuch author, who still lived in East Berlin (he would emigrate in 1979 to become a PEN member and award-winning author in West Germany). Again, the Friedrichstraße train station served as exchange point.³⁹³ Contrary to the media attention for Haraszti's debut, the mainstream media were silent about Dalos. Only leftist newspapers reviewed Dalos' cynical poems and anecdotal stories. Although Dalos and his Rotbuch editors exchanged cordial correspondence regularly, his success in West Germany stalled. The reason was probably not only his cynical style and choice of subject matter, but also his unbroken leftist convictions and most likely also his very close connections with the opposition in East Germany. Until today, Dalos is considered the most leftist among the former Hungarian opposition. Enzensberger, on the other hand, had this to say when in 1980 a long argument ensued with Brasch over the shares of royalties. Enzensberger resolved to pay Brasch DM 2.500-3.000 to “shut him

³⁹¹ Letters from 20 January 1975 and from 11 February 1975, from Rotbuch editor Ingrid Karsunke to the French translator Danielle Jaeggi. Institut für Buchwissenschaften, Mainz, Folder: Autorenkorrespondenz 1975-1991 [Leitz, grey] – archived under “H.”

³⁹² See for instance Péter's letter from February 11, 1975, to Mrs Karsunke. Institut für Buchwissenschaften, Mainz, Folder: Autorenkorrespondenz 1975-1991 [Leitz, grey] – archived under “H.”

³⁹³ See Marlies Janz letter to Hans Magnus Enzensberger on June 7, 1979. Institut für Buchwissenschaften, Mainz, Folder: Falken Archivmappe – Dalos. Meine Lage in der Lage I. Rotbuch.

up.” “No leftists,” he growled, “will ever understand that it doesn’t mean anything if a publishing house has half a million in assets.”³⁹⁴

In Hungary, the ideological moderation is reflected in the integration of the students of the sociologist István Kemény and the ‘bourgeois’ editor Ferenc Kőszeg. Kemény, also a participant in 1956 who had been imprisoned until 1959, had worked at the Sociology Institute since 1969. Other Fifty-Sixers, for example Miklós Vásárhelyi and György Litván, likewise found employment at the Academy of Sciences’ research institutes in those years. Kemény had lead pioneering research into social equality and the situation of Hungarian workers and the Roma.

When Kemény began investigating the ‘second economy’, he faced opposition. The second economy represented the backbone of Hungary’s ‘goulash communism’: the regime permitted small-scale private enterprises and production. Many Hungarians ended up working two jobs, one during the day and another after work hours. ‘Surplus’ was allowed to be sold and profits kept. For many, this was a source of much needed additional income. For the regime, the second economy compensated for shortages of the planned economy; however, given its inherent contradictions with socialist ideology, the topic was off limits. In 1972, Kemény lost his position at the Sociology Institute, but he found collaborators at the Historical Institute. But even there, he could not publish his study on *Hungarian Workers*, not even under pseudonym. Given the compatibility of their interests, Kemény and his students, for example Ottilia Solt, befriended the circles around Kis and Bence. Banned from research and publishing, Kemény eventually

³⁹⁴ See the correspondence from August 28, 1979 to June 16, 1980 in Institut für Buchwissenschaften, Mainz, Folder: Falken Archivmappe – Dalos. Meine Lage in der Lage I. Rotbuch.

immigrated to France in 1977, while his students became integral to the new opposition.³⁹⁵

With the exception of János Kenedi, the non-conformists approached Ferenc Kőszeg rather hesitantly. Kőszeg, who is a few years older than the Lukács kindergarten, had been an editor at the Európa publishing house. He had frequented the Café Hungaria, today's New York Café, one of Budapest's remaining fin-de-siècle coffee houses. One day, presumably in the mid-sixties, he had noticed a fiery debater who did not shy away from arguing with strangers about politics and history.³⁹⁶ Kenedi and Kőszeg, despite the age difference of eight years, became instant friends. After Kenedi was fired from the state publisher Magvető in 1970, he asked Kőszeg whether he and a friend could rent out the unused maid's room in the back of Kőszeg's nineteenth-century apartment. Although puzzled, Kőszeg agreed:

I did not want to question him too much. That's how I first met and then became good friends with György Bence. I had already heard about him. I knew he was a key figure in the critical intelligentsia and that he was a Marxist. Our first conversation was very cautious, neither one wanted to offend the value system of the other [...]. Bence was somehow a leader – I do not want to say 'Führer' [laughs] – of this group. [...] I was older, I did not belong to these Marxist circles, [...] and they were not [...] familiar with the bourgeois intelligentsia [to which I belonged].³⁹⁷

Bence and János Kis put the last nail in the coffin of Marxist revisionism, when in 1975 they finished the study *The Soviet-type Society through Marxist Eyes* using the

³⁹⁵ Kemény was amnestied in May 1959, despite a four-year-sentence. Only in 1962 was he hired as librarian at the Szechenyi Library. In 1969, he started working at the Sociology Institute. Other Fifty-Sixers like Vásárhelyi, Litván, and Szabó were also reintegrated as researchers at the same time, he explains. Ervin Csizmadia, "Kemény István," in *A Magyar Demokratikus Ellenzék (1968-1988). Interjúk* (Budapest: T-Twins, 1995), 27-30. "Kis János," *ibid.*, 109.

³⁹⁶ Ferenc Kőszeg, interviewed by the author, 19 April, 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

³⁹⁷ The interview was in German. Kőszeg used the word 'Leiter' in German instead of 'Führer.' At the time, Kenedi was married to Mária Papp; however, they divorced in 1970 and Papp and Bence got married. Kőszeg still laughs about the arrangement that – in today's terms – appeared more like a bromance to him than a love story between a man and a woman. Ferenc Kőszeg, interviewed by the author, 19 April, 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

pseudonym Marc Rákosi.³⁹⁸ They argued that Marxism's theoretical framework could not grasp the reality of state socialism. Neither the system nor the ideology was viable. Eva Karadi recalls the combined impact of the studies by Haraszti, Konrád and Szelényi and Kis and Bence:

The problem had really been the ideology, the vocabulary – at least for this branch of the opposition, which grew out of the circle of philosophy students. Like the Baron Münchhausen, we had to pull ourselves out of this Marxist ideology and terminology and to find our own interests and subject matters.³⁹⁹

While the non-conformists in Budapest were bidding farewell to their ideological origins, the Cold War entered a new state. Arms negotiations between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. had initiated a phase of *détente*, an easing of Cold War tension, which culminated in the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe in the Finnish capital in August 1975. János Kádár, who had been instrumental in the preparation of the meeting, travelled to Helsinki.

In preceding years, Kádár had become a favorite among several West European Social Democrats, most prominently the West German Willy Brandt and the Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, who had pursued a relaxation of East-West relations from their side of the Iron Curtain. At the end of the conference, he gave an agreeable and appreciative closing speech about the significance of the Helsinki Accords. Walking a tightrope between Moscow and the West, Kádár corroborated his reputation as a genuine “Mitteleuropa Man” among Western statesmen.⁴⁰⁰ Ferenc Kőszeg recalled that the Hungarian media “made a huge deal out of Kádár’s speech and that he talked about the

³⁹⁸ Csizmadia, “Kis János,” 107. It was published as *tamizdat* in Paris for the first time in 1983. Marc Rakovski, *A szovjet típusú társadalom marxista szemmel (György Bence and János Kis)* (Paris: Magyar Füzetek Könyvei, 1983).

³⁹⁹ Éva Karadi, interviewed by the author, 7 January, 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

⁴⁰⁰ Gough, *A Good Comrade*, 195-205. Miklóssy, “The Helsinki Process from Small States’ Perspective: Cold War Strategies of Hungary and Romania in Comparison,” 501-02.

situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania. [...] Yet, it did not say a word about Basket III [which opened up exchanges in science, technology and culture].”⁴⁰¹

Hungary’s critical thinkers criticized the Helsinki Accords for cementing the status quo.⁴⁰² According to them, the agreement legitimated the socialist regimes, retroactively sanctioned the Iron Curtain, and confirmed the artificial division of Europe into a presumably civilized West and a backward East. Although decisions leading to the divide and Soviet dominance in the East had already been made earlier at the Tehran Conference of November 1943 and the Moscow Conference of 1944, the dissidents coined the term ‘Yalta Europe’ referring to the conference at Yalta in February 1945 to protest the Allied powers’ arbitrary settlement of border issues at the end of World War II. Contrary to their initial reservation, the Final Act actually resulted in significant improvements in their lives: It extended the protection that contact with the West, for instance with publishing houses like Rotbuch and Suhrkamp provided.⁴⁰³ Since the Hungarian writers also abandoned their attacks on existing socialism from the far left and approached a moderate ideological equilibrium in the mid-1970s, they became more palatable to a Western audience.

As a result of détente, Hungarian authorities devised a new strategy in dealing with its critics: Instead of persecuting and incarcerating them, which would damage the regime’s reputation in the West and potentially jeopardize desperately needed loans and imports, the Kádár regime began exporting its opponents, making “out of sight, out of mind” its new policy. With his surprise decision in 1974 to stay in Hungary, Konrád had represented a dilemma. To rid themselves off the critic, authorities allowed him to travel

⁴⁰¹ Ferenc Kőszeg, interviewed by the author, 19 April, 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

⁴⁰² This interpretation of Helsinki persisted for years, see e.g. Konrád, *Antipolitik*, 13.

⁴⁰³ György Dalos, interviewed by author, 9 June 2009, Berlin, Germany.

abroad. In 1976, he received a ten-month-fellowship from the prestigious DAAD artist-in-residence program in West Berlin. Two years later, in 1978, Miklós Haraszti received the same fellowship.

The DAAD, the West German Academic Foreign Exchange Service, the largest government-funded source for fellowships, offered a very accommodating program. Every year, at least one Hungarian could stay in West Berlin thanks to this fellowship, which included a stipend, a family-size apartment, materials and tools, studio and exhibition space, even daycare, if needed. Looking at the selected fellows, it becomes clear that since the 1970s the DAAD has hosted about every prominent Hungarian novelist, poet, visual artist and playwright that became or was a member of the Democratic Opposition. The program was intended as a space for creativity and safe haven; guests enjoyed absolute freedom, as they were not under any obligation to 'produce' tangible results. Barbara Richter, the long time director of the program's literary segment, emphasized the only condition: artists had to return to their home countries at the end of the fellowship. Otherwise the DAAD would risk upsetting authorities and jeopardize opportunities for future grantees.⁴⁰⁴ The fellowship did not represent an exit pass, but by making the artists better known abroad, Richter hoped Western recognition would create a sort of protection. However, as idealistic as the program's mission of supporting artists from repressive regimes sounds, one should note that the DAAD tends not to select up and coming artists, but rather established stars

⁴⁰⁴ Author's interview with Barbara Richter, 18 May 2008, [Café Montevideo] Berlin. Richter passed away in May 2010. To illustrate the point, here a selection: 1974 Miklós Meszöly, 1977 György Konrád, István Szabo (film director), 1978 Miklós Haraszti, Endre Tot (artist), 1980 Péter Esterházy, György Jovánovics (artist), 1982 Péter Nádas, 1982 Gábor Bódy (film director), 1983 István Eörsi, László Béke (art historian), 1984 György Dalos, 1986 György Petri, 1988 György Galantai, (simultaneous with: Susan Sontag), László Földenyi (art historian). Contrary to Richter's claim, the 'must return' policy did not apply at least to Dalos. He was appointed to the Forschungsstelle Osteuropa at the University of Bremen in 1985 following his DAAD fellowship.

already known in the West. For that reason, a publishing house like Rotbuch, which did pioneering work, was crucial. It allowed the Hungarians to get a foot in the door.

The case of György Dalos proves the DAAD's selection criteria of established over marginal artists. Often, the DAAD's choice was based on word of mouth. So György Konrád encouraged Dalos to apply to the West Berlin program, too. But despite Konrád's endorsement, nothing came of it. Less known abroad, it was thus easier to harass Dalos at home. In 1979, the Rotbuch team grew very concerned, when Dalos did not arrive in East Berlin for Christmas break as planned.⁴⁰⁵ For two days, they did not hear from him, until he eventually called them. At the East Berlin airport, Dalos had been detained and returned to Budapest, separated from an accompanying friend who passed through the security controls without any complications. The East German authorities had barred him from entry and henceforth considered him an 'undesirable person'. Dalos would not be allowed to return to East Germany until 1990. He suspects that the GDR authorities had wanted to put an end to his regular visits to his friends in the East German opposition; they feared fraternization between the opposition movements in the East more than Western contacts. During a previous visit to East Berlin in September 1979, Dalos had met with oppositionist writers Klaus Schlesinger, Klaus Bartsch, Dieter Schubert and Heiner Müller. His Stasi files later revealed that these meetings had been the cause for his ban.⁴⁰⁶ A few weeks after this setback, Dalos received a travel permit for

⁴⁰⁵ He had discussed his plans on the phone with Uta Ruge on 28 November 1979. During the conversation, Ruge cautiously inquired whether a radio journalist could visit and interview Dalos not mentioning the name of the reporter. Dalos did not object, "the future holds whether it will have been good for him." See Institut für Buchwissenschaften, Mainz, Uta Ruge, "Gesprächsprotokoll vom Telefongespräch mit Dalos vom 28.11. 79," Folder: Autorenkorrespondenz 1975-1991 [Leitz, grey] – archived under "D."

⁴⁰⁶ Dalos, "on Berlin nach Berlin und zurück."

Vienna: “[My] kind, dear, beautiful & slender and gifted government has given me the green light. In short: furlough, re-socialization part II,” he commented.⁴⁰⁷

Apart from the joking, Dalos’ situation remained precarious. In 1982, he actually refrained from “Westkontakte,” contact with the West. Dalos had thought he might be able to place a manuscript with the state publishing house Magvető, and he had not wanted to jeopardize this chance. But his caution was unwarranted; the book did not go into print. Moreover, three years had passed since his initial application, and Dalos was still waiting for “this damned DAAD fellowship” as he put it, which would mean a considerable improvement to his family’s living conditions and hopefully offer protections like it had for Konrád and Haraszti.⁴⁰⁸ The delay can probably be explained by the fact that until today Dalos is considered the most leftist among the Hungarian writers; he had been close to the East German opposition, which was arguably the “most socialist” in Eastern Europe.

Whereas Dalos waited until 1984 for a DAAD fellowship, György Konrád made good use of the DAAD’s vast network and the opportunities a stay in West Berlin offered. While in West Berlin in 1976, he gave an interview to the weekly *Die Zeit*.⁴⁰⁹ He described his stay as forced but useless “quarantine.” He would not succumb to the regime’s intimidation tactics and continue writing what he wanted. Konrád only vigorously objected to the label ‘dissident’: “One does not become a dissident by choice; one is rather made a dissident – along the lines of Sartre: the Jew is determined by anti-

⁴⁰⁷ Letter from György Dalos to Marlies Janz, 24 March 1980, Institut für Buchwissenschaften, Mainz, Folder: Autorenkorrespondenz 1975-1991 [Leitz, grey] – archived under “D.”

⁴⁰⁸ See letter from Dalos to Gabrielle Dietze, 19 October 1982. Institut für Buchwissenschaften, Mainz, Folder: Dalos – Meine Lage [roter Hängeordner].

⁴⁰⁹ “Dissident ist ein unpassender Begriff. Ein Gespräch mit dem ungarischen Schriftsteller György Konrad,” *Die Zeit*, 9 January 1976.

Semitism.” Western observers as well as East European authorities used the label in a way that suggested a monolithic society as well as an isolated minority dissenting from it. Konrád however envisioned his role as integral to society, a necessary corrective to social injustices and a check on the powers that be; thus, he preferred the term ‘opposition’.⁴¹⁰

In these years, the existence and intentions of the Hungarian non-conformists still had to be explained in relation to actors, developments or movements better known among Western readers. Instead of Jean-Paul Sartre, he could have referenced Theodor Herzl who in *Altneuland* in 1902 made the same observation, but he opted against a Zionist interpretation and chose to ‘Westernize’ his argument. The ‘Hungarian opposition’ or the ‘Hungarian dissidents’ were not yet self-explanatory terms. One comparison with which they often struggled was the frequent comparison with the New Left. Radio Free Europe for example suggested that the Hungarians were “an Eastern version of what is called New Leftism” arguing that “Hungarian officials have attached the same label to it, and the group’s members have not protested.”⁴¹¹

Konrád remained ambivalent on the topic of his ideological home: he thought that *The City-Builder* would actually be an embarrassment to East European authorities as well as the West European New Left. However, the comparison persisted, largely because Western observers were still unfamiliar with the new opposition and struggled with placing it in the political landscape of the Cold War. Journalists opted for labels that were readily comprehensible to their Western readers. Konrád pursued the same strategy when he referenced Sartre, which also allowed him to demonstrate that he was familiar with and actually belonged to the *Western* discourse.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ RFE, Background report 107, “A Nonconformist Hungarian Novel Present the Vision of a Humane Socialism,” (May 14, 1976). HU OSA 36-1-90.

II.2.2. The Beginning of a New Opposition in the East

The first major disruption after the Prague Spring that restored the belief in popular, bottom up protests and caught Western attention took place in Poland in June 1976. When the Polish government announced price hikes for basic foodstuffs without raising salaries, street protests erupted. The authorities had foreseen such a reaction and quickly moved to suppress it. What they had not foreseen, however, was the foundation of KOR, the Committee for the Defense of the Workers, which consisted of intellectuals and educated professionals such as Jacek Kuroń who provided legal counseling.⁴¹² The Hungarian non-conformists followed the developments closely. János Kis explains:

An extremely important influence came from the 1976 Polish events, the widespread riots as a reaction to the price [increases]. [...] Then the Workers' Defense Committee was formed, KOR, and the founders came to the assistance of the workers in the trial, [they] went to attend the trials, gave press conferences. It turned out [that] although the authorities did everything to prevent them from doing that [...] the government revealed itself as not strong enough to suppress that kind of defense and advocacy [...]. They rather yielded [in granting a general amnesty in 1977] and that was unmasking. [It] made us understand that there is a very different, very new situation in the making in East Central Europe.⁴¹³

The Polish events of 1976 finalized the Hungarians' ideological shift to individual human rights.⁴¹⁴ Visiting Poland that year, Miklós Haraszti came to admire the Polish opposition because when he came across *Robotnik*, an independent workers' newspaper, he was "jealous that the Polish opposition already printed its own political newspaper." Although the Hungarians shared many of the same concerns, Haraszti had to admit "the

⁴¹² Michael Szapor, "The Godfather of the Polish Opposition. Conversation with Jacek Kuroń," in *Solidarity. The Great Workers Strike of 1980* (New York: Lexington Books, 2012).

⁴¹³ János Kis, interviewed by the author, 24 April 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

⁴¹⁴ The émigré and *tamizdat* publisher Péter Kende claims that "anyone who would just open his eyes a little bit" knew "something" was starting in Poland. Péter Kende, "A lengyel földrengés," *Magyar Füzetek*, no. 7 (1980).

Poles were [always] a step ahead.”⁴¹⁵ Contrary to the Polish government, Kádár refused to crack down on opposition or hand down the cost of foreign debt to the population. The relatively agreeable situation in Hungary did not offer much cause for mass protests.

In the absence of popular discontent in Hungary, for years, inspiration for the critical thinkers in Budapest came from abroad. Not only Poland, but also neighboring Czechoslovakia proved restless. For some years already, the musical and intellectual underground in the capital Prague had flourished. The years of social acquiescence known as ‘normalization’ following the violent end of the Prague Spring were coming to an end. Several underground publishing houses had begun the production of *samizdat*, the practice of ‘self-publishing’ of illegal and clandestinely produced independent publications typical for the opposition.⁴¹⁶ The regime’s attempts to put an end to the unruly thinkers proved futile and only resulted in an absurdly high number of men with PhD degrees stoking furnaces, cleaning windows, and driving construction vehicles.⁴¹⁷

In January 1977, in response to the continued repression of independent cultural expression and recent arrests in the music scene, a coalition of intellectuals – among them the playwrights Václav Havel and Pavel Kohout, the philosopher Jan Patočka, the former party members Jiří Hájek and Zdenek Mlynář – published the Charta 77, an indictment of the regime for violating its own laws and the Helsinki Final Act.⁴¹⁸ The regime reacted with severity: the spokespersons were arrested, the signatories dismissed from work, their

⁴¹⁵ Miklós Haraszti, "Civil kurázsitól civil forradalomig: a magyar samizdat két évtizede," *Magyar Lettre International* 38(2000).

⁴¹⁶ For a recent study of the underground culture(s) in Czechoslovakia that provided the ferment for the Charta 77, see Jonathan Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent. Charter 77, The Plastic People of the Universe, and Czech Culture under Communism* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2012).

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.* For a brief contextualization, see Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe. Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings*, 88-95.

⁴¹⁸ The document in Gale Stokes, ed. *From Stalinism to Pluralism. A Documentary History of Eastern Europe Since 1945*, 2 ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 163-66.

children banned from university, and the StB, the Czechoslovak State Security, administered tight surveillance and repression of sympathizers.

When Radio Free Europe spread the news about the Charta 77 and the regime's reaction, a small cohort in Budapest, who had experienced similar repercussions for their independent mindedness, drafted a letter of solidarity.⁴¹⁹ Several voiced concerns about possible repercussions.⁴²⁰ The ad hoc letter was published at the end of January 1977.

György Dalos remembers:

[Radio] Free Europe became the multiplier for the opposition in Hungary. That means when in 1977 thirty-four people signed the solidarity letter for Pavel Kohout, that became the first constitutive event, then for two days, at every hour, I think [Radio Free Europe] read the entire list out. That brings an audience of 800,000 to one million people! The system could not handle that.⁴²¹

Contrary to earlier worries, the regime appeared indifferent to the letter. Dalos believes the authorities let the letter pass without an immediate response to demonstrate to the West that Hungary, contrary to Czechoslovakia, was a liberal state worthy of the title 'the happiest barrack in the Eastern bloc.'⁴²²

KOR and the Charta 77 forced the Budapest non-conformists to confront their own passivity, while their counterparts in Poland and Czechoslovakia had pressed ahead in face of much greater adversity. In February 1977, the philosopher András Kovács distributed a survey inquiring about the contemporary attitudes towards Marxism and

⁴¹⁹ Kind-Kovács, *Written Here, Published There*, 356-57.

⁴²⁰ When the initiators of the solidarity letter came around to collect signatures, he happened not to be at home. That is why, he explains, his name does not appear in the original list of thirty-four. Ferenc Kőszeg, interviewed by the author, 19 April, 2012, Budapest, Hungary. Kőszeg, *K. történetei*.

⁴²¹ Dalos adds: "Munich [the headquarter of RFE] was very important. The second generation in Munich, so the younger generation, these younger editors who were not such fierce Cold Warriors like the first generation who had been these postwar émigrés, who had been utterly stupid in 56 when they campaigned against Imre Nagy, because he had been a Communist." György Dalos, interviewed by the author, 9 June 2009, Berlin, Germany.

⁴²² Dalos, *Archipel Gulasch*, 38.

socialism: “What do you think Marxism is and what is your relationship with it?”⁴²³ Not all he contacted had believed in Marxist revisionism like the Lukács School, but inevitably Marxism in the form of state socialism had shaped everyone’s life. He re-distributed the twenty-four responses in *samizdat* format as *Marx in the Fourth Decade*. The title played upon the age of the contributors as well as the fact that Hungary was about to enter its fourth decade of state socialism.

The format and tone of the responses varied: Péter Donáth for instance used a joke to predict the coming self-destruction of state socialism.⁴²⁴ Miklós Haraszti reiterated the views developed in *Piece-Rates*:

Marxism is of course not an ideology of the working class. [...] Marxism offered the [official] state intelligentsia a world in which knowledge, that means science, rules. This class – which constantly changes its image and role – this eternal servant of knowledge assigned for the first time a world historical significance to capitalism, in which information and organization became more and more the engine of productivity and the source of power.⁴²⁵

Although only a handful of copies circulated, Kovács was forced from his position at ELTE and joined the ranks of ‘freelancers’.⁴²⁶ The anthology highlighted the generational change taking place: many contributors who were in their thirties had abandoned Marxism and Marxist revisionism or outright rejected the assumption that these ideological currents had played any role in their lives. That same year, the Lukács School decided to emigrate: In September 1977, Mária and György Márkus moved to West Berlin; in December, Heller and Fehér followed and all four moved to Sydney, Australia. Márkus explains his motivation:

⁴²³ András Kovács, "Marx a negyedik évtizedben," *Beszélő*(1998), <http://beszelo.c3.hu/98/09/10kova.htm>.

⁴²⁴ Quote from Donáth’s contribution in *ibid*.

⁴²⁵ For a German translation of Haraszti’s contribution, see Miklós Haraszti, "Miklós Haraszti's Gedanken im Jahre 1977 zum Thema 'Was ist Marxismus?'," in *Archipel Gulasch*, ed. György Dalos (Bremen: Donat & Temmen, 1977 (1986)), 99, 102.

⁴²⁶ A few were reprinted, for example in the Paris-based *tamizdat* journal *Magyar Füzetek*, but never has the entire publication been published. Kőszeg, *K. története*, 139

Earlier we had relatively good connections among the widely spread Hungarian intelligentsia; after 1973 that practically narrowed down to our circle of friends. Additionally, for my part, I rather love philosophy, that's what interests me, that's what I like to do. The thing is that towards the end of my life, every year you sign two letters of protest which are then read out on [Radio] Free Europe, and that should be the main activity in my life? That didn't fancy me in the least. I want to be a philosopher, and so I felt: You have no opportunities here.⁴²⁷

Their departure completed the transfer of intellectual authority to the younger generation. The solidarity declaration for the imprisoned Czech Chartists, although its impact was far from certain, turned into the constitutive moment for the Hungarian opposition. Two further *samizdat* projects eventually gave the non-conformists a sense of community and direction.

In the fall of 1977, the thirty-year-old writer Mihály Kornis proposed to friends, the poet György Petri, Miklós Sulyok and János Kenedi the idea of a 'diary of opposition', in Hungarian *A Napló*.⁴²⁸ Kornis suggested sharing moments of every day life as well as opinions about current affairs, history and politics. Apart from Kornis, Petri and Sulyok, the writer Péter Nádas, the sociologist Zoltán Zsille, György Dalos, András Kovács, the Fifty-Sixer and playwright István Eörsi, and Ferenc Kőszeg were among the one hundred contributors. Everyone was allowed to keep *The Diary* for a short while, tracking for instance the events of a week before passing it on. Sometimes, the diary returned as fierce debates demanding a riposte ensued on its pages.

The authorities kept a close watch on the recent surge in activities. Mihály Kornis remembers when he first told Bence, Kis and Petri about his suspicions that plainclothes officers were following him. The others dismissed his worries laughingly. But after Kenedi had initiated another *samizdat* project, *Profile*, which featured a piece by Kornis,

⁴²⁷ Csizmadia, "Márkus György," 24.

⁴²⁸ Mihály Kornis, "Kedves Barátom!", undated, in Barna et al., *A Napló, 1977-1982*, 9.

he confirmed the concerns: Kornis was truly under surveillance.⁴²⁹ The project concerned was *Profile*, a selection of writings that the state publishing houses had rejected. Since in Hungary, editors and publishers could decide independently what they would publish, submissions deemed politically unacceptable were usually returned with a standardized letter claiming they would not fit the publisher's "profile." Aware of the predominantly political and not aesthetic reasons for most rejections, János Kenedi had decided to collect a sample of prose and poetry that had failed to pass Hungary's informal censors. Since many of the authors had already contributed to *Marx in the Fourth Decade* and *A Napló*, the regime had a hand in forging the ties between those it tried to silence.

Meanwhile, György Konrád was making strides abroad, representing the Hungarian opposition in the West. While Luchterhand had published his first two novels, just like Habermas a few years earlier, he joined the ranks of Suhrkamp authors.⁴³⁰ Most likely, he had met Siegfried Unseld in 1976 during his DAAD fellowship in West Berlin. In November 1977, Suhrkamp editor Elisabeth Borchers wrote to him:

Dear György Konrád,
For now everything has been arranged: Hans-Henning Paetzke will give us the manuscript by February 1st.
Seuil [the French publishing house] will publish the book in June/ July the earliest; its date will also be ours.⁴³¹

The book under discussion here was *The Intelligentsia on the Road to Class Power*. Contrary to the Hungarian authorities' assumption, one manuscript had escaped

⁴²⁹ Mihály Kornis, "Gefördert, geduldet oder verboten -- dann lieber Samisdat-Literatur!," in *Die Wende Beginn am Balaton*, ed. Eva Karadi and Regine Möbius (Leipzig: Plötner, 2010). In the case of *The Diary*, Miklós Sulyok was not charged with anti-state agitation until December 1982. For a reprint of the Pest District Central Court's verdict from December 14, 1982, and Sulyok's appeal letter from July 19, 1983, see Barna et al., *A Napló, 1977-1982*, 6.

⁴³⁰ Luchterhand published Habermas' *The Transformation of the Public Sphere* in 1962. In 1968, Unseld published his *Technik und Wissenschaft als 'Ideologie'* and soon acquired the publishing rights for his earlier publications, too.

⁴³¹ Original in French. Note Elisabeth Borchers, November 7, 1977, Leitz File: Autor. György Konrád. Von 1977 bis..., DLA SUA Marbach.

confiscation. Konrád had quickly gained Unseld's confidence. Christian Döring, a German-language editor at Suhrkamp in the 1980s, recalls the two having been very close: The cosmopolitan Konrád, a Central European reincarnation of the European avant-garde, the Benjamin-like flâneur with a predilection for endless conversations and good wine, epitomized Unseld's ideal Suhrkamp author.⁴³²

To Suhrkamp's benefit, Konrád brought his own translator, Hans-Henning Paetzke, along. Döring explains how this writer-translator-team blazed the trail for the reception of contemporary Hungarian literature in West Germany:

[My colleague] Elisabeth Borchers looked especially after Konrád. Hans-Henning Paetzke presented and assessed all of [the Hungarian writers] – and she trusted him. He was sort of a jack-of-all-trades at the time, because that's how he made a living. He could read Hungarian – and who can claim *that*? He had an entire line-up of authors at hand, good ones and bad ones [...], and he probably would have loved to get them all published in order to break even as translator.⁴³³

Paetzke was an East German exile, who had studied in to Budapest in 1968. Fond of the country and the language, Paetzke taught himself Hungarian. He got to know several writers and non-conformist thinkers, and translated the work of Miklós Mészöly, to many a mentor, into German before also taking on Konrád.⁴³⁴ At first, he claims, Konrád had kept his talents as translator a secret. In 1973, instead of going back to East Germany, Paetzke moved to Frankfurt am Main, the seat of the Suhrkamp publishing

⁴³² Christian Döring, interviewed by the author, 26 June 2012, Berlin. Also see Döring's description of Konrád in a piece written in 1992, recalling a visit to Budapest in the summer of 1985. Christian Döring, "Budapest Mythologie – Ein Porträt von György Konrád " *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 11 October 1991. Also Sontag, "The Last Intellectual: Walter Benajmin."

⁴³³ Christian Döring, interviewed by the author, 27 June 2012, Berlin, Germany.

⁴³⁴ Paetzke first translated Miklós Mészöly's novel *Saulus* with the help of a dictionary. Mészöly had been a DAAD fellow already in 1974. Although he is considered the teacher of Hungary's most successful contemporary writers, he never had a breakthrough abroad like his students. Hans-Henning Paetzke, interviewed by author, 24 November 2011, Budapest. László Földényi, "Im Labyrinth Familie. Der ungarische Romancier Miklós Mészöly," 7 May 1998. Also Péter Nadás, "Die grosse Entrümpelung. Zum Tod des ungarischen Schriftstellers Miklós Mészöly," *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 19 July 2009.

house to facilitate the exchange. Once Suhrkamp published Paetzke's translation of Konrád, the liaison merited recognition.⁴³⁵

The manuscript was delayed by several months, but it would eventually come out in mid-1978, still a few months earlier than in France and the U.S.⁴³⁶ To promote the book, Konrád had drafted a lengthy self-description which also addressed his arrest and interrogation. Explaining his decision to remain in Hungary afterwards, he reiterated his indifference to repression: "I stayed. One can buy paper and typewriter ribbon in the stores. More I do not expect from the state."⁴³⁷

II.2.4. Finding Common Ground: East and West, 1977-1979

As Konrád was preparing his publication in West Germany, the Helsinki Review Conference in Belgrade dragged on. Delegates to the conference must have been aware of a sideshow happening in Italy that highlighted the difficulties of negotiating cultural freedom and artistic expression as a pillar of international relations: In 1977, the director of the Venice Biennale announced that the exhibition would be dedicated to "Dissent." Under the leadership of the president Carlo Ripa di Meana, the previously rather elitist Biennale had turned into a political event.⁴³⁸ The provocative Ripa di Meana, a member of the Italian Socialist party, had begun to 'popularize' and politicize the biannual exhibition. He had rocked the art world when he dedicated the 1974 Biennale exclusively

⁴³⁵ Hans-Henning Paetzke, interviewed by the author, 24 November 2011, Budapest, Hungary.

⁴³⁶ For a discussion about the book's date of publication, see DLA SUA Marbach Elisabeth Borchers, "Telefongespräch mit György Konrád, 20. Oktober 1977," October 21, 1977, Leitz File: Autor. György Konrád. Von 1977 bis....". For the English version, see Konrad and Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*.

⁴³⁷ DLA SUA Marbach. Letter by Konrád to Hans-Henning Paetzke, December 19, 1977, copy in 03 Lektorat Borchers, Konrád 1978-99.

⁴³⁸ After the Second World War, Ripa di Meana was a member of the Italian Communist Party. The PCI sent him to Prague in the early 1950s. He left the party in 1956 and joined the Marxist revisionist Socialist Party (PSI); in 1968, the PSI condemned the invasion of Prague. Nine years later, in 1977, it welcomed the Charta 77 and protested its prosecution.

to Chile. The year before, the democratically elected Socialist president of Chile Salvador Allende had been ousted and killed in a military coup – presumably with American approval.⁴³⁹ However, to strike a balance, Ripa di Meana did not only ostracize American interventionism but also Soviet imperialism. Dedicating the 1977 Biennale to non-conformist art in the Eastern bloc allowed him to present himself as “a liberal confronting *both* the totalitarian regime of the Soviet bloc and his own political opponents in Italy.”⁴⁴⁰ Just as much as his invitation of Ortensia Allende, the Chilean president’s widow, in 1975, had intentionally raised controversies, so did sending invitations to artists censored by ways of exclusion, discrimination and persecution omitting national academies of art in Eastern Europe two years later.⁴⁴¹

In March 1977, the Soviet Ambassador to Italy requested from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to change the Biennale’s theme.⁴⁴² To ease tensions, Ripa di Meana was summoned to the Foreign Ministry, the outraged Biennale president resigned in protest of undue interference in cultural and domestic affairs. At the time of a multi-party coalition in Italy, which included the Socialist and Communist parties, his resignation became the matter of a parliamentary debate. The Biennale’s advisory board consisted of members of all governing parties, and the scandal grew to question Italian sovereignty and cultural autonomy. The Italian Communist Party (PCI) was caught between a rock and a hard place. On the brink of losing credibility, the PCI weight its relations with the Kremlin

⁴³⁹ "Will politics re-capsize Venice? New Prez, Carlo Ripa di Meana, appeals for harmony for festivals," *Variety*, 9 March 1974.

⁴⁴⁰ Maria-Kristiina Soomre, "Art, Politics and Exhibitions: (Re)writing the History of (Re)presentations," *Studies on Art and Architecture* 21, no. 3-4 (2012). Ripa di Meana eventually resigned from the Biennale in 1979 because he was elected a deputy of the Socialist Party to the European Parliament. In 1992, he became the European Commissioner for the Environment. On the latter, see "What will we do without Carlo?," *The Independent*, 1 July 1992.

⁴⁴¹ "Art, Politics and Exhibitions," 115.

⁴⁴² Ambassador Rijov’s press statement to the Italian press agency ANSA, quoted "Moscow fights ‘dissent in East Europe’," *Variety*, 9 March 1977.

against its own independence. In July 1977, a report in the *New York Review of Books* commented cynically, paraphrasing the Soviet position as:

Our relations are good, but if you pursue this idea of giving undue importance to "dissent," we will lodge a strong protest. Eastern countries will join us. We consider this emphasis on dissent a provocation. It will not be good for you. We have so many reasons, do we not, including trade, to remain on friendly terms?⁴⁴³

With strong support in the art world, Ripa di Meana steadfastly stood by his choice, defending the theme in Italian and foreign papers.⁴⁴⁴ In the *New York Review of Books*, he argued that he considered dissident art the true avant-garde in the Eastern bloc:

The world of culture cannot remain indifferent to, for example, the growing emigration of artists and intellectuals from the Eastern countries; to the difficulties (including imprisonment) that well-known international artists and intellectuals often encounter; to the suppression of numerous works; to the circumstances in which *samizdat* editions become necessary to circulate poetry and fiction.⁴⁴⁵

In the end, Ripa di Meana returned and proceeded with the 'Biennale del Dissento.' In November 1977, the exhibition opened with a secretly recorded speech about the importance of freedom of expression and culture by the Soviet nuclear physicist and dissident Andrei Sakharov.

Several intellectuals from New York, among them Robert Silvers, Susan Sontag, and Joseph Brodsky, as well as the Polish philosopher Leszek Kołakowski, by then living in Chicago, attended the Biennale that year. Upon her arrival, Sontag noted excitedly:

[Alberto] Moravia met me at the airport; Stephen Spender was just leaving. First dinner with Claude Roy + Loleh Bellon + Geörgy Konrád [sic] (Hungarian writer) in Do Pozzi Hotel, after an hour at Florian's [café]. Joseph's reading at the Teatro Ateneo from 9-11 p.m. I had shivers when he stood up and declaimed

⁴⁴³ Furio Colombo, "Italy: the Politics of Culture," *New York Review of Books* (1977).

⁴⁴⁴ Soomre offers a critical analysis of the quality and power hierarchies involved in the 'branding' of dissident art. Soomre, "Art, Politics and Exhibitions." For a similar discussion, see "Dissident ist ein unpassender Begriff. Ein Gespräch mit dem ungarischen Schriftsteller György Konrad."

⁴⁴⁵ Carlo Ripa di Meana, "News from the Biennale," *New York Review of Books* (1977).

his poems. He chanted, he sobbed; he looked magnificent. Boris Godunov; Gregorian chant; Hebrew moan. After, 2nd dinner with Joseph and walk. Then to Hotel Europa for the first time, at 2 a.m.⁴⁴⁶

Sontag spent most of the time in Venice with Joseph Brodsky, scribbling down Brodsky's comments about censorship, the Gulag, Russians and Jews in her notebook. But she also grew close to the Hungarian writer György Konrád, who was the only non-conformist writer attending the Biennale who still lived in his home country. Fascinated, she remarked:

György Konrád looks so much like Jacob [Taubes] – as soon as I saw him yesterday afternoon, I was attracted + repelled; and this morning, late breakfast à deux at Florian's later joined by Joseph – I discover that, of course, he was the man with whom Susan [Taubes, an old friend] had an affair when she was in Budapest in August 1969.⁴⁴⁷

For Sontag, the Biennale was turning into a form of political education. As part of the New York clique and close friends with Brodsky, she had known *about* dissent in the Eastern bloc before, but in Venice she came face to face with the new type of opposition emerging in those years. When Konrád declared in French: "The writer who maintains militant positions deprives himself of his proper tools," Sontag concluded:

(If I'm for anything, it is – simply – the decentralization of power. Plurality.) [...] In short, the classic libertarian/ conservative/ radical position. I can be no more. I should not want to be more. I am not interested in 'constructing' any new form of society, or joining any party. There is no reason for me to try to locate myself on either the left or the right – or to feel I should.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁶ Susan Sontag, *As consciousness is harnessed to flesh. Journals and Notebooks, 1964-1980* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2012), p. 434.

⁴⁴⁷ Susan Taubes was the writer and wife of Jacob Taubes, son of a Jewish rabbinical family born in Vienna in 1923. He had emigrated to the U.S. in 1938. Sontag and Taubes had become close friends when he had been one of her instructors during graduate studies at Harvard University. In 1965, Taubes moved to West Berlin. Quote from entry on December 5, 1977 in Sontag, *Journals and Notebooks, 1964-1980*, 437.

⁴⁴⁸ Konrád: "L'écrivain qui a des positions militantes est un masochiste: il se prive de ses propres dons." Diary entry dated December 10, 1977. *Ibid.*, 446- 47.

In one of the keynote speeches, György Konrád enlightened his primarily Western audiences about dissident life. He presented his biography as representative not only for Hungary, but Eastern Europe at large:

I am an Eastern European; I know what repression is like, and my experiences with it did not begin with Stalinism. I attended a small-town Jewish elementary school; out of its 100 students only four of us are alive today. I have known ever since that you cannot trust the state, only a few friends at best. [...] The death camps provided the twentieth century with the absolute model of evil. [...] The true symbol of the totalitarian state is not the executioner, but the exemplary bureaucrat who proves to be more loyal to the state than to his friend.⁴⁴⁹

In his speech, Konrád emphasized that Eastern Europe had carried the burden of both totalitarian regimes, Nazism and Stalinism. Dissidents appeared as the courageous survivors of totalitarianism in a region that had been pillaged and repeatedly devastated throughout the twentieth century. This historical contextualization of dissent corresponded to and validated the political convictions of the anti-Communist, liberal intellectuals from New York. As a result, they came to identify with Konrád and his views. The January 1978 issue of the *New York Review of Books* reprinted his speech “The Long Work to Liberty.”⁴⁵⁰ Through the encounter with East Europeans, Brodsky and now Konrád, Susan Sontag strove for a more differentiated view. In a 1978 interview, she explained:

[The] prestige of communism was first of all created by its adversaries. If fascism flew the flag of anti-communism, as in general people think in ‘binary’ or ‘polarized’ terms, then to be anti-fascist means to be pro-communist. This is the logic that has influenced people’s minds for the last fifty years and it is this ‘binary’ reasoning that must be abandoned.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁹ György Konrád, “The Long Work of Liberty,” *The New York Review of Books* 24, no. 21 & 22 (1978).

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Guy Scarpetta, “Susan Sontag: Dissidence as Seen from the USA,” in *Conversations with Susan Sontag*, ed. Leland Poague (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995 [1978]), 98.

A few years later, an interview in the *Rolling Stone* demonstrates how Sontag reassessed her past and past convictions in light of her new friendships:

A lot of activities of the New Left [...] were very disturbing. It was a thing one didn't want to say too loudly in public in the late Sixties and early Seventies, when the principal effort was to stop the American war in Vietnam. But some of the activities of the New Left were very far from democratic socialism and were deeply anti-intellectual, which I think of as a part of the fascist impulse.⁴⁵²

From Venice, Konrád did not return to Hungary, but using a grant from the publishing house Harcourt Brace Jovanovich spent a few weeks in San Francisco and New York finalizing the English-language publication of *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*.⁴⁵³ Konrád also worked on the manuscript of his third novel, *The Loser*.⁴⁵⁴ The story is a break from the preceding two novels. Situated in the 1970s, it represents a historical reassessment of the past forty years. Konrád used the novel to process his biography in light of his status in the 1970s and his experiences as a dissident: the fictional protagonist reviews the impact of the historical and political catastrophes in Eastern Europe on his life – the Second World War, the Holocaust, Stalinism, the revolution of 1956, and the consolidation of the socialist regime in the 1960s. Indirectly, this novel consolidated Konrád's identity as East European dissident. During the next two decades, the themes outlined in *The Accomplice* dominated his public and self-image.

Towards the end of the 1970s, the Hungarians and the New Yorkers had begun refining their self-image. The encounter with one another very much shaped this process. A similar development took place in West Germany. When *The Intelligentsia on the Road to Class Power* appeared in German in 1978, the Federal Republic was just

⁴⁵² "Rolling Stone Interview (October 4, 1979)," *ibid.* (University of Michigan Press, 1995), 116.

⁴⁵³ György Konrád, *The Intelligentsia on the Road to Class Power* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979). György Konrád, interviewed by the author, 22 July 2009, Hegymagas, Hungary.

⁴⁵⁴ The original title was *The Accomplice*. *Ibid.* *Der Komplize* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980). George Konrad, *The Loser* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982).

recovering from months of terror, known as the 'German Fall.' When the student protests mellowed out, a few radicalized and formed militant group that planned the violent overthrow of the existing system. In September 1977, the so-called Red Army Faction (RAF) had kidnapped the president of the German Federation of Employers, Hanns-Martin Schleyer, to blackmail the government. In October, to extort the release of RAF leaders imprisoned in a high security prison, fraternizing Middle Eastern militants hijacked a Lufthansa passenger plane, rerouted it to Mogadishu, and murdered five crewmembers before a SWAT team stormed the aircraft. Shortly thereafter, Schleyer was found dead in a car.⁴⁵⁵ Meanwhile, the continuing trial against the leading RAF members, Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Horst Mahler and Ulrike Meinhof, turned into a farce that also discredited the conduct of authorities.⁴⁵⁶

The terror had paralyzed West Germany for months and tarnished the rapprochement between the two blocs. The German Fall and the support from the East that the RAF received, especially from East Germany, reactivated the old distrust that détente politics in preceding years had tried to dispel. Those who had identified with the 1968 protests and had come of age since found themselves without an ideological home. For these, the new opposition movements in Eastern Europe, most prominently the Charta 77, then represented a new and hopeful image of a different East and a new, peaceful form of critiquing the system of a bipolar world.⁴⁵⁷

The West German historian Karl Schlögel exemplifies this realignment. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Schlögel had belonged to the marginal Maoist wing of the student

⁴⁵⁵ "Fall Schleyer: Die Dramatik muß raus," *Der Spiegel*, no. 39 (1977). "Fall Schleyer: Der zweite Schlag," *Der Spiegel*, no. 43 (1977). Walter Laqueur, "Terroristen - die Superunterhalter unserer Zeit," *ibid.*, no. 37.

⁴⁵⁶ Stefan Aust, *Baader-Meinhof: The Inside Story of the R.A.F.* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁴⁵⁷ "Es gibt weder Sieger noch Besiegte," *Der Spiegel*, no. 24 (1977).

movement. Unusually at the time, he had learnt Russian in school and had developed an early fascination with the East. Although he had visited Czechoslovakia in August 1968, only days before the Warsaw Pact invasion, his convictions would not change until a few years later while West Germany was caught up in the terror of the RAF.⁴⁵⁸ Then, just like his role model Hans Magnus Enzensberger, he abandoned his radical beliefs.⁴⁵⁹

The simultaneous rise of the new opposition movements in the late 1970s allowed disillusioned former radicals like Schlögel and Enzensberger to safeguard their basic opposition to the political establishment at home. They did not have to give up their ‘hope’ in an alternative system, when they aligned themselves with the dissidents, who they considered the ‘real’ East. Schlögel recalls reading *The Intelligentsia on the Road to Class Power*. Konrád and Szelényi were using a “shared language. [...] They were so to say crown witnesses, their voice, their arguments, their tone, particularly the tone, were to me a clear evidence that something new had been under way for long,” he explains.⁴⁶⁰ Correspondingly, Konrád recalls that Schlögel was one of the very few in the West, who wrote a “reasonable” review of *The Intelligentsia on the Road to Class Power*, because “he understood,” so he sent him a thank-you note.⁴⁶¹ Shortly thereafter, the recently exiled Iván Szelényi, came to visit him in his attic apartment in Cologne, as Schlögel colorfully described. He could sense that in the end, he – just like his intellectual star Enzensberger – did get it right; identifying with the dissidents represented a form of

⁴⁵⁸ Karl Schlögel, interviewed by the author, 25 June 2009, Frankfurt (Oder).

⁴⁵⁹ The two did not meet face to face until Schlögel had returned from a research stay in Moscow, funded by the DAAD, in 1983. Then, Schlögel contributed to Enzensberger’s new magazine *TransAtlantik*; Enzensberger wrote the foreword for a collection of key text of the Russian intelligentsia, which Schlögel had put together. Ibid. Karl Schlögel, *Wegzeichen. Zur Krise der russischen Intelligenz*, ed. Hans Magnus Enzensberger (Frankfurt am Main: Die Andere Bibliothek, 1990).

⁴⁶⁰ Karl Schlögel, interviewed by the author, 25 June 2009, Frankfurt (Oder).

⁴⁶¹ György Konrád, interviewed by the author, 22 July 2009, Hegymagas. Karl Schlögel, interviewed by author, 25 June 2009, Frankfurt (Oder).

redemption for their earlier radicalism, and still allowed them to preserve their fascination with the East European 'other'.⁴⁶² In Frankfurt, Siegfried Unseld had recognized this shift in perception and values among educated West Germans. By 1978, Suhrkamp had obtained the copyrights for Konrád's Luchterhand novels and republished *The Visitor* and *The City-Builder*. In 1980, it would publish *The Accomplice*, as Konrád advanced to one of Suhrkamp's best-selling East European authors.

In the meantime, encouraged by the Carter administration's change in policies, the New Yorkers were increasing their lobbying efforts. Jeri Laber, who had been working for Bernstein's 'Freedom to Publish Committee' recalls that in March 1978 U.S. Ambassador Arthur Goldberg "returned from Belgrade discouraged."⁴⁶³ Well-known for their expertise, Laber and Bernstein were invited to the State Department for consultations. Realizing that they could influence foreign policies, they decided to take their activism to the next level. They found inspiration in the first civic monitoring group that the Soviet physicist Yuri Orlov had founded in Moscow in May 1976.⁴⁶⁴ The Russian activists had been arrested shortly before the Helsinki review conference opened in Belgrade.⁴⁶⁵ The Ford Foundation's new president, McGeorge Bundy, promised Bernstein some \$400,000 for the first two years. Thinking big, Bernstein looked for a skilled organizer to get an American Helsinki group off the ground, when he learnt that the director of the American Civil Liberties Union, Aryeh Neier, had resigned from his post and joined the Institute for the Humanities at NYU.

⁴⁶² Schlögel said that he felt like the character in the 1839 painting 'The Poor Poet' by Carl Spitzweg. Karl Schlögel, interviewed by the author, 25 June 2009, Frankfurt (Oder).

⁴⁶³ Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 97. Also Aryeh Neier, interviewed by author, New York, NY, USA, February 27, 2012.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 93-97. Snyder, "The Rise of the Helsinki Network: 'A Sort of Lifeline' for Eastern Europe," 181-83.

⁴⁶⁵ Mink, *The Defendant: The State*, 21-26.

Born in Berlin in 1937, Neier's parents had fled Nazi Germany in 1939. From England, the family relocated to the U.S. in 1947.⁴⁶⁶ Growing up, authors like Albert Camus, Arthur Koestler, Thomas Mann, George Orwell and Aldous Huxley had a formative influence on Neier's worldview. In 1954, when McCarthyism had been at its height, he enrolled in Cornell College. Because of the 'Red Scare', colleges around the country had been banning politically "unreliable" speakers from their campuses. To counter the general trend, Neier joined a student organization and deliberately invited controversial speakers.⁴⁶⁷ Disappointment by the growing dogmatism among the students, Neier left in 1960.⁴⁶⁸ Three years later, in pursuit of an active role in the social movements of the time, he joined the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), then the largest non-partisan organization for the defense of individual rights in the U.S.⁴⁶⁹

In 1970, after years at the head of the New York chapter, Neier had become the ACLU's national director. He had risen to the top job because of his unceasing defense of freedom of speech. Controversially, Neier, born Jewish, had defended America's most notorious neo-Nazis. "In those days," Neier explains, "the Nazi cases were very visible."⁴⁷⁰ A victim of fascism himself, he made it a point to have 'Jewish' lawyers represent neo-Nazis in court. In the 1977 Supreme Court case "National Socialist Party of America v. Village of Skokie," Neier defended the neo-Nazis' right to march through

⁴⁶⁶ Neier recalls that growing up writers like Albert Camus, André Malraux, Ignazio Silone, Arthur Koestler, Thomas Mann, Aldous Huxley, and George Orwell. The same authors were inspiration to a young Susan Sontag. The majority of these writers were active members in the Congress for Cultural Freedom. See Neier, *Taking Liberties*, xvi. Sontag, *Reborn*, 6-20.

⁴⁶⁷ Guest speakers were for example Murray Kempton, Dwight McDonald, "two of the political commentators I admired the most," and the former Socialist presidential candidate Norman Thomas. See Neier, *Taking Liberties*, xvii-xix.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, xxi.

⁴⁶⁹ At the ACLU New York, Neier contributed to putting the rights of patients with mental illnesses, women's rights and civil rights for African Americans permanently onto the ACLU's agenda.

⁴⁷⁰ Skokie and for instance the 1969 Supreme Court case 'Brandenburg v. Ohio' made history as they set legal precedence. Neier recalls George Lincoln Rockwell, the founder of the American Nazi Party, calling him directly in his office to discuss police misconduct and other matters. Neier, *Taking Liberties*, 113.

Skokie, a village on the outskirts of Chicago, on the basis of their freedom of speech. With a population of 70,000, Skokie was home to over 35,000 Jewish residents, Holocaust survivors among them. The city council had tried to prevent the march by questionable means. Facing widespread outrage at the ACLU's advocacy, Neier argued:

Civil liberties are the antithesis of Nazism. Perhaps that explains best why we defend free speech for Nazis. We don't share their values. We don't take guidance from them. We defend free speech for Nazis – or anyone else— because we say that government may not put nay person or group beyond the pale of constitutional protection. [...] Does anyone really believe that the exercise of such discretion by government will defeat the values represented by the Nazis?⁴⁷¹

Few agreed with his argument, and as a result of the Supreme Court's decision in favor of the American Nazi Party, the ACLU's membership dropped by 40,000.

While the leadership had shared Neier's insistence on Jewish-born attorneys defending neo-Nazis, the defense of white supremacists, however, created immense tensions. Ultimately, Neier realized he was losing the debate, and started looking for alternatives. For the short-term, he received a fellowship for a manuscript about his work at the ACLU, and was appointed a visiting professor in NYU's Law School. Additionally, he received a call from Richard Sennett to join the Institute for the Humanities in the summer of 1978. Since he would be at NYU anyways, he accepted the invitation as a short-term fellowship, but constrained by the above obligations he rejected the offer to take over as the institute's director.⁴⁷² Then Bernstein called him and inquired whether he would be interested in joining the human rights group that he was just about

⁴⁷¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 119.

⁴⁷² See Richard Sennett's original letter, dated July 12, 1978, and Neier's response, dated July 12, 1978. NYU Archive. NYUIH, Group 37.4, Series I: B, Box 6, Folder 18: Aryeh Neier, 1978-1985.

to set up.⁴⁷³ Neier agreed, “because of our battles against the CIA [in the sixties], I knew that Bob’s involvement in Helsinki Watch would not be merely a Cold War exercise in denunciations of the Soviet Union.”⁴⁷⁴ Due to his prior commitments, however, it was not until 1981 that he would get fully involved.

In the meantime, inspired by the recent rise of human rights, Richard Sennett sought to exploit his position as the Institute’s founding director. In January 1979, he invited Yuri Orlov, the imprisoned Soviet dissident and founder of the first Helsinki monitoring group, to New York. In Moscow, Orlov had just been sentenced to ten years in a labor. Sennett had hoped he could entice authorities to release him if he was leaving the country.⁴⁷⁵ Apparently, he had asked the U.S. Ambassador to have the invitation delivered to Orlov’s wife through ‘personal friends’. But since he was still waiting to hear from Orlov in April, he contacted House Representative John Brademas who was on his way to Moscow. He counted on Brademas’ help because he had co-sponsored the 1965 bill establishing the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, the latter a sponsor of the Institute since its foundation. He complained about the seeming indifference of U.S. officials:

It seems to me a government like ours, which has dedicated itself to the cause of human rights, would want to take as effective action as possible to induce the Soviet Union to release Dr. Orlov from prison. Invitations to go abroad offer one kind of actions of our Embassy and our Ambassador in Moscow are not as forceful as they should have been.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷³ A common friend, the lawyer Orville Schell Jr., had already agreed to join the group. Aryeh Neier, interviewed by the author, New York, NY, USA, February 27, 2012.

⁴⁷⁴ Neier, *Taking Liberties*, 150.

⁴⁷⁵ Letter from Sennett to Yuri Orlov, 31 January 1979. NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group 37.4, series I: B Box 6. Folder 21: Yuri Orlov, 1979.

⁴⁷⁶ Letter by Richard Sennett to John Brademas, 16 April 16, 1979, NYU Archive. NYUIH, Group 37.4, Series I: B Box 6. Folder 21: Yuri Orlov, 1979.

Brademas did not respond until the end of June 1979: “I fear that your letter did not arrive in time for me to make use of it during my trip to the Soviet Union, but I trust that you have other ways of communicating your invitation to Mr. Orlov.”⁴⁷⁷ Disappointed, Sennett forwarded the letter to Bernstein: “I thought you’d like to see this note from John Brademas. It is a real pity.”⁴⁷⁸

Although he could not help with the delivery himself, Bernstein the activist *and* publisher busied himself preparing for the upcoming Moscow Book Fair in 1979. He and Jeri Laber aspired to counter anti-American propaganda in the Soviet Union with a special book series by the American Publishers’ Association called ‘America through American eyes’. Bernstein, however, was denied an entrance visa, and Jeri Laber went to Moscow on her own. Each morning, she carefully noted the titles of those books authorities were confiscating, then handed the lists to journalists and thus managed to place an indictment of Soviet censorship in the *New York Times*. She also used to trip to pay a visit to Andrei Sakharov, Elena Bonner and the families of the imprisoned Moscow Helsinki Group members.⁴⁷⁹

Laber’s experiences in Moscow made it clear that the New Yorkers had to pursue the idea of founding a human rights group more vigorously. But Neier had finally accepted the standing offer to serve as the next director of the Institute for the Humanities. Sennett had come under tremendous pressure. Although the institute had quickly developed into a well-integrated intellectual powerhouse, by 1980, it was caught

⁴⁷⁷ Letter by John Brademas to Richard Sennett, 25 June 1979, NYU Archive. NYUIH, Group 37.4, Series I: B Box 6, Folder 21: Yuri Orlov, 1979.

⁴⁷⁸ Letter by Richard Sennett to Robert Bernstein, 12 July 1979, NYU Archive. NYUIH, Group 37.4, Series I: B Box 6, Folder 21: Yuri Orlov, 1979.

⁴⁷⁹ “I found him pleasant, but reserved, not given to the major pronouncements we all wanted to hear from him. [...] Elena Bonner was more open and feisty than her husband.” When Laber organized a dinner reception for Soviet activists and Western journalists, the latter abandoned her. Afterwards, unsurprisingly, Laber was no longer allowed to travel to the Soviet Union. Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 109-20.

up in a brawl with the university's administration. In June 1980, Neier's predecessor, Loren Baritz, had gone "on vacation" two months before the official end of his term. A new university administration was unwilling to simply transfer Baritz's salary to his successor. NYU's acting president explained:

First, intentionally or unintentionally, you [Baritz] led me to believe that the agreement to allocate University funds to your salary would assure continuity of our directorship [agreement on September 1, 1979]. And more importantly, because the basis for your New York University salary was your tenured professorship at New York University, not your position as Director of the Institute, I simply confirmed an existing obligation – an obligation to you as an individual. This obligation will cease to exist on August 31, in view of your resignation from the New York University faculty appointment.⁴⁸⁰

Reconsidering its obligations to the Institute at large, the letter urged Baritz to figure out a way "whereby the Institute will eventually 'pay its own way'" and reimburse the university for the services provided. Disgruntled, Baritz walked out leaving the conflict to Sennett. The latter stood by his decision to have Neier take over, precisely because he hoped Neier would prevent such managerial disasters.⁴⁸¹ Unsure what the future might hold, Sennett urged the fellows and the Board to assist his fundraising efforts. He reminded them:

Our Institute is widely acknowledged as the most distinguished humanities research institute in the nation; this is why NEH [National Endowment for the Humanities] continues to regard us with great favor, and why New York University puts large amounts of money into an organization which has no students, nor contributes money to the University.⁴⁸²

⁴⁸⁰ See letter by Ivan L. Bennett to Loren Baritz, July 10, 1980, NYU Archive, NYUIH, NYUIH, Group 37.4; series I: B Box 6. In 1977, NYU's board had voted the institute one of the university's permanent activities; so Bennett could not cut it off completely, but resorted to minimalizing NYU's contributions.

⁴⁸¹ "You should know that Neier was the first choice of the search committee established in 1977 to find a director. Neier declined at the time because he had received a Twentieth Century Fund grant to write a book." Sennett to Members of the Board of Trustees, July 7, 1980. NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group No. 37.4 Series no I:A; Folder 14: Board of Trustees – General 1977-80.

⁴⁸² For some time, John Sawhill, who had helped Sennett with the institute's founding, was expected to return as president of NYU. In the summer of 1981, however, former House Representative John Brademas assumed that post. See letter from Sennett to Members of the Board of Trustees, July 7, 1980, NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group No. 37.4; Series no I:A; Folder 14: Board of Trustees – General 1977-80.

As expected, Neier started his new job swiftly getting in touch with the university administration. In August 1980, as a gesture of reconciliation, Neier invited the Provost, Jay Oliva, to join the institute's Board of Trustees.⁴⁸³ In October 1980, still without a proper solution, Neier laid out four realistic options for the institute's future: it could renegotiate the contract with NYU, seek out an affiliating with one of the other universities in New York City, raise sufficient funds to operate independently, or as a last resort, the Institute could close down.⁴⁸⁴

Meanwhile, Bernstein was demanding Neier's attention, too. In September 1980, the next Helsinki Review Conference had started in Madrid. In light of recent events, such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, the Iranian hostage crisis, and the arrest of the entire Ukrainian Helsinki group, expectations were low. Additionally, the election of the Republican Ronald Reagan as U.S. president over the incumbent Jimmy Carter in November 1980 crushed hopes for compromises.⁴⁸⁵

With the odds rising against them, Neier full-heartedly got engaged in both the Institute and the Watch Committee.⁴⁸⁶ To gain credibility, Bernstein and Neier knew they had to develop a convincing non-partisan strategy. For this reason, the New Yorkers created a dual structure, in which one group, Americas Watch, monitored U.S.-backed authoritarian regimes in Latin America, and the other, Helsinki Watch, focused on human

⁴⁸³ Letter from Neier to Oliva, August 1, 1980, NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group No. 37.4, Series no I:A; Folder 14: Board of Trustees – General 1977-80; August 1, 1980.

⁴⁸⁴ A special meeting of the Board of Trustees with the fellows was scheduled for November 4, 1980. See letter from Neier to members of the Board, October 23, 1980, NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group 37.4, series I: B Box 6; Folder 18: Aryeh Neier 1978-85.

⁴⁸⁵ For more, see Fry, *The Helsinki Process*, 43-77.

⁴⁸⁶ Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 122.

rights violations in the Eastern bloc.⁴⁸⁷ “We would criticize the U.S. government’s shortcomings as well, and thus showed by example how a Helsinki committee should and could function in an open society,” Jeri Laber, who became the Helsinki Watch Group’s director in 1981, explains.⁴⁸⁸ Neier described the success of this dual structure:

When the Reaganites attacked Americas Watch for criticizing governments aligned with the United States, our engagement in Helsinki Watch made it difficult for them to portray us as Soviet dupes. The two Watch Committees established each other’s credibility.⁴⁸⁹

The dual organization allowed them to transcend the traditional Cold War divides, in which a critique of the U.S. was considered a pro-Soviet attitude and vice-versa. Human rights, Laber argues, created a “‘new’ ideology from precepts we believed had long been forgotten – a belief in the essential dignity of the human being.”⁴⁹⁰

Whereas the human rights activists had quickly found a solution to their credibility problem, the financial situation of the Institute of the Humanities was still unresolved. In late 1981, Sennett sought NYU’s support for a two-year-fundraising campaign to create an endowment that would make the institute independent. Frustrated, he pressured the Provost:

Had the original plans [...] been pursued, the problem of fund-raising would not exist. As you may recall from those dim, murky days, my understanding [...] was that I would raise the initial money to launch the Institute, and the University would [...] raise the funds to establish the Institute on a permanent basis – if the Institute merited continuance. As you know, I did raise the initial funds [...]. The changes and financial problems of the University in recent years deflected a corresponding effort [...]. The result is that the Institute has become

⁴⁸⁷ Americas Watch strongly lobbied against Ronald Reagan human rights policies – or lack thereof. Neier, *International Human Rights Movement*, 207-09. For contemporary views, see e.g. “The Hunted in Argentina,” *New York Times*, 5 March 1981; William Safire, “The Real Timerman Issue,” *ibid.*, 22 June.

⁴⁸⁸ Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 99.

⁴⁸⁹ Neier, *Taking Liberties*, 156.

⁴⁹⁰ Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 103.

a valuable activity for the University and the city, recognised [sic] nationally, but it has become financially unstable.⁴⁹¹

Little did Sennett know that his financial worries would soon vanish into thin air. The Institute would soon benefit from the creation of the Watch Groups, as unexpected events in Eastern Europe changed the rules of the Cold War.

II. Conclusion

Within one decade, Americans watched three very different presidents move into the White House. The election of Richard Nixon in 1968 following the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. dramatically changed the political framework in which the New Yorkers operated. Although the Watergate Scandal confirmed the intellectuals' reservations against the highest office and its secret service, it was Nixon who initiated the rapprochement with the Chinese and Soviet governments.

Some of the former, passionate protesters mellowed as the case of Susan Sontag illustrates. A trip to Hanoi cured her fascination with the victims of American interventionism; instead, the perceived threat of cultural and political fascination with fascism at home caught her attention – an important prequel to the discovery of her own and Eastern Europe's Jewish heritage. Her friend Hans Magnus Enzensberger also turned to issues closer to home, such as support for suppressed writers in Eastern Europe with whose ideological premises he could sympathize.

The Social democratic chancellor Willy Brandt's 'Neue Ostpolitik' paved the way for the reception of the Hungarian non-conformists, since the Kádár regime relied on Western loans and specifically on investments from West Germany rendering itself

⁴⁹¹ See letter by Sennett to Oliva, December 7, 1981, NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group No. 37.4, Series no I:A; Folder 13 – NYUIH, Board of Trustees, Fund-raising 1979-1983.

vulnerable to Western opinion. The Federal Republic became Hungary's second largest trade partner and also the first to embrace the 'dissidents', once Hungarian authorities realized it was more opportune to export critics than to incarcerate them.

Like their Western counterparts, by the 1970s, the Hungarian non-conformists had abandoned Marxist revisionism, epitomized by separation from and departure of the Lukács School. The pressure that the regime exerted in the wake of the economic crisis of 1973 – evidenced in the Philosophers' Trial, Haraszi's conviction and the Faustian bargain offered to Szelényi and Konrád in 1974 – tied the non-conformists in Budapest closer together but also confronted them with the absence of an ideological home. They looked to Poland and Czechoslovakia for inspiration. The three *samizdat* projects of 1977, *Marx in the Fourth Decade*, *Profile* and *The Diary*, reflect the delayed consolidation of an opposition in Hungary.

The founding of the Soviet Helsinki monitoring group, the protests in Poland in 1976, and the Charta 77 in Prague had a similar impact on the intellectuals in New York. These opposition movements held Eastern *and* Western powers accountable for violations of the Helsinki Final Act and questioned whether they would enforce the human rights provisions. True to their characteristic skepticism, the New Yorkers responded by founding two, mutually reinforcing groups, Americas and Helsinki Watch, which allowed them to criticize governments in the East, West and South.

The internationalization of the dissident movements contributed to the acceptance and defense of human rights as universal. The growing understanding of the Holocaust as the ultimate evil and the responsibility that it bequeathed to coming generations to prevent such horrific acts go hand in hand with the rise of the human rights movement.

The 1960s had left the Western intellectuals discussed here in limbo. In the 1970s, they searched for a new purpose and justification for their public interventions. They found it in cultural liberalism, which was for them the only acceptable ideology in opposition to fascism and communism, after they had awakened to their naïve idealization of foreign socialist revolutions. Liberalism was the only ideology that allowed them to preserve their intellectual integrity within the framework of the Cold War, their cosmopolitanism, and their opposition to governments at home and abroad.

Given the Westerners' appreciation of European modernity, in which fin-de-siècle Central Europe had played such a crucial role, the turn to liberalism appears sensible. The artists and writers they admired grappled with the failure of classic liberalism and the ailments of modern society, such as inequality, social fragmentation, nationalism, and imperialism, just as they were doing some seventy years later. These seemingly disparate, but interlocked intellectual priorities explain the interest in Hungarian non-conformists, which the *New York Review of Books* and the Institute for the Humanities as well as a publishing house like Suhrkamp in West Germany developed at the end of the 1970s.

III. Chapter. One For All, All For One: Solidarity with Poland

III. Introduction

This chapter illustrates how Poland became a turning point in the Cold War and the world of the East European dissidents. The success of the first independent trade union Solidarity, however brief, validated the Westerners' recent turn towards cultural liberalism, and encouraged the Hungarians to develop a historic tradition of a Third Way. It highlights the theoretical and practical assistance that they received from abroad and the unexpected expansion of the support network in the West in the wake of the strikes in Poland and the foundation of Independent Trade Union Solidarność in the fall of 1980. This cataclysmic event consolidated various independent institutions, groups and individuals already involved into one network and brought George Soros – a man with vision and money – into the fold. The following pages will emphasize the euphoria that the Polish events inspired among intellectuals in East and West as well as the tremendous shock the declaration of martial law caused.

The significance of the Polish-Hungarian solidarity is institutionally reflected in the establishment of the Paris-based *samizdat* journal, the *Magyar Füzetek*, and the foundation of the first properly serialized *samizdat* journal *Beszélő*. Two key players almost accidentally entered the stage simultaneously because of the Polish crisis: George Soros and the Fondation pour une entraide intellectuelle européenne. Moreover, Poland in 1980 made *Central Europe* interesting to a larger public – a shift acknowledged in Carl Schorske belatedly receiving the Pulitzer and MacArthur Awards in 1981. The return of Central Europe to the cultural map of the Cold War shed light on the apocalyptic threat

Soviet *and* American armaments posed to the former hearth of European modernity and the repression the writers and artists who followed this tradition endured in the present.

III.1. The Turning Point: Poland, 1980

III.1.1. Hungary: Building a Dissident Community

In 1978, Péter Kende, the former staff writer of *Szabad Nép*, who had fled the country in 1957, founded the tamizdat journal *Magyar Füzetek* in Paris. Contrary to *samizdat*, the improvised underground publishing press *in* socialist countries, tamizdat, literally meaning “published there,” refers to journals and monographs produced in the West, publishing censored writers from the Eastern bloc for domestic and foreign consumption. By then, he was an established scholar at the prestigious Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). With little opposition in the 1960s, only the trials of 1973 suggested to Kende that change might come from within.⁴⁹² In 1976, at the twentieth anniversary of the Hungarian revolution and the Polish protests, he had organized a conference with his Polish colleague Krzysztof Pomian, “1956 Varsovie-Budapest.” Friedericke Kind-Kovács points out such conferences were ideal meeting places for émigré academics and scholars and writers from the East who were allowed to travel; they were also fertile grounds to exchange ideas and plan future projects.⁴⁹³ When in 1978 he learnt about the solidarity letter for the arrested Chartists and the *samizdat* projects *Marx in the Fourth Decade* and *The Diary*, Kende decided to act:

I wanted such a journal, which would create a dialogue between East and West. [...] I started to think about it, but I was skeptical until by chance I got my hand on a piece by János Kis and György Bence, a critical analysis of one of András Hegedüs's studies, whose ambitious political reasoning directly disputed

⁴⁹² Csizmadia, "A Magyar Demokratikus Ellenzék," 43.

⁴⁹³ Kind-Kovács, *Written Here, Published There*, 160-63.

Hegedüs's arguments. This was the first writing, which I felt was of such quality, that I could begin a journal with it.⁴⁹⁴

Kende received help from István Kemény, the sociologist and former mentor to many non-conformists in Budapest. Kemény had recently settled in Paris. Kende invited him to publish his work on the Hungarian economy, which had caused so much trouble at home, in the *Magyar Füzetek*. The first issue featured not only articles by Kende and Kemény but also the argument between Bence and Kis on the one hand and András B. Hegedüs on the other. Alongside these, Kende published an article by the Polish KOR leader Adam Michnik and the "last will" of the recently deceased Czech Charta 77 co-founder Jan Patočka.⁴⁹⁵ Several Hungarian émigré scholars, such as Mihály Vajda and Iván Szelényi, contributed to subsequent issues.⁴⁹⁶ Quickly, the magazine established itself as the Hungarian opposition's first serialized journal, exemplary for new political thinking behind the Iron Curtain.⁴⁹⁷

On October 24, 1979, in Prague, severe prison terms were handed down to the arrested spokespersons of the Charta 77. When the news reached Budapest, the opposition again drafted a letter of solidarity. Ferenc Kőszeg and Gáspár Miklós Tamás, a Hungarian from Transylvania recently expatriated from Romania, collected about 250 signatures. Again, the list was read out on Radio Free Europe.⁴⁹⁸ Within days, signatories

⁴⁹⁴ Kende, "A Magyar Füzetek nem tudott volna fönmaradni a budapesti szerzőgárda nélkül".

⁴⁹⁵ For online access to *Magyar Füzetek*, no.1, (1978), see:

http://www.rev.hu/portal/page/portal/rev/kiadvanyok/magyar_fuzetek/magyarfuzetek01.

⁴⁹⁶ Péter Kende, "A Magyar Füzetek Búcsúja," *Századvég* 12, no. 3-4 (1990): 6.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁹⁸ Kőszeg, *K. történetei*, 166-69. Tamás was born to Hungarian-Jewish parents in Kolozsvár/ Cluj, Romania. Educated in philosophy, he became an outspoken critic of the Nikola Ceaușescu's anti-Hungarian policies. As a result, he was expatriated in 1978. In Budapest, he quickly joined the emerging Democratic Opposition.

who still had a job were fired.⁴⁹⁹ Kőszeg's boss, the director of the Európa Publishing House, informed him that not only was he dismissed but he would surely not find employment at any other publishing house either. Kőszeg remained without proper employment until 1989.⁵⁰⁰

By the time of the second solidarity declaration, the Hungarian signatories already constituted a community that was growing closer. Since 1979, Budapest's critical intelligentsia had been holding weekly apartment seminars, the so-called Monday Free University. Inspiration came on the one hand from the earlier Polish model of the Flying University as well as the Bibó Seminars, which Miklós Szabó, a researcher at the Academy's Historical Institute had organized.⁵⁰¹ Since most of them had been removed from university, they met in private apartment seminars to pursue their scholarly interests, debate taboo topics, and party. Szabó was a key figure. Although his participation in 1956 did not amount to much, he was assigned to a school in the countryside, away from the capital and the opportunity to cause trouble.⁵⁰² Only in 1967 did he return to Budapest to work as a librarian. Shortly thereafter, a historian by training, he had then been admitted to the Academy's Institute of History. By the mid-seventies, Szabó had gained a loyal following for his privately held 'Bibó seminar, where some of Iván Szelényi's former students, the son of András B. Hegedüs, Mária Kovács, Antal Örkény, Sándor Szilágyi and others discussed the work of István Bibó.⁵⁰³ In the mid-

⁴⁹⁹ Some of the unemployed researchers and scholars had founded independent research group to continue their professional work. Szilágyi, "Kenedi János," 64.

⁵⁰⁰ Kőszeg, *K. története*, 170-71. Ferenc Kőszeg, interviewed by the author, 19 April, 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

⁵⁰¹ Szilágyi, "Kenedi János," 61. Mária Kovács refutes the claim the Poles served as model. "Kovács Mária," 53.

⁵⁰² Csizmadia, "Szabó Miklós," 71. He had attended meetings of the Petőfi Circle, but not been an active fighter.

⁵⁰³ The Bibó Seminar actually took place in Géza Saska's apartment. Szilágyi, "Szabó Miklós," 33.

1970s, Kis, Bence, and their friend Sándor Radnoti had gone to see Szabó to talk about 1956. Szabó remembers that Miklós Vásárhelyi and Ferenc Donáth had encouraged the meeting.⁵⁰⁴ An alliance did not seem such a distant possibility any longer.⁵⁰⁵

The first meeting did not go well because of the generational differences. The Fifty-Sixers still “spoke the language of Imre Nagy,” Szabó admitted.⁵⁰⁶ But by the summer of 1978, he agreed to take the lead in the proposed lecture series. János Kis approached György Dalos about whether he would volunteer his apartment on the Ring Street.⁵⁰⁷ Róza Hodosán, a freshman at ELTE at the time, remembers that Miklós Szabó, easily recognizable with his long hair, was one of the most popular lecturers.⁵⁰⁸ The word quickly spread and the audience grew steadily to include younger students, too. The Monday Free University, which often ended with wine and dance, made a huge difference in the participants’ lives.⁵⁰⁹ To debate and party with the critical intelligentsia of the Hungarian capital provided an air of adventure.⁵¹⁰ György Dalos who later modeled the character Ákos Csató in his novel *Der Versteckspieler* on Szabó remembers:

Compared to [my boring translation work] it was a great fortune that I could present my thoughts in the Free University and that they had a sort of relevance. And the friendships truly mattered, too. I wanted to shine in front of [György] Petri, Kis and Bence, and well, in front of the girls, too.⁵¹¹

The Monday Free University continued until late 1981. Because it inspired a feeling of community, participants were not deterred when on several occasions police stormed in and broke up the meeting,. The debates allowed many to pursue their research

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 37. Csizmadia, "Szabó Miklós," 75.

⁵⁰⁵ "Szabó Miklós," 77-78.

⁵⁰⁶ Szilágyi, "Szabó Miklós," 36-37.

⁵⁰⁷ "A Hétfői Szabadegyetem," 67.

⁵⁰⁸ Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek*, 44.

⁵⁰⁹ Szilágyi, "Kenedi János," 65-66.

⁵¹⁰ Róza Hodosán, interviewed by the author, 11 April 2012, Budapest/ Hungary. Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek*, 46.

⁵¹¹ Szilágyi, "A Hétfői Szabadegyetem," 71.

interests, even though they were dismissed from their jobs. The regime fretted over the community, whose actions demonstrated that the critical intelligentsia was gaining confidence. The Monday Free University happened under strict police surveillance, and, as the files show know, was infested with informants.⁵¹²

“The conventional narrative of Communism’s final collapse begins with Poland,” explains Tony Judt and for the Hungarian Opposition this assessment certainly rings true.⁵¹³ In the summer of 1979, János Kis and György Bence travelled to Warsaw to meet with the KOR leaders Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuroń, and Jan Lityński. They became instant friends. “I even happened to meet Lech Wałęsa then, but of course I didn’t know that he was to become *Wałęsa*,” Kis remembers.⁵¹⁴ Michnik was probably the most important mediator within the Polish and the East European opposition movements at large; he had laid out a diplomatic approach to finding compromises in *The Church and the Left* to consolidate the common front against the socialist regimes.⁵¹⁵ The year before, in the summer of 1978, Michnik and Václav Havel had met at the Polish- Czechoslovak border.⁵¹⁶ Shortly after the Hungarian visitors, Michnik would host Jürgen Habermas in his Warsaw apartment.⁵¹⁷

Michnik’s biography had followed a trajectory that probably helped Kis and Bence to connect more easily: he had been a Communist believer, with a father and a brother in high-ranking positions during the Stalinist era; but he had also lost his paternal grandparents in the Holocaust and found himself expelled from university in 1968 during

⁵¹² *A Hétfői Szabadegyetem és a III/III. Interjúk, dokumentumok.*

⁵¹³ Judt, *Postwar*, 585.

⁵¹⁴ János Kis, interviewed by the author, 24 April 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

⁵¹⁵ Adam Michnik, *L'Église et la Gauche: le dialogue polonais* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1979).

⁵¹⁶ Václav Havel, "About Michnik," in *In Search of Lost Meaning: The New Eastern Europe by Adam Michnik*, ed. Irena Grudzinska Gross (University of California Press, 2011), viii.

⁵¹⁷ "‘More Humility, Fewer Illusions’ - A Talk between Adam Michnik and Jürgen Habermas," *New York Review of Books* 41, no. 6 (1994).

the anti-Semitic campaign that forced many young Polish students out.⁵¹⁸ Michnik suggested a joint *samizdat* project to Kis and Bence, in which each would publish translations of representative articles from the other. János Kis and György Bence agreed, but when they returned to Hungary, their passports were revoked and they were placed under a travel ban. From then on, until 1989, others had to travel to Poland to coordinate on their behalf.⁵¹⁹

On 14 August 1980 workers in the shipyards of Gdańsk went on strike. Unlike in 1976, the military did not intervene and the authorities remained indecisive about how to react although the strikes spread to other cities on the Baltic coast like a wildfire. Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuroń and Bronisław Geremek, the intellectual leaders of KOR, rushed to the workers' assistance.⁵²⁰ On 31 August 1980, Lech Wałęsa, who had emerged as a leader at the Lenin shipyard, signed the 'Gdańsk Accords' in which the Communist government conceded the workers the right to freely form independent unions.⁵²¹ Two weeks later, SZS Solidarność, the Self-Governing Trade Union Solidarity, was founded.

The Hungarians rejoiced. János Kis remembered that "1980-1981 were the most beautiful years of the opposition."⁵²² The memory of the defeats in Budapest in 1956 and in Prague in 1968 had crushed thoughts of opposition. But the peaceful foundation of Solidarity raised unforeseen expectations.⁵²³ György Dalos added: "The people were

⁵¹⁸ John Darnton, "Michnik," in *In Search of Lost Meaning: The New Eastern Europe by Adam Michnik*, ed. Irena Grudzinska Gross (University of California Press, 2011).

⁵¹⁹ Kis would not meet his Polish friends again until 1989. János Kis, interviewed by the author, 24 April 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

⁵²⁰ Timothy Garton Ash, *Solidarity. The Polish Revolution*, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 41-72.

⁵²¹ See Document No.7: The Gdańsk Agreement, August 31, 1982, in Malcolm Byrne and Andrzej Paczkowski, eds., *From Solidarity to Martial Law: the Polish Crisis, 1980-1981* (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2007), 70-80.

⁵²² Csizmadia, "Kis János," 113.

⁵²³ Kende, "A lengyel fölindulás," 8.

thrilled by the Polish courage [...]. It had always been [...] a hot topic, they didn't believe in solely inner Hungarian issues anymore anyways. They were loyal to [the idea of a] Hungarian-Polish tradition."⁵²⁴ Excited, the Hungarian Opposition sent a "delegation" to express its support. The Hungarian authorities, however, did not appreciate this new type of oppositional tourism and cross-border cooperation.⁵²⁵ They began refusing or revoking travel permits.⁵²⁶ But the Hungarian oppositionists could no longer be deterred. Poland was key as Gáspár Miklós Tamás passionately explained:

[Solidarność] was enormously important! I had never been to Poland, not even when I had a so-called blue passport, which enabled me to travel to the west. A red passport – that would have allowed me to travel through the Eastern bloc. So I could go to Paris, but I could not go to Warsaw. No, no. But I practically lived in Poland through those years. That was *the* decisive battle! I was once talking to Bronisław Geremek in the 1990s, and he said: [imitating Geremek] "You remember these things better than I do!"⁵²⁷

The euphoria in Budapest was pervasive. In the spirit of solidarity, the Hungarians sought to actively support the Polish opposition and organized for instance a two-week-summer camp for Polish children in July 1981.⁵²⁸ Róza Hodosán, then a fourth-year-university student, remembers: "For the first time, we began thinking, we began talking about a possibly peaceful and democratic change in Eastern Europe. The example of the

⁵²⁴ György Dalos, interviewed by the author, 9 June 2009, Berlin, Germany.

⁵²⁵ For example, on August 27, 1980, the Interior Ministry noted that György Dalos, János Kis, and Zoltán Zsille thought about organizing a donation campaign for the families of the Polish workers on strike. BM I 1-20/129/1980, NOJ Sz. 139, 27 August 1980, [page 0019, copy p. 19] deposited in Forschungsstelle Osteuropa, Folder: Parall. Archiv I. Dt.

⁵²⁶ Bálint Magyar, "Egy lengyelországi út utóélete [1981. szeptember 19.]," in *A Napló, 1977-1982. Válogatás* (Budapest: Minerva). Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek*, 70; Magyar, "Egy lengyelországi út utóélete [1981. szeptember 19.]."

⁵²⁷ Gáspár Miklós Tamás, interviewed by the author, 12 December 2011, Budapest, Hungary. [emphasis mine]

⁵²⁸ Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek*, 69-71. Gábor Demszky, "A Solidaritás küldte, a Szeta fogadta: lengyel gyerekek a Balatonnál (Beszélő 1. szám)," in *Beszélő Összkiadás*, ed. János Rainer (Budapest: AB- Beszélő 1992). Kőszeg, *K. történetei*, 316-20. For more, see also Szilágyi, "Sáska Géza," 113.

Polish Solidarność was our every hope. I watched and I worried. For a year and a half, I was torn between hope and doubts.”⁵²⁹

The alliance of Polish workers *and* intellectuals impressed particularly the Hungarians. Previously, the studies by Miklós Haraszti, György Konrád and Iván Szelényi had found such cooperation impossible. Their Polish counterpart Bronisław Geremek, a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and former Communist Party member, explained: “It was a moment of social coalescence when, however briefly, social antagonisms ceased to exist.”⁵³⁰ The eruption of mass strikes and the role that KOR played in Poland proved that intellectuals could play a supportive, not only a manipulative role in the public interest.⁵³¹ The ‘Polish’ Pope’ John Paul II also publicly supported the workers. Even U.S. President Carter sent a telegram to Margaret Thatcher of the UK, Valérie Giscard d’Estaing of France and Helmut Schmidt of West Germany embracing “the conciliatory approach adopted publicly by the Pope and Cardinal [Stefan] Wyszyński.”⁵³² The Polish émigré writer and Nobel Prize laureate of 1980 Czesław Miłosz explained the widespread fascination with the movement: “The [...] creation of Solidarity accomplished in practice what Michnik had envisioned in theory: an alliance of intellectuals, workers, and the Church, and the principles of legality and nonviolence.”⁵³³

⁵²⁹ Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek*, 68.

⁵³⁰ Michael Szporer, "The Berlin Wall Started Falling in the Gdańsk Shipyard. Conversation with Bronisław Geremek (2003)," in *Solidarity. The Great Workers Strike of 1980*, ed. Michael Szporer (New York: Lexington Books, 2012), 254.

⁵³¹ László Rajk, interviewed by the author, Budapest, Hungary, 26 January, 2012.

⁵³² However, the U.S. administration and the C.I.A. remained highly vigilant in subsequent months about Soviet policies towards Poland. Document No. 8. President Carter’s Letter on Poland to Allies, September 1, 1980. Byrne and Paczkowski, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: the Polish Crisis, 1980-1981*, 81-82.

⁵³³ Czesław Miłosz, "Foreword," in *Letters from Prison and other essays by Adam Michnik*, ed. Jonathan Schell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), xi.

The international repercussions of the Polish events cannot be overstated. The crisis jeopardized Hungary's on-going negotiations with the IMF and the World Bank.⁵³⁴ Contrary to other East European leaders, János Kádár opposed a Soviet intervention and urged the Polish leadership to regain control before the unrest could spill into neighboring countries.⁵³⁵ He, too, remembered the potent force of an alliance between workers and intellectuals. For the time being, however, he did not see any reason to act: in Hungary in 1980, such an alliance did not exist.⁵³⁶

For two years, Péter Kende's and István Kemény's *Magyar Füzetek* had served as outlet through which the banned philosophers and writers expressed their thoughts and exchange ideas with the émigré community. The French capital had become the home of several exiled scholars from all over Eastern Europe, particularly from Poland. Kende published articles from and about other East European dissidents, making the *Magyar Füzetek* part of a new, genuinely international dissident discourse. However, contrary to the Polish, the Hungarian opposition lacked a comprehensive political agenda and the expansive underground publishing in Czechoslovakia and Poland dwarfed the three Hungarian *samizdat* projects of 1977. The quality and quantity of Polish *samizdat* had deeply impressed the visiting Hungarians, particularly two young visitors named László Rajk and Gábor Demszky. Rajk claims that he had been infatuated with Polish culture since the sixties:

It was easy for Hungarians to go to Poland; it was a kind of Mecca of culture. In Rock music, in Jazz, in Fine Art and in Theatre... Movies of course... Modern

⁵³⁴ Gough, *A Good Comrade*, 211-15.

⁵³⁵ See for instance the meeting of Warsaw Pact leaders in Moscow on December 5, 1980 where Stanisław Kania, who had taken over as First Secretary from Edward Gierek, pleaded for an internal solution in the face of increased military preparation in the region. Document 22: Minutes of Warsaw Pact Leadership meeting in Moscow, December 5, 1980. Byrne and Paczkowski, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: the Polish Crisis, 1980-1981*, 141-62.

⁵³⁶ Gough, *A Good Comrade*, 211-12.

music, contemporary music... For young ambitious artists like me: every summer, [we would] go to Poland because there you could see things you could never see in Hungary. They were much poorer, compared to us, but culturally very rich.⁵³⁷

Inspired by Polish and Czech courage, the Hungarians began expanding their *samizdat* production. In late 1980, Rajk and Demszky travelled to Poland again.⁵³⁸ Rajk knew from prior visits to France, where his ailing mother Júlia received medical care, that the Poles were well connected. But what he witnessed had left him speechless:

[...] They worked at such a scale you cannot imagine! Through the trade unions in Belgium and France they were very strong. So their strategy in printing in practical means [was] that if the police took away something it was immediately replaced. [...] It was large-scale printing. There were camions [trucks] going over to Poland with printing machines. It was absolutely amazing!⁵³⁹

The Poles taught Rajk and Demszky the so-called “ramka” technique, a simple printing and copying device made out of household items.⁵⁴⁰ Rajk remembers:

We always operated on small machines that were not complicated and repaired manually, that I could repair if there was a problem. We couldn't use something sophisticated. If someone wanted to give us a [bigger one] we always told [them to] sell it or keep it. If you sell it, give us the money. But we cannot repair it.⁵⁴¹

Kőszeg remarks that

in the West they had the value of trash, totally outdated, so [...] we only had to take care of the smuggling. [...] Paradoxcially, you could buy the ink in a regular store, just like the paper. You would just tell them that you worked for an organization like KISZ [the Communist Youth Association] and maybe you

⁵³⁷ László Rajk, interviewed by the author, Budapest, Hungary, 26 January 2012. László Rajk had met Polish émigré scholars in Paris. His mother Júlia Rajk and Péter Kende were connected through their shared experience in 1956. Júlia travelled to France exceptionally often. In 1980, Rajk took his mother to Paris for treatment. She was so sick that he preferred care abroad. She died from cancer in November 1981, and was buried next to her husband.

⁵³⁸ See also Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe. Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings*, 130-33.

⁵³⁹ László Rajk, interviewed by the author, 26 January, 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

⁵⁴⁰ Gábor Demszky, interviewed by the author, 25 June 2012, Berlin, Germany. Also Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek*, 70.

⁵⁴¹ László Rajk, interviewed by the author, 26 January 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

even had a stamp and you paid in cash. The clerks did not care much about this anyways.⁵⁴²

Konrád's translator, Hans-Henning Paetzke, recalls how he acquired a machine that a Maoist organization in Frankfurt no longer needed: "The thing was darn heavy and the staircase [to the attic] so narrow, it was dangerous!" Laughing, Paetzke remembers how Erhard Busek, then deputy mayor of Vienna, was giving him a helping hand. Busek drove across the border to Hungary with the machine in his trunk. Thanks to his official service ID – not a diplomat's passport as legend has it – nobody bothered him.⁵⁴³ Once in Budapest, Paetzke handed the pieces of the disassembled machine to Rajk.⁵⁴⁴

As the 25th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution was approaching, some of the Hungarian critics thought to use the momentum of the parallels between Poland 1980 and Hungary 1956, and turned to the almost forgotten István Bibó. János Kenedi proposed to collect essays in honor of Bibó for his seventieth birthday in 1981.⁵⁴⁵ György Konrád claims that he was the one who first "discovered" Bibó:

I was probably the first in this group who knew who István Bibó was. I happened to study literature and thought it might be helpful to re-read the big journals of the twentieth century, *Nyugat* was the most influential but also others. Then I came across these articles by Bibó in several places, and I was surprised by the power of his intellect and the brilliance of his writing.⁵⁴⁶

János Kenedi paid a visit to Bibó, who had withdrawn from the public and had worked as a librarian since his amnesty in 1963. The non-conformist intellectuals unexpectedly found inspiration in such analyses as "The Misery of Small East European States," "The Jewish Question in Hungary," and "The Crisis of Hungarian

⁵⁴² Ferenc Kőszeg, interviewed by the author, Budapest, Hungary, 19 April 2012.

⁵⁴³ Busek emphasizes his status, since the story has become rather notorious. Paetzke also claimed that Busek had a 'semi-diplomat's status.' Erhard Busek, interviewed by the author, 7 February 2012, Vienna, Austria.

⁵⁴⁴ Hans-Henning Paetzke, interviewed by the author, 24 November 2011, Budapest, Hungary.

⁵⁴⁵ Réz, "A Bibó Emlékkönyv elé," 5.

⁵⁴⁶ "György Konrád, interviewed by the author, 24 July 2009, Hegymagas, Hungary.

Democracy.”⁵⁴⁷ Bibó offered them an independent intellectual tradition and seemed to explain their own biographies. Essential for their dissident identity, it explained their contemporary marginalization through Central Europe’s disadvantageous geographic location on the periphery of two great civilizations, the German and the Russian, and the historical and political dilemmas that had resulted from this ‘in-between’ situation.

Bibó died in May 1979 before the essay collection was completed. György Konrád recalled the funeral, mocking the dissidents’ own insignificance and the state security’s paranoia:

We were maybe some twelve people or so, and they were hundreds. The neighboring grave was ‘under construction’; they were just tossing dry leaves back and forth, it made no sense. Then there was this photographer, who wanted to take pictures, but Bence told him not to, because how else would we be able to claim in fifty years that we were several hundred. We laughed heartily. [...] The policemen were really upset about this physical labor. They had come for nothing, it just didn’t make any sense.⁵⁴⁸

It took almost two years before the *Bibó Commemorative Book* was completed. The *éminence grise* of the whole project, Bibó’s former comrade in arms, Ferenc Donáth, offered the essay collection to the state publishing house, which promptly rejected it. To the authorities, such a blatant reminder of 1956, at the time of the revolution’s 25th anniversary, and the disproportionate number of banned authors were unacceptable.⁵⁴⁹ But the very fact that over thirty thinkers of different ideological preferences had contributed to this project already constituted a success. Among the others were not only banned authors, but also tolerated writers as well as established scholars, such as the censored György Konrád, István Eörsi and János Kis but also the poet Gyula Illyés, the

⁵⁴⁷ István Bibó, *Democracy, Revolution, Self-Determination: Selected Writings*, ed. Károly Nagy, Atlantic Studies on Society in Change (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 1991). *Die Misere der osteuropäischen Kleinstaateri*, trans. Béla Rasky (Frankfurt am Main: Neue Kritik, 1992 (1946)).

⁵⁴⁸ György Konrád, interviewed by the author, 24 July 2009, Hegymagas, Hungary.

⁵⁴⁹ Réz, "A Bibó Emlékkönyv elé." For the aftermath, see Paetzke, "Ungarische Kulturpolitik zwischen Verbot und Toleranz."

linguist Endre Bojtár, and the historian Jenő Szűcs.⁵⁵⁰ Bibó had been a respected mediator in his lifetime, an advocate of a third way, and an outstanding analyst of the region's political, social and economic dilemmas. His work offered the much-needed smallest common denominator to forge a community consisting of two competing historical trends among the country's intelligentsia, the so-called *népi* and the *urbánus*, which slowly resurfaced among the opposition in the early 1980s. For the time being, in Bibó, the Hungarian critics of the Kádár regime had found an independent tradition and school of thought in its own right.

III.1.2. Solidarity's Success Story in New York

The rise of Solidarity in Poland also propelled the New Yorkers at the Institute and the newly founded Helsinki Watch Group. They were driven by the stark contrast of two developments: on the one hand, the success of *Solidarność* suggested that despite preceding attempts to crack down on critics in Moscow, change from below in the Eastern bloc was in fact possible. On the other hand, the election of Ronald Reagan and the return of the neo-conservatives to power had made American foreign policies less flexible to embrace change. Officially, the U.S. had entered a new phase of the Cold War.

The New York intellectuals resisted the new president's reactionary course. During Aryeh Neier's directorship, the Institute for the Humanities at NYU turned its gaze not only to Western, but to Eastern Europe as well. The change reflected a larger trend in intellectual perceptions: in mid-1981, founding member Carl Schorske received the Pulitzer Prize as well as the annual MacArthur Foundation Award for his monograph

⁵⁵⁰ Other contributors were György Petri, Sándor Csoóri, Emil Niederhauser, and of course Ferenc Donáth.

Fin-de Siècle Vienna.⁵⁵¹ Both awards were well endowed, and Schorske, who Neier described as “a man of impeccable character and reliability,” donated the award money not to Princeton University, where he was teaching, but to the Institute for the Humanities.⁵⁵²

Schorske’s analyses of the cultural and artistic responses to the failure of nineteenth-century liberalism in the Habsburg Empire had constituted his intellectual kinship and friendship with Richard Sennett. Their shared research interests in the past and present condition of urban, primarily European culture had been the basis for their common effort to found the Institute for the Humanities in 1978. The essays in the award-winning monograph had appeared separately years earlier in *The American Historical Review*.⁵⁵³ The delay suggests that by the early 1980s, the perception of history, historiography, and Europe among intellectual circles in the U.S. had changed. According to historian Stephen Beller, the “Schorskean paradigm” did not only represent a distinct approach. Beller argues that Schorske’s conclusion that the cultural innovation in fin de siècle Vienna was a result of the political alienation of a younger generation from the classic liberalism of the late Habsburg Empire reflected the “connection between political alienation and cultural innovation in American society in the 1950s, the shift from Marx to Freud, from social to psychological explanations.”⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵¹ Carl E. Schorske, *Fin de Siècle Vienna. Politics and Culture* (New York: A. Knopf, 1980).

⁵⁵² For the quote, see Aryeh Neier’s press release, June 15, 1981, NYU Archive. NYUIH, Group 37.4, Series I:B Box No 7; Folder 7: Carl Schorske, 1980-88. For Schorske’s request to allocate the prize money to NYUIH, see Schorske’s letter to Vice President Dr. Gerald Freund, November 4, 1981. NYU Archive, Group 37.4, Series I:B Box No 7; Folder 7: Carl Schorske, 1980-88.

⁵⁵³ Carl E. Schorske, “Politics and the Psyche in fin de siècle Vienna: Schnitzler and Hofmannsthal,” *The American Historical Review* 66, no. 4 (1961). “The Transformation of the Garden: Ideal and Society in Austrian Literature,” *The American Historical Review* 72, no. 4 (1967). “Politics and Patricide in Freud’s Interpretation of Dreams,” *The American Historical Review* 78, no. 2 (1973).

⁵⁵⁴ Stephen Beller, “Introduction,” in *Rethinking Vienna 1900*, ed. Stephen Beller (New York: Berghahn, 2001), 3.

With the decade of *détente* over and the beginning of a new phase of the Cold War, Schorske's belated success was the first in a wave of studies in the 1980s that dealt with Habsburg culture at the turn of the century. The dynamic, creative past of the imperial capital, Vienna, contrasted starkly with the contemporary situation in Central Europe, which after the NATO Double Track decision and the stationing of nuclear capable missiles on either side of the Iron Curtain had become Europe's most endangered region.⁵⁵⁵ Schorske and the activities of the Institute for the Humanities, the Helsinki Watch Group and the *New York Review of Books* drew attention to this dilemma, the apocalyptic threat to Europe's erstwhile cultural hearth. They were instrumental in paving the way for the 'rediscovery' of Central Europe in the mid-1980s.

Meanwhile, the Helsinki Watch Group in conjunction with its predecessor, the American Publishers' Association, prepared for the Third International Book Fair in Moscow to open in the fall of 1981. While two years earlier, Jeri Laber had still been allowed to participate, now she and Robert Bernstein were both banned. Instead, they put together a counter-event, the 'Book Fair in Exile', in the New York Public Library, a week after the one in Moscow had closed.⁵⁵⁶ The press announced the participation of Russian poets Joseph Brodsky, Vladimir Bukovsky and several other well-known exiles.⁵⁵⁷ Within days, the venue was sold out. However, people continued calling Laber's office, she remembered one distinctly:

It was on behalf of a financier named George Soros. [...] It was the first time that I had heard his name. I was about to refuse him a ticket, when the woman who requested it, Svetlana Stone [...], declared in a pointed way: "Mr. Soros is a very important man." "Anyway," she added, "he won't stay long. He only wants

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁵⁶ Edwin McDowell, "Exiles Writers Hold Own Book Fair," *New York Times*, 15 September 1981.

⁵⁵⁷ Harold C. Schonberg, "A Book Fair is Planned for Exiles from Soviet Union," *ibid.*, 31 August.

to meet two people: Vladimir Bukovsky and Bob Bernstein.” Something told me it was prudent to say yes.⁵⁵⁸

At the same time, Neier’s ‘Writing and Politics’ series, which he had established when he took over as director the previous year, was also attracting a general audience the Institute. In November 1980, for example, he had invited the exiled Polish philosopher Leszek Kołakowski to give a talk on “The Polish lesson,” in which he analyzed the unexpected emergence of Solidarność in his home country.⁵⁵⁹ In the summer of 1981, Aryeh Neier began teaching a seminar on “Literature and Censorship” at NYU together with Michael Scammel, the founder of *Index on Censorship*. They sought to “identify the different types of censorship and their effects on literature.”⁵⁶⁰ Scammel, who had worked together with Robert Bernstein for years, was instrumental in opening also the Institute to the East, as Solidarity instilled a sense of urgency to get involved. In 1982, he would become a two-year-fellow at the Institute.

Then in September 1981, three weeks after the ‘Book Fair in Exile’, Neier chaired a discussion between Czesław Miłosz, Joseph Brodsky, and Robert Silvers. Neier explained:

I had organized a series of conversations between me and various writers about writing and politics, about the way in which the political context influenced their writing. [...] [A] woman [Svetlana Kostić Stone] who was associated with George Soros attended a few of those conversations. And she said to me at a certain point that she was associated with this man, George Soros, who had

⁵⁵⁸ Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 131.

⁵⁵⁹ On April 15, 1980, the French philosopher Alain Tourraine and the British scholar Stephen Lukes debated “The Downfall of ‘Civil Society.’” The two had been engaged in secret apartment seminars in Prague, which will be later. NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group 37.4, series I: A Box 3, Folder 13: Ten-Year-Report. For more, see Barbara Day, *The Velvet Philosophers* (London: Claridge Press, 1999).

⁵⁶⁰ NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group 37.4, series I: A Box 3, Folder 13: Ten-Year-Report.

made a lot of money and he would be interested in what I was doing and she arranged for me to have dinner with George Soros at his apartment.⁵⁶¹

Svetlana Kostić Stone was a Yugoslav émigré who worked in the American Academy of Sciences and had attended Neier's panels. One day she brought the Hungarian-born millionaire George Soros along.⁵⁶² The intellectuals at the Institute for the Humanities, the *New York Review of Books* and in the Helsinki Watch Committee instantly intrigued him. His biographer claims "Soros was impressed by Neier's non-charismatic leadership. He recognized him as someone like himself, a doer, a man who achieved things, while keeping out of headlines."⁵⁶³

Neither Laber, nor Neier nor anyone else knew who George Soros was. Soros had been born in Budapest in 1930. During the Second World War, his father, a respected lawyer, had produced forged passports for Jewish Hungarians and his family.⁵⁶⁴ The German occupation in 1944 and the Holocaust represent *the* formative experience in Soros's life.⁵⁶⁵ In 1947, as the Hungarian Stalinists were preparing their take-over, he moved to London. In September 1949, he started studying at the prestigious London School of Economics. He had found post-war England unwelcoming to foreigners and refugees, although the teachings of the Central European émigré scholars, such as Ludwig Wittgenstein, Friedrich Hayek, Michael Polányi and Arthur Koestler, fascinated him. One summer, he read Karl Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies*. Popper's

⁵⁶¹ Among other presenters, Neier also mentioned the exiled Czech playwright Pavel Kohout and Alberto Moravia, the Italian anti-fascist writer and journalist. Aryeh Neier, interviewed by author, New York, NY, USA, February 27, 2012.

⁵⁶² Michael T. Kaufman, *Soros. The Life and Time of a Messianic Billionaire* (New York: Vintage, 2000), 147-.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁵⁶⁴ Tivadar Soros was born Teodor Schwartz in 1894. Son of assimilated Jewish parents in the Habsburg monarchy, he studied law at the University of Heidelberg. During World War I, he became a Russian POW and learnt Russian. See Humphrey Tonkin, "Afterword," in *Masquerade. Dancing around death in Nazi-occupied Hungary by Tivadar Soros* (New York: Arcade, 2000).

⁵⁶⁵ George Soros, "My Philanthropy," *New York Review of Books* 58, no. 11 (2011).

analysis offered Soros a conceptual framework to explain his experiences during the Second World War. In response, he decided to enroll in Popper's philosophy classes.⁵⁶⁶ Whereas their contact then was sporadic at best, Popper's thinking came to influence Soros for the rest of his life.⁵⁶⁷ In 1956, Soros moved to New York, where his parents joined him in 1957 after the crushing of the Hungarian Revolution.⁵⁶⁸

In the U.S., Soros had made himself a successful Wall Street analyst. In 1973, he and a colleague set up their own hedge fund management firm, the Soros Fund, chartered offshore in Curaçao and the Cayman Islands. By 1978, it was worth \$100 million. Despite the success, however, Soros remained unknown in New York and he never truly felt at home among the city's financial establishment.⁵⁶⁹ A Jewish immigrant from Central Europe with a curious accent, he avoided the limelight of New York's socialites. Although by 1980 his hedge fund was worth some \$120 million, Soros "virtually had no public identity."⁵⁷⁰

Soros had not shown any particular interest in his home country until the unexpected appearance of István Eörsi on his doorstep. In 1980, the Hungarian playwright held a short-term-visiting position at Case Western University in Cleveland, Ohio. Instead of participating in the social life of the department, Eörsi decided to enjoy

⁵⁶⁶ Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: Routledge, 1945). For a brief account of Popper's and Soros's interaction at LSE: Kaufman, *Soros. The Life and Times*, 70-76.

⁵⁶⁷ George Soros, "Prove it!," *New York Review of Books* 21, no. 14 (1974). Soros here responded to a review by Peter Singer. He felt that Singer had misrepresented Karl Popper's stand on induction and the fallibility of scientific hypotheses. The noteworthy detail here is that all three involved – Popper, Singer, and Soros – are émigrés from Central Europe and Jewish. Peter Singer, "Discovering Karl Popper," *The American Historical Review* (2 May 1974).

⁵⁶⁸ Kaufman, *Soros. The Life and Times*, 74. In 1956, Soros decided that he needed to make half a million dollars within the next five years, so that he could devote the rest of his life to philosophy. In a 2011 article, Soros explained his philosophical ambitions as motivation for his philanthropy. Soros, "My Philanthropy."

⁵⁶⁹ Kaufman, *Soros. The Life and Times*, 155.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 147-59. One article on the hedge fund appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* in 1975. Only in 1981 did Soros consent to a feature article, "The World's Greatest Money Manager," for the *Institutional Investor*, Kaufman explains.

the freedoms of the West and travel the country. The president of the organization that had organized Eörsi's exchange, Adam Watson, later remarked: "The first two East Europeans we sent [to Case Western Reserve University] did not quite understand what was expected of them, perhaps owing to inadequate prior briefing here, though they returned fully satisfied with their visit."⁵⁷¹

Little did Watson know that Eörsi's adventurism would soon save his organization. In fact, Eörsi's visit to George Soros, a long-lost friend from Budapest, would lay the foundation for an unparalleled international network across the Iron Curtain. Allegedly, Eörsi called the days with Soros and his friend, the American poet Allen Ginsberg, a memorable "wild time."⁵⁷² The two had quite a lot to catch up on: like Soros, Eörsi had been born to Jewish parents in 1931 and had survived the Holocaust in Budapest. They had gone to school together, but lost contact when Soros emigrated. When they met again in 1980 or 1981, Eörsi probably shared his experiences – the 1956 revolution, the years in prison, his work with György Lukács and the recent activities of the opposition – with Soros.

Eörsi's stories from home inspired Soros to get involved. Only then did he consult Svetlana Stone; from her, he learnt about Helsinki Watch and Aryeh Neier. Their quick and cordial interactions proved mutually beneficial. Later, in December 1981, Soros committed \$17,000 to the Institute's budget, a welcome relief after the university administration had minimized its contributions to the 1981-82 budget to an all-time low

⁵⁷¹ Adam Watson, President FEIE, letter to the American Friends of the Fondation, June 17, 1983, Paris. HU OSA, 26'2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991 Box 5, Folder: Ford Foundation 1983. The Case Western exchange was a new program. Only on 10 July 1980 had Annette Laborey told Francis Sutton at the Ford Foundation that the Fondation was in the process of screening potential candidates for the newly created position at Case Western in Cleveland, Ohio. HU OSA, 26'1 (A), corresp. Ford-Foundation, 1977-1982, Folder [blue-grey] Fondation Ford

⁵⁷² Kaufman, *Soros. The Life and Times*, 183.

of \$60,000.⁵⁷³ But instead of putting Soros's \$17,000 towards existing programs, they were to cover the living and travel expenses for in-coming fellows from Hungary.⁵⁷⁴

In recognition of his generosity, in April 1982, Roger Straus offered Soros membership in the Board of Trustees:

I understand from Richard Sennett that you too share our considerable interest in the work and activities of the New York Institute for the Humanities. I am delighted to hear this and hope that you will be able to join our Board and work with us. There is much to do and we are eager to have help.⁵⁷⁵

Following the 'Book Fair in Exile', Aryeh Neier had suggested to Jeri Laber that she should take a leave from the Helsinki Review Conference in Madrid and travel through Eastern Europe. A year earlier, in November 1980, the conference had begun with a remarkable show of civic groups, Helsinki Watch among them, protesting the violations of the Final Act.⁵⁷⁶ Soon, however, the conference was caught in mutual accusations between delegates from East and West, while Solidarity in Poland was actually forging ahead. Neier urged Laber to survey the situation on the ground and devise meaningful strategies together with the opposition movements. In November 1981, she packed her suitcase, removed any evidence that might reveal her identity as Helsinki Watch staff and flew to Central Europe.⁵⁷⁷

After Prague and Warsaw, Hungary was the last stop on Laber's list. "I didn't expect to find dissidents in Budapest; my inquiries in New York had come to nothing,"

⁵⁷³ Letter from Richard Sennett to L. Jay Oliva, 7 December 1981. NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group No. 37.4, Series no I:A Box. No. 1, Folder 13 – NYUIH, Board of Trustees, Fund-raising 1979-1983.

⁵⁷⁴ The three were György Bence, Mária Kovács, and Zsolt Csálog. Letter by Aryeh Neier to Annette Laborey, 15 December 1981. HU OSA 27 / 1 à 2 Rapports d'activités, 1973-1991.

⁵⁷⁵ Letter from Roger Straus to George Soros, April 29, 1982. NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group 27.4 – series I: A Box 2, Folder 28: Roger Straus – Board of Trustees. "I shall be happy to join the Board of the New York Institute for the Humanities." Letter from George Soros to Roger Straus, dated May 20, 1982. NYU Archive, NYUIH, Box. No. 1, Group No. 37.4, Series no I:A, Folder II: Board of Directors – George Soros.

⁵⁷⁶ Neier, *International Human Rights Movement*, 212. Snyder, "The Rise of the Helsinki Network: 'A Sort of Lifeline' for Eastern Europe," 185-87.

⁵⁷⁷ Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 132-33.

she wrote.⁵⁷⁸ During her stay, however, Laber quickly learnt that Hungary, known as ‘the happiest barrack in the Eastern bloc’ was not all that happy. Upon her arrival, she met a guarded, short-spoken Mária Kovács, György Bence’s partner, and two friends. Initially, the three had expected yet another adventure-seeking, naïve American. But soon they acknowledged the sincerity of Laber’s intentions and quickly grew comfortable. Kovács and Bence openly informed her about the peculiarities of goulash communism and life as dissidents. But Laber still sensed that that the Hungarians “seemed almost embarrassed to complain, knowing how much worse things were elsewhere in Eastern Europe.”⁵⁷⁹

Laber immediately understood the divide within the Hungarian opposition that set it apart from other opposition movements. The *Bibó Commemorative Book*, which was in the making at the time of her visit, could not hide the fundamental differences between the *népi* and *urbánus* factions. Kovács and Bence, who were members of the *urbánus* intelligentsia, explained that the populists stood for Hungarian traditionalism, the folkish type of ethnic nationalism that dated back to the interwar period. The *urbánus* on the other hand represented the cosmopolitan, urban, westernized tradition, which had historically attracted more Jewish-born intellectuals. Although the troubled history of East European Jewry had accompanied her since her arrival in Prague, Laber felt that this phenomenon was unique to Hungary.

The situation was further complicated by the fact that many of the *urbánus* intellectuals also happened to be “children of privilege, born to parents from the Communist elite.”⁵⁸⁰ Laber felt immediately closer to the cosmopolitan side; she

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid., 154.

⁵⁷⁹ The two friends Laber met were Ágnes and Vilmos Soós. Laber spent most of her time in Budapest in the company of Bence and Mária Kovács. Ibid., 156.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., 158.

understood the historical legacy that the ethnic nationalism of bygone days had excluded Jewish Hungarians, some of whom were then, in response to interwar anti-Semitism, drawn to Communism. Laber was repeatedly confronted with her own Russian-Jewish heritage; in Prague for instance, someone had told her she would understand totalitarianism better precisely because she was born Jewish. She also talked to György Konrád, who shared his story of surviving the Holocaust in hiding, whereas György Bence recalled his tragic experience on the shores of the Danube, where hundreds of Hungarian Jews, including many of his friends and family members, were shot in 1944. Remembering these discussions, Laber later noted a charming but almost absurd comparison: “I liked them all [...]. The apartment, the books, and the way they dressed and spoke reminded me of my Upper West Side friends in New York.”⁵⁸¹

Laber returned to New York City eager to act. Since Bence had been stripped of his passport after his visit to Poland in 1979, she contacted the U.S. Assistant Secretary for Human Rights on his behalf. A few months later, the couple received passports and exit visas. Aryeh Neier extended the offer of a fellowship at the Institute for the Humanities to Kovács and Bence as well as the sociologist Zsolt Csálog. Neier probably had told Soros about the plans to have the Hungarians come stay at the Institute, and convinced him to provide the necessary funds for the fellowships.⁵⁸² Yet, the Hungarians were only the beginning of what after December 1981 expanded into a larger program. Soros would cover the skyrocketing expenses.

⁵⁸¹ On her second day in Budapest, Mária Kovács informed Laber that four cars with plainclothes policemen were following her. At the airport, Laber’s luggage was recalled and meticulously searched as she stood by watching. *Ibid.*, 156-59.

⁵⁸² Bence and Kovács probably arrived in New York in June or July 1982. Letter from Edmund White to George Soros, dated May 20, 1982. NYU Archive. NYUIH, Group No. 37.4, Series no I:A Box 1, Folder II—Board of Directors – George Soros.

III.2. The Polish Crisis & International Solidarity

III.2.1. Despair and Defiance, 1981-1982

When Jeri Laber visited Budapest in late November 1981, she had arrived shortly after the first issue of *Beszélő*, the ambiguous Hungarian title meaning ‘The Speaker’ but also visiting hours in jail, had appeared. Although the Poles and Czechs had already pioneered *samizdat*, the debate in Budapest about founding a Hungarian equivalent was hardly harmonious. The *Bibó Book* had already revealed differences in convictions, aspirations and sense of discretion.⁵⁸³ Different opinions about purpose and program of such a journal almost brought the idea to a premature end, when the explorative meeting in November 1980 adjourned inconclusively. Others, such as György Bence, had been opposed because of the inherent risk to those who still had proper jobs and families to feed.⁵⁸⁴

A small group consisting of György Petri, Bálint Nagy, Gábor Iván, Miklós Haraszti, János Kis, Sándor Szilágyi and Ferenc Kőszeg who had spoken in favor of a journal at the meeting, then met separately.⁵⁸⁵ Following the Polish and Czechoslovak examples, they believed the publication of such a journal to be guaranteed under Hungarian legislation and the Helsinki Accords. In defiance of authorities and to preempt possible charges of conspiracy, they editors put their addresses in the imprint. Echoing

⁵⁸³ Under much controversy, allegedly, two former key members of the opposition, Zoltán Zsille and György Krassó, were excluded, because they were considered “too radical.” Deeply offended, Zsille emigrated in 1980. Dalos, *Archipel Gulasch*, 76-78. Also Hans-Henning Paetzke, interviewed by the author, 24 November 2011, Budapest, Hungary.

⁵⁸⁴ Similar debates about reasonable risks raged in other opposition movements, for instance in Czechoslovakia between Ludvík Vaculík and Václav Havel. John Keane, *Vaclav Havel: A Political Tragedy In Six Acts* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 159-61. Years later, Bence looks back at the controversy in György Bence, “Political Justice in Post-Communist Societies: The Case of Hungary,” *Wilson Center for International Scholars: Global Europe Program* (1992).

⁵⁸⁵ Kőszeg, *K. története*, 327. Csizmadia, “Kis János,” 113.

the justification of the Charta 77, János Kis declared: “What we were doing was legal, so we took responsibility. [...] We had rights, human and constitutional rights!”⁵⁸⁶

The founders insisted that *Beszélő* was not to be an “oppositional reporter” for their own gratification. They hoped to provide factual information to generate a public debate. They strongly believed in the existence of a wider, alternative public. The events in Poland and Czechoslovakia, about which *Beszélő* reported regularly, turned into a source of inspiration. The Central European kinship encouraged the Hungarian opposition. It also monitored the discrimination against the Hungarian minorities in Romania and Czechoslovakia, which the official press deliberately ignored. As a service to this ‘second public’, the editors aspired “to help to the best of our abilities the quietly whispering masses to acquire a truer picture of themselves.”⁵⁸⁷ Aware of their small number, the editors outlined the inherently Hungarian dilemma in the first issue:

They say nothing is happening in Hungary. The people are happy when you leave them alone with politics; in their free time, they build family houses, raise chicken, mess around. The intelligentsia is closed off in their garden of culture; politics is let to the politicians. The churches collaborate with the state. The old guard of reactionaries and bourgeois democrats have died out; the communist movement’s revisionists no longer draw on their 1956 defeat. The authorities sometimes demonstrate their iron rules, but when they see that nobody buckles, they quickly put them away.⁵⁸⁸

For many, János Kádár had transformed into a caring father figure, a guarantor of stability and Hungarian prosperity.⁵⁸⁹ Breaking this complacency represented a challenge that László Rajk remembers well: “We were always blamed that we increase the tensions,

⁵⁸⁶ "Kis János," 114.

⁵⁸⁷ Allegedly, János Kádár had claimed that there were only “the two dwarfish minorities – the opposition and the country’s leadership.” The majority neither mattered nor cared. János Kis, Miklós Haraszti, and et. a., “Lapunk elé (Beszélő 1. szám),” in *Beszélő Összkiadás*, ed. János Rainer (Budapest AB- Beszélő, 1992), 12.

⁵⁸⁸ Copies of the first issue were not circulated until December. *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵⁸⁹ Gough, *A Good Comrade*, 195-205.

we should not [protest], because there is going to be some person worse than Kádár, so “just keep silent and go away,” they said.”⁵⁹⁰

The weak spot of the Kádár regime was its installation in the wake of the crushing of the Hungarian Revolution. Through *Beszélő* the opposition made the rehabilitation of 1956 a pillar of the opposition to the Hungarian authorities.⁵⁹¹ The first issue planned to appear on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution; it contained a reprint of the democratic program István Bibó had handed to the Indian Ambassador on November 5, 1956, the day after the Soviet Army’s return. Attacking the official interpretation of a counter-revolution was instrumental in delegitimizing the Kádár regime. The restoration of the proper memory of ’56 was the Hungarian equivalent to Václav Havel’s ‘living in truth’ and the Polish ‘us against them.’

In the summer of 1981, Rajk, Demszky and their friend Jenő Nagy set up the first, genuine *samizdat* publishing house in Hungary: the AB Kiadó. Rajk was in charge of layout and illustrations, Demszky of organizing and management.⁵⁹² Every Tuesday, László Rajk opened his apartment, which became known as the ‘Rajk bútik’, to showcase the AB publications. They offered translations of Polish and Czechoslovak *samizdat* as well as Western and Hungarian books, for instance those by György Konrád and the poet György Petri or George Orwell that had been banned. Demszky and Rajk also published

⁵⁹⁰ László Rajk, interviewed by the author, 26 January 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

⁵⁹¹ János Kis, interviewed by the author, 24 April 2012, Budapest, Hungary. Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek*, 47.

⁵⁹² György Konrád, "Visszatekintés a Szamizdatra (1990. januárjában)," in *Szamizdat '81-89. Válogatás a Hírmondó Folyóiratból* (Budapest: AB-Beszélő 1990).

Hungarian authors such as who could no longer publish officially.⁵⁹³ Radio Free Europe soon announced the weekly opening hours.⁵⁹⁴

The AB Kiadó and the 'butik' operated under the "quasi-political immunity" of Rajk's name and his father's fate. The authorities kept a close watch on the illegal bookstore. But it was clear that János Kádár would not put another László Rajk on trial.⁵⁹⁵ Although the regime had been co-opting the memory of Rajk, the former Interior Minister and victim of the Stalinist purges, people still remembered his reburial on 6 October 1956 as the beginning of the 1956 revolution and the prehistory to the Kádár regime.⁵⁹⁶ For the time being, the son was off limits.

II.2.2 The 'Fondation', a New Generation of Cold Warriors

The reason why the New Yorkers had "much to do" as Roger Straus had put it in April 1982 had less to do with Hungary but with Poland.⁵⁹⁷ The coincidental but fortunate turning point was the merging of interests between the organization that had brought István Eörsi to the U.S., Soros's midlife crisis and the New Yorkers' concern for human rights. The history of the so-called 'Fondation pour une entraide intellectuelle européenne,' the Foundation for Mutual Intellectual Understanding in Europe, dates back

⁵⁹³ Others were George Orwell's 1984, Béla Szász's *Volunteers for the Gallows*, Gyulla Illyés's 1956 poem *One sentence on tyranny* and Bill Lomax's 1956. An interview with Gábor Demszky and Jenő Nagy from *Beszélő* no. 3 in *Gegenstimmen*, no. 9, (October 1982): 25-26.

⁵⁹⁴ Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek*, 94.

⁵⁹⁵ This comment has been made in several interviews. Reference is to his father's show trial in September 1949. Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe. Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings*, 130. Rajk's mother Júlia, who still yielded influence over members of the Politbureau (e.g. György Aczél) was seriously ill. It was not the time to harass her son. She passed away on September 6, 1981. She was buried next to her husband in the Communist Pantheon. [László Rajk has since moved his parents' grave to a different location in the Kerepesi Cemetery.] Pető, *Júlia Rajk*, 184-86.

⁵⁹⁶ The anniversary of Rajk's birthday had been officially celebrated since 1959. In 1969, on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, the Pannónia street in Budapest was renamed László Rajk street. [It has been restored to its old name in the 1990s]. Since 1975, one of the dormitories of the Karl Marx University became the Rajk László Kollégium. *Júlia Rajk*, 176-84.

⁵⁹⁷ Letter from Roger Straus to George Soros, April 29, 1982. NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group 27.4 – series I: A Box 2, Folder 28: Roger Straus – Board of Trustees.

to the early days of the Cold War. Its predecessor, the 'Comité d'Écrivains et Éditeur pour une Entraide Européenne', had been founded at a Congress for Cultural Freedom meeting in Paris in 1957.⁵⁹⁸ Nine years later, on 7 July 1966, a remodeled Comité was legally certified in Switzerland under the name 'Fondation'.⁵⁹⁹

Initially, the organization was inextricably tied to the Congress for Cultural Freedom, whose offices in Paris it shared. The Fondation's long-time secretary Roselyne Chenu explained that the two organizations were identical, they had only registered under different addresses: The apartment that housed the headquarters stretched from the Boulevard Haussman on one end of the block to the Rue de la Pépinière on the other and had therefore two entrances.⁶⁰⁰ The simple but ingenious trick secured the Fondation's access to Eastern Europe, which otherwise would have been limited due to its association with and the name of the anti-Communist Congress.

The Fondation represented the classic type of anti-totalitarian liberalism, since its programs targeted left-wing *and* right-wing regimes in Europe's East and South respectively. It developed an impressive network throughout Eastern Europe, particularly in Hungary, which was – again – notoriously open to such advances. Although Roselyne Chenu vehemently denies any wrongdoing, the 1966 scandal about the C.I.A.'s involvement in the Congress for also seriously impacted the Fondation.⁶⁰¹ After the

⁵⁹⁸ Nicolas Guilhot, "A Network of Influential Friendships: the Fondation Pour Une Entraide Intellectuelle Européenne and East-West Cultural Dialogue, 1957-1991," *Minerva* (2006): 381. Roselyne Chenu, interviewed by the author, 3 July 2012, Paris, France.

⁵⁹⁹ The founding charter was signed in Zürich, Switzerland, by Hans Oprecht, Eduard Zellweger, Golo Mann, Herbert Lüthy, Jean Graven, Konstantin Jelenski, and François Bondy on July 7, 1966. HU OSA, 27 / Box 5 Listes des boursiers et documents divers [sd], Folder: Statuts.

⁶⁰⁰ Roselyne Chenu, interviewed by the author, 3 July 2012, Paris, France.

⁶⁰¹ Madame Chenu vehemently protested the demonization of the C.I.A. agent Michael Josselson, who she remembers as a cordial, polite character who genuinely cared about "his friends" in the Congress. Roselyne Chenu, interviewed by the author, 3 July 2012, Paris, France. In contrast: Pierre Grémion, *L'intelligence de*

Congress's partial re-structuring and name change in 1968, the Fondation continued operating under the Congress' successor, the International Association for Cultural Freedom. Due to the refinancing of the International Association, the subordinated Fondation also depended on future funding from the Ford Foundation.

In 1974, after six years of tug of war between Ford and the IACF, the British international relations expert, Adam Watson, became the Association's president and as such the Fondation's director general. He announced optimistically: "I believe the momentum of the work has now been restored. Certainly the staff of this office find themselves with more work than they can get through in the week."⁶⁰² Although himself a former agent in the British Foreign Ministry's Information Research Department, Watson believed the C.I.A. scandal would soon be forgotten.⁶⁰³ Such declarations were imperative because the Ford Foundation insisted the Association would divest itself of the legacy of the Congress. Watson explained the new agenda:

The IACF is [...] less concerned with the public proclamation in the free world of the value of cultural freedom, [...] and more with helping individuals and groups struggling to think and create independently and sincerely in countries where this is difficult but not impossible.⁶⁰⁴

Not only the Ford Foundation's demands but also the change in international relations in the mid-1970s, the decade of détente, had exacted adjustments. Chenu recalls how she had tired of the overburdening administrative tasks – reports, fundraising, applications – that took her away from the Fondation's 'real' work: the meetings, the

l'anticommunisme. Le Congrès pour la Liberté de la Culture à Paris (1950-1970) (Paris: Fayard, 1995); Hans-Rüdiger Minow, "Benutzt und gesteuert. Künstler im Netz der CIA," (2006).

⁶⁰² Memo by Adam Watson to members of the Board, 15 July 1974. HU OSA 27 / 1 à 2 Rapports d'activités, 1973-1991, Box 1.

⁶⁰³ For more on the controversies around the Information Research Department, see Timothy Garton Ash, "Orwell's List," *New York Review of Books* 50, no. 14 (2003).

⁶⁰⁴ Memo by Adam Watson to members of the Board, 15 July 1974. HU OSA 27 / 1 à 2 Rapports d'activités, 1973-1991, Box 1.

exchanges, the conferences, the travels behind the Iron Curtain.⁶⁰⁵ At a council meeting in March 1975, Chenu and the Fondation's president, Hans Oprecht, resigned. It was also the last time the name of the Fondation's C.I.A. liaison, Michael Josselson, appeared in the documents.⁶⁰⁶ Josselson passed away in his Swiss home in 1978 after years of illness.

Concomitantly, the board reconsidered the Fondation's purpose. The Ford Foundation deliberated on whether to give up the International Association or not. Hence, it became paramount to emphasize the Fondation's independence and intrinsic value to secure separate and continued funding. That year alone, the Fondation extended travel grants to eight Poles, seven Yugoslavs, four Hungarians and four Romanians. It mailed 354 books and 29 subscriptions to 112 individuals in Poland (50), Romania (21) Hungary (17), and Czechoslovakia (13).⁶⁰⁷ In March 1975, the council's members the founder and the French poet Pierre Emmanuel, the Swiss Social Democrat Kurt Reiniger, the Swiss journalist and editor of *Preuves* and *Die Weltwoche*, François Bondy, and the Polish émigré writer Constantin Jelenski elected Adam Watson to the Fondation's board. In response to Ford's request to diversify the board, Jelenski suggested the long-time Congress member and board member of the International Association since 1968, the

⁶⁰⁵ Madame Chenu for instance complained that she had never had an assistant to help her with the paperwork. Roselyne Chenu, interviewed by the author, 3 July 2013, Paris, France.

During the Council meeting on June 3, 1978, Constantin Jelenski proposed to suggest to Roselyne Chenu to resign from the board, because she had explicitly rejected to participate in any fundraising efforts. Since the 'French quota' had been met, he preferred to add a new member to the board who was willing to raise funds. Chenu conceded to the request in a letter from 13 July 1978. Procès verbal de la Réunion du Conseil de la Fondation pour une Entraide Intellectuelle Européenne du 3 juin 1978 à Paris. HU OSA 27 / 4 Réunions du Conseil de fondation, 1975-1991.

⁶⁰⁶ Procès verbal de la Réunion du Conseil de la Fondation pour une Entraide Intellectuelle Européenne du 10 mars 1975 à Paris. HU OSA 27 / 4 Réunions du Conseil de fondation, 1975-1991.

⁶⁰⁷ Report to the Ford Foundation 1975, International Association for Cultural Freedom, April 1976, HU OSA 26'1 Corresp. Ford-Foudation 1977-1982 [box4]. Folder [green unnamed].

influential editor of the German weekly *Die Zeit* Marion Dönhoff, who accepted the nomination.⁶⁰⁸

Jelenski also introduced a newcomer to the Fondation, the possible replacement for Chenu Annette Laborey. However, board members worried about Laborey's "youth" and lack of experience; she was only welcomed in an advisory function. Six months later, Laborey was elected general secretary. Little did the board know that under Laborey's leadership, the Fondation would soon expand exponentially. She promptly co-authored new bylaws, which favored support for repressed critics over the Congress's practice of cooperating with the socialist regimes:

The Foundation gives grants to non-conformist intellectuals from Eastern Europe who do not qualify for officially sponsored exchange programs. The Foundation invites applicants who have been recommended to it by trusted friends in Eastern or Western Europe and has thus gained the confidence of three generations of men and women in Eastern Europe.⁶⁰⁹

With the death of the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco in November 1975, right-wing regimes had disappeared from the European map, so that the Fondation could focus exclusively on Eastern Europe. In 1977, the Ford Foundation decided to cease funding the International Association, leaving the Fondation's future in limbo. In September 1977, Constantin Jelenski who had left the Fondation the year before assured his friend Francis "Frank" Sutton, officer at the Ford Foundation:

I will continue to take the same active interest in the Fondation's program and activities. Indeed, I consider the existence of a small secretariat of the Fondation under the competent, devoted and imaginative direction of Annette Laborey as an indispensable condition for pursuing my personal involvement in Eastern European cultural affairs, since I could not possibly respond to the numerous

⁶⁰⁸ Procès verbal de la Réunion du Conseil de la Fondation pour une Entraide Intellectuelle Européenne du 10 mars 1975 à Paris. HU OSA 27 / 4 Réunions du Conseil de fondation, 1975-1991.

⁶⁰⁹ Supplement to the annual report of activities of the Fondation for 1975 and 1976 to the Ford Foundation. International Association for Cultural Freedom, International Secretariat, no date given, presumably late 1976/ early 1977. HU OSA 26'1 Corresp. Ford-Fondation 1977-1982 [box4]. Folder [green unnamed].

requests which are addressed to me personally from my friends in that area [...]. Short of letting my friends down, I therefore admit to a “personal” stake in the Fondation’s future.⁶¹⁰

To demonstrate the huge leap the Fondation had recently made, Laborey compared budget and activities of 1975 and 1976, concluding that the increase in activities had doubled the expenses – to over FF 400,000 – for stipends, books, subscriptions, and meetings. To maintain such levels of activity, the Fondation urgently needed a commitment from Ford.⁶¹¹ Against the Fondation’s basic principles, Laborey revealed details of several Polish and Hungarian grantees, among them for example Władysław Bartoszewski, survivor of the Warsaw Uprising and member of the newly founded KOR, and the Hungarian writer Miklós Meszöly. She took a great risk not only because she worried about the loss of trust, but because as a tax-exempt foundation, the Ford Foundation was legally prohibited from supporting political organizations. To dispense doubts, Laborey insisted that KOR was actually not a political but a non-partisan organization for the defense of human rights.⁶¹²

Ford accepted Laborey’s argument and extended another three-year-grant. At the council meeting in December 1977, Laborey outlined its strict conditions: chief among them was Ford’s expectation that the Fondation, unquestionably a European organization, attract support from European sources so that by the end of the grant it could sustain itself

⁶¹⁰ To illustrate the importance of the Fondation’s support for Polish intellectuals, he send along a *samizdat* article by Jacek Bochenski, to be published in *Index on Censorship*, and Tom Stoppard’s article on the situation in Czechoslovakia. Letter by Constantin Jelenski to Frank Sutton, 2 September 1977. HU OSA 26’1 corresp. Ford Foundation A 1977- 1982. Tom Stoppard, "Prague: The Story of the Chartists," *New York Review of Books* 24, no. 13 (1977).

⁶¹¹ Report by Annette Laborey to Francis Sutton, 20 November 1977. HU OSA 26’1 corresp. Ford Foundation A 1977- 1982.

⁶¹² HU OSA, Supplement to the annual report of activities of the Foundation for 1975 and 1976 to the Ford Foundation. International Association for Cultural Freedom, International Secretariat, no date given, presumably late summer or fall 1976. HU OSA 26’1 Corresp. Ford-Foudation 1977-1982 [box4]. Folder [green unnamed].

independently from Ford. Secondly, the council ought to diversify nationally and reflect the West European host countries proportionally. Finally, Ford demanded the Fondation cut administrative costs and submit biannual progress reports.⁶¹³ In lieu of an alternative, the Fondation could only promise to comply.

In response, Laborey bombarded the Ford offices with newspaper clippings and letters by or about the Fondation's East European grantees. Among those were a thank you letter from the Czech playwright and signatory of the Charter 77 Pavel Kohout and an article from the *International Herald Tribune* about a police raid in Adam Michnik's apartment, the KOR member and "close friend of the Fondation."⁶¹⁴ While in Paris with a grant from the Fondation in 1977, he had written *The Church, the Left: A Dialogue*. Banned in Poland, the Fondation had arranged for a French publication in *du Seuil*.⁶¹⁵ In response to feedback she got on one of her trip to Czechoslovakia and Poland in early 1978, Laborey organized a colloquium in neutral Austria to "enable scholars and writers from Eastern Europe who are not on their governments' exchange lists to meet colleagues from the West."⁶¹⁶

Despite such activities, the Fondation failed to secure additional financial resources. The Fondation's leadership could only point to the promising changes in Eastern Europe that its grantees helped to bring about. President Reiniger informed the

⁶¹³ Ford required: 1) A "systematic campaign" to raise funds in Switzerland, Germany and France "in the forthcoming months;" 2.) "a modestly expanded [board] to provide greater geographic representation;" 3.) "An outside advisory group of distinguished intellectual and artistic personalities [...];" 4.) reduction of administrative costs through renting free office space in municipal or governmental buildings; 5.) board membership was to be limited to three years, renewable only once;" 6.) no remuneration for the board; 7.) to cut costs, cooperation with similar foundations was to be explored; 8.) "A publication on Fondation objectives and work will be prepared shortly for distribution in Europe." Letter by Francis Sutton to Dr. Kurt Reiniger, 9 February 1978. HU OSA 26'1 corresp. Ford Foundation 1977- 1982 A.

⁶¹⁴ See the copies attached to Annette Laborey's letters to Francis Sutton, 10 January 1978 and 27 February 1978. Both in HU OSA 26'1 corresp. Ford Foundation 1977- 1982 A.

⁶¹⁵ Michnik, *L'Église et la Gauche: le dialogue polonais*.

⁶¹⁶ Mid-year report by Kurt Reiniger and Annette Laborey to Francis Sutton, 30 June 1978. HU OSA 26'1 corresp. Ford Foundation 1977- 1982 A.

Ford officers that the newly elected Pope, former Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, had indicated his interest in Michnik's upcoming publication:

Pope John Paul II is a distinguished philosopher deeply engaged in the intellectual life of Poland. While he appears to share the moderately conservative position of the Polish Church in matters of faith, he is an advocate of an open dialogue with nonbelievers and he is deeply committed [sic] to the principles of Human Rights, including freedom of intellectual expression. He is thus familiar with the existence of our Fondation and appreciates its unique importance through his personal friendships with some of our closest friends and advisers in Poland, both among liberal Catholics and among dissenting radicals.⁶¹⁷

The Fondation barely survived the first year without the International Association. For 1979, Laborey submitted two prospective budget plans to the Ford Foundation, one optimistic and one realistic.⁶¹⁸ Ford conceded an exceptional grant of \$75,000. Alarmed by the dire situation, Marion Dönhoff, who despite the initial euphoria of joining the Fondation's board had abstained from the meetings, arranged for a donation from *Die Zeit* Foundation.⁶¹⁹ Given the nature of its program, long-term planning and indeterminable visa applications, the Fondation could only function properly with a long-term financial commitment.⁶²⁰

In 1979, relief came when a new cohort of officers took over the Ford Foundation's international affairs section. Laborey again bent the rules of confidentiality and named the Fondation's prospective grantees of 1980: from Poland, Barbara

⁶¹⁷ Report and estimated budget for 1979 by Kurt Reiniger to Francis Sutton, 27 October 1978. HU OSA 26'1 corresp. Ford Foundation 1977- 1982 A.

⁶¹⁸ Version B of the budget estimate implied \$75,000 from Ford, \$20,000 from the Lily Endowment (a legacy of the IACF), \$15,000 from the Europahaus Vienna (for the planned scholarly meeting); \$10,000 from a charitable auction, and \$18,000 from miscellaneous sources. With the total of \$138,000 the Fondation could barely meet the running expenses for projects, administration, office and staff (three full salaries including benefits at \$59,000). Report and estimated budget for 1979 by Kurt Reiniger to Francis Sutton, 27 October 1978. HU OSA 26'1 corresp. Ford Foundation 1977- 1982 A.

⁶¹⁹ Letter by Laborey to Felice D. Gaer, 31 May 1979. HU OSA 26'1 corresp. Ford-Foundation 1977-1982 A. Folder: Ford 1979.

⁶²⁰ Letter by Annette Laborey to Francis Sutton, 16 November 1979. HU OSA 26'1 corresp. Ford-Foundation 1977-1982 A. Folder: Ford 1979.

Torunczyk and Stanisław Baranczak; from Czechoslovakia Ivan Klima and Ludwig Vaculík; and from Hungary János Kis, György Bence, Sándor Radnoti.⁶²¹ All of them were household names of the new opposition movements in Eastern Europe. Swayed by Laborey's charm offensive, in January 1980 the Ford officers agreed to \$20,000 in additional funds, and another \$55,000 subject to revision for the rest of the year.⁶²²

Nevertheless, by June 1980, Laborey was so exhausted that she informed the council members to prepare for the Foundation's liquidation. Unless they raised a staggering \$40,000 within three weeks, they would have to close down at the beginning of October. She proposed that they raised the employees' salaries not only by the usual 10% but by 40% to secure them proper unemployment benefits.⁶²³ Two months later, however, with the beginning of the strikes in Poland and the signing of the Gdańsk Agreement in August 1980, Laborey recovered her energy and enthusiasm. Proudly, she wrote:

The latest events in Poland should make it as clear to 'Western' observers as it always was to our friends in Eastern Europe that the work accomplished over the years by our Foundation is of crucial importance. As you know, all members of the K.O.R. group [...] have either received travel grants or books (etc.) from the Foundation. More than half of the Polish intellectuals who have signed the letter of solidarity with the Gdansk strikers are in the same case.⁶²⁴

Hope for change in Poland became hope for the Foundation. In the fall of 1980, three young Polish scholars, members of KOR and associates of Solidarność, Aleksandr

⁶²¹ Letter by Annette Laborey to Felice D. Gaer, 13 December 1979. HU OSA 26/1 Ford-Foundation corresp. 1977—1982 A.

⁶²² Further installments would only be released if they acquired matching funds: for every \$1 from Ford \$1.50 from outside sources. Additionally, Ford now required quarterly, not just annual reports. Ford Foundation Grant No 780-0125B, signed by Howard Dressner, Secretary, 30 January 1980. HU OSA 26'1 Ford-Foundation corresp. 1977—1982 A.

⁶²³ Letter by Annette Laborey to members of the Council, 3 June 1980. HU OSA 27 / 4 Réunions du Conseil de fondation, 1975-1991

⁶²⁴ Letter by Annette Laborey to Francis Sutton, 5 September 1980. HU OSA 26'1 Ford-Foundation corresp. 1977—1982 A. Folder [blue grey].

Smolar, Barbara Torunczyk, and Krzysztof Pomian, were staying with Laborey in Paris.⁶²⁵ In November, she flew to New York to get to know and seek advice from her new contact at the Ford Foundation, Felice Gaer.⁶²⁶

The events in Poland had changed the entire region dramatically. Correspondingly, the Ford Foundation issued a grant of \$325,000 for the following three years, \$50,00 of which were to be used as “emergency assistance” for Poles. Each year, the Fondation was expected to raise matching funds of \$75,000. In addition to more objective, non-discriminatory selection criteria (the vast majority of grantees were men), Ford requested a report from each grant recipient.⁶²⁷ Relieved, Laborey wrote: “1980 was a decisive year for the life and survival of the Fondation.”⁶²⁸ The Polish events had fundamentally altered the dynamics of the Cold War, and allowed the Fondation to demonstrate its experience and vast network:

The demands which we receive for works in philosophy, sociology, and literary criticism, history, economy, art – all inaccessible in east Europe – are more and more numerous. They are three times larger than our current possibilities can satisfy. Therefore, we are trying to create veritable ‘travelling libraries’ in Poland, Hungary, Romania, and even in Bulgaria. To achieve that goal, we have to send and resend books with recommended couriers. We have to establish a system of control to make sure that the books and magazines do not ‘disappear’ after they have crossed the border. Moreover, we have to have friends who don’t lack the courage to fill their suitcase with books, which otherwise would not arrive at their destination.⁶²⁹

⁶²⁵ Ibid.

⁶²⁶ The two women had quickly become friends and shared stories about motherhood. On February 5, 1979, Gaer had sent Laborey a letter congratulating her on her son’s birth. On January 29, 1980, Laborey asked: “I do very much hope that everything will go well for you and that we will soon receive good news from your baby.” At the end of her letter, she reminded her American friend: “have a glass of champagne every once in a while – that’s much better for the baby than Coca-Cola, believe me.” Letter by Annette Laborey to Felice Gaer, 8 December 1980. HU OSA 26/1 Ford-Foundation corresp. 1977—1982 A. Folder [blue grey]. The second letter in HU OSA 26/1 Ford-Foundation corresp. 1977- 1982 A.

⁶²⁷ Grant Number 810-0352, 30 March, 1981. HU OSA 26/ 1 Ford-Foundation corresp. 1977—1982 A.

⁶²⁸ Rapport d’activités pour l’année 1980. HU OSA 27 / 1 à 2 Rapports d’activités, 1973-1991.

⁶²⁹ Rapport d’activités pour l’année 1980. HU OSA 27 / 1 à 2 Rapports d’activités, 1973-1991.

Nevertheless, the problem of finding additional donors did not subside. The Fondation's president speculated about the underlying problem:

Fund-raising in Europe has revealed to be more difficult than we thought. It seems to be essentially a political problem in Europe now where we observe a general negative attitude towards extra governmental activities which might affect 'détente' considered as more important than ever.⁶³⁰

Therefore, the Fondation aspired to expand to the U.S., where philanthropy was a cherished tradition. Several exiled writers, who had come to fame in the U.S., such as Czesław Miłosz and Leszek Kołakowski, were "friends" of the Fondation and offered their nominal support.⁶³¹

The Polish events became a matter of heart, Laborey's Polish guests became good friends. She particularly cared for the historian Barbara Torunczyk, who wanted to go to the U.S. but might be "too political." In March, she asked the Ford officers: "I thought contacting Sophie Silverberg of the Fund for Free Expression and Mr. Aryeh Neier of the New York Institute for the Humanities, whom you introduced me to while in New York, but I would like to have your advice [...] before doing so."⁶³²

Although she had just returned from a two-week trip to Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary, she planned to return to the U.S. in October 1981 to survey the possibilities of setting up an American branch of the Fondation.⁶³³ At about this time, Eörsi must have

⁶³⁰ Letter by Kurt Reiniger to Francis Sutton, 1 December 1980. HU OSA 26/ 1 Ford-Foundation corresp. 1977—1982 A.

⁶³¹ Letter by Laborey to Felice Gaer, 21 July 1981. HU OSA 26/ 1 Ford-Foundation corresp. 1977—1982 A.

⁶³² For this exchange see Annette Laborey's letter, 30 March, 1981. Gaer however was on maternity leave, and her replacement responded positively to Laborey's inquiry on April 23, 1981, further suggesting the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars and the National Humanities Center in D.C. HU OSA 26/ 1 Ford-Foundation corresp. 1977—1982 A.

⁶³³ Laborey also congratulated Gaer on the birth of her son; however, Gaer had just been dismissed. Their letters must have crossed; four days prior to Laborey's, Gaer had added in handwriting: "Annette – We have had a debacle at the foundation – some 30 persons are to be dismissed, myself among them. We should talk soon if you are interest in pursuing the matters noted above [the tax-exempt committee of American friends] since it may elapse otherwise and I shall be gone... (but not forgotten??). Felice." Letter by Laborey to Felice Gaer, 21 July 1981. HU OSA 26/ 1 Ford-Foundation corresp. 1977—1982 A.

reported about his stay in the U.S. Unsure what to make of the stories, in September 1981, she inquired at the Ford Foundation:

[...] I would like to find out the address of a man whose name is George SOROS (of hungarian origin)w. [sic] I was told about him in Budapest; he seems to be a business man in New York, who has settled up [sic] some “New York Academy” which is run mainly by a woman called Svetlana STONE [sic]. Have you ever heard about this Institution? I would be very glad to know it’s address [sic].⁶³⁴

The Ford officers did not know Soros, but suggested instead to contact Aryeh Neier and Robert Bernstein. Neier recalled in a typical matter-of-fact tone:

At a certain point [Annette Laborey] talked to me about her interest in bringing some of the East European intellectuals with whom she was in contact to the United States for fellowships or appointments or visiting scholars. I liked that idea.⁶³⁵

Seeing an opportunity to enlarge the Institute’s network, Neier promised to help. The matter became even more urgent as the situation in Poland escalated shortly after their meeting. On 13 December 1981, General Wojciech Jaruzelski declared martial law in Poland and put a violent end to Solidarity.⁶³⁶ With the country under lockdown, the Fondation’s Polish grantees could no longer return home. Without hesitation, Laborey began looking for employment opportunities and host institutions for at least eighty-one Poles who were stranded abroad. For these Polish emergency grants, the Fondation alone dispensed with over FF 270,000 and DM 13,000, about U.S. \$ 54,000 and \$ 5,460 respectively at the time.⁶³⁷

⁶³⁴ Letter from Annette Laborey to Felice D. Gaer, 3 September 1981, HU OSA (uncatalogued) FEIE 26`1, Correspondence Ford Foundation 1977-1983 [box 4], Folder: Ford Foundation 1981.

⁶³⁵ Aryeh Neier, interviewed by author, New York, NY, USA, February 27, 2012.

⁶³⁶ Garton Ash, *Solidarity*, 273-83. Also see the last part of the documents collection, “Crackdown,” in Byrne and Paczkowski, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: the Polish Crisis, 1980-1981*, 459-98.

⁶³⁷ HU OSA (uncatalogued), 27 / 5 Listes des boursiers et documents divers Bourses 1982 I. Polonais retenus en occident après le 13.12.1981.

In response to the declaration of martial law in Poland, the board of the Institute for the Humanities decided on “something of an emergency step”: it would host three of the Foundation’s Polish scholars.⁶³⁸ In July 1982, in a letter to George Soros, the current director, the novelist Edmund White, explained the situation and the contribution of the new East European fellows:

For the spring term, we have had three Poles who were stranded in the United States after the declaration of martial law in Poland. They are Barbara Torunczyk, Jaroslaw Anders and Ewa Kuryluk. The fourth is Andras Kovacs, the distinguished Hungarian sociologist. For the fall, we have had four acceptances as well. They are Zsolt Csalog, Gyorgy Bence, Predrag Matvejevich and Gyorgy Conrad [sic].

These Visiting Fellows have made a remarkable contribution to the intellectual life of the Institute. Ewa Kuryluk [...] has brought her own point of view to the seminar on Sex, Gender and Consumerism, which is made up primarily of American feminists. This has proved to be a fascinating, sometimes fiery, always fruitful exchange. Similarly, Jaroslaw Anders has been an active member of Michael Scammel’s Censorship Seminar. In fact, he has been such a valuable participant that the Fellowship Committee of the Institute has named him a Fellow for the coming year.⁶³⁹

In the same letter, White informed Soros about the Institute’s precarious financial situation. For Soros, the declaration of martial law became the moment when he could make himself indispensable. For the academic year 1982-83, he pledged to donate \$95,000, more than twice as much as NYU. For two years, the Institute had been on the verge of closing down; now it had budget of over \$270,000 available.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁸ Letter from Edmund White to George Soros, dated May 20, 1982. NYU Archive. NYUIH, Group No. 37.4, Series no I:A Box 1, Folder II: Board of Directors – George Soros.

⁶³⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁰ On 4 November 1983, the annual budget, listed the following positions: NYIH Board as of 9/82: 40,000. Open Society Fund: 95,000. New York Council for the Humanities: 37,000. MacArthur Foundation: 30,000. Philip L. Graham Foundation: 10,000. Stanley Marcus: 10,000. Friends of the Institute: 5,000 (common call for \$250 each to become a friend). New York University: 43,000. Total: 270,600. NYU Archive. NYUIH, Group 37.4, Series I: A Box 2, Folder: Board of Trustees – General 1981-84: Board of Trustees Meeting.

The coincidence of financial distress, the Polish crisis and Soros's generosity allowed a new network between New York, Paris and Eastern Europe to emerge. Apparently, Neier had kept his promise and introduced Laborey to Soros. In Paris, she had opened up not only the Fondation's office, but also her home to the stranded Poles. In February 1982, Adam Watson described the situation as "[Our] small office is inundated with Poles."⁶⁴¹ Within six months of martial law, the Fondation expanded its support to 129 Poles sending sixteen to England, twelve to Germany, five to Sweden, two to Holland and one each to Austria and Spain, while ninety-two stayed in France.⁶⁴²

In June 1982, Laborey could finally announce to the Ford Foundation that they had acquired matching funds. In June, George Soros's newly founded Open Society Fund promised a donation of \$20,000 for the rest of 1982, followed by another \$35,000 exclusively for the Poles in December.⁶⁴³ In response to the Polish tragedy, the Ford Foundation provided another \$50,000 "emergency support for stranded Poles" for the second half of 1982.⁶⁴⁴ All of the sudden, the Fondation found itself flush with money.

Not only the Poles benefitted from the sudden surge in interest. Over 40% of the Fondation's general fund in 1982, which had increased considerably in the wake of the Polish events, actually went to thirty-three recipients in Hungary, among them András

⁶⁴¹ Letter by Adam Watson to "Frank," Francis Sutton, 23 February 1982. HU OSA 26/ 1 Ford-Foundation corresp. 1977—1982 A.

⁶⁴² One of those stranded, Barbara Danicka, became Laborey's assistant and interpreter. Letter by Annette Laborey to Francis Sutton, 17 May 1982. HU OSA 26/ 1 Ford-Foundation corresp. 1977—1982 A.

⁶⁴³ The letter from the Open Society Fund, dated 23 June 1982, was signed by Sophie Silberberg, member of the Fund for Free Expression and Helsinki Watch, who at the time had also assumed the role of Vice President and Treasurer for the OSF. In addition to the \$16,000 from the NYU Institute, they received \$12,000 from the International Fund of New Jersey, over \$1,000 from the New York Academy of Sciences, AS 200,000 Austrian Shilling from the Dr. Bruno Kreisky Foundation, SF 10,000 Swiss francs from Ladys & Gyr Foundation, and smaller private donations from France, England and Germany. Report from 29 June, 1982, by Annette Laborey to William Hertz, Deputy Secretary at the Ford Foundation. HU OSA 26/ 1 Ford-Foundation corresp. 1977—1982 A. Letter by Soros's assistant Jackie D. MacGregor to Annette Laborey, 23 June 1982. HU OSA 26/ 1 Ford-Foundation corresp. 1977—1982 A.

⁶⁴⁴ Financial Position December 31, 1982, composed by Annette Laborey, signed on 31 March 1983. HU OSA 26/ 2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991 Box 5, Folder: Ford Foundation 1983.

Kovács, János Kenedi, and the two philosophers Ágnes Erdélyi and Vilmos Soós, who Jeri Laber had met in November 1981.⁶⁴⁵ The year before, Aryeh Neier had established the ‘Writers in Exile’ program at the Institute, and Soros saw to it that his money would be invested in East European fellows. Neier relied on Laborey’s recommendation for potential fellows.⁶⁴⁶ The three made up a powerful trio: Neier had the know-how, Soros the money, and Laborey the connections.

The Institute’s annual report for 1982-83 argued: “The [Writers in Exile] program provides members of the East European intellectual community with the opportunity to enlarge their knowledge of American life and ideas.”⁶⁴⁷ But not only the East Europeans profited from the cultural exchange, the New Yorkers did so too. In July 1982, when György Bence presented in the “Writing and Politics” series, he sought to dispel the West’s positive image of Hungary as a country with “more intellectual and cultural freedom.”⁶⁴⁸ Bence tried to explain the sophisticated system of censorship and manipulation that “Comrade Aczél, the big cultural boss in our country” had established in his home country. Like Jeri Laber prior to her visit in November 1981, most of the audience was probably ignorant of the details of Hungary’s regime. To explain the dilemmas of Hungarian culture, he used references to better known Soviet and Nazi era

⁶⁴⁵ The artist couple Julia Klaniczay and György Galantai spent time in Italy. Klaniczay’s younger brother Gábor travelled to France. András Kovács first went to New York, then to France for a translation project. The sculptor György Jovánovics and the editor Ferenc Kőszeg went to Germany. The art historian Miklós Péternak spent time in the Belgium and the Netherlands. Bourses 1982. Programme General. HU OSA 27 / 5 Listes des boursiers et documents divers [sd]. Catégorie: Conseil de Fondation / secretariat.

⁶⁴⁶ Aryeh Neier, interviewed by the author, New York, NY, USA, February 27, 2012.

⁶⁴⁷ Annual Report 1982-83. NYU Archive. NYUIH, Group 37.4, Series I: A Box 2, Folder 14: Board of Trustees—Meeting 5/6/1983.

⁶⁴⁸ NYU Archive. NYUIH Series III: Audio Tapes – Subseries A: 41-5. Gyorgy Bence.

artists. His rendition fascinated the Americans and thrilled the East Europeans in the audience.⁶⁴⁹

A few months later, in December 1982, George Soros gave a presentation at the Institute, “The Credit Crisis of 1981,” in which he outlined the interplay between economic and political forces on the international market, using the example of the crises in Latin America and Poland in the previous year. The Polish events had made investments in all of Eastern Europe risky, aggravating the shortage of hard currency in the socialist states. Imitating the International Monetary Fund’s assessment, Soros suggested: “The Hungarians are awfully good boys, they are cooperating.” However, the international financial system was entirely reliant on political stability, which the current situation did not offer.

The passionate debate following his talk, particularly with the Russian émigré economist, Vassily Leontieff, highlights how quickly Soros had been accepted into the intellectual circle.⁶⁵⁰ “Such people provoked and challenged Soros’s thinking,” his biographer Kaufman summarizes,

Soros was enjoying himself. His social life was becoming much more varied and satisfying than it had ever been. [...] He met émigré writers and through them was introduced to the poet Allen Ginsberg, who was to become a life-long friend.⁶⁵¹

Soros’s talk in 1982 alluded to the philosophical foundation of his coming philanthropic commitment to Eastern Europe. Combining his belief in Karl Popper’s

⁶⁴⁹ Ewa Kuryluk, one of the stranded Poles, asked about social taboos; a lawyer from Belgrade was amazed by the similarities with Yugoslavia. An American asked Bence to once again clarify whether there was formal censorship or not.

⁶⁵⁰ George Soros, “The Credit Crisis of 1981,” delivered on 10 December 1982, NYU Archive, Series II: Audiotapes – Subseries A: 44-2, George Soros. Note that Quantum Fund in fact suffered huge losses in 1981, from which, however, it recovered in a year.

⁶⁵¹ One should also note that in 1983 Soros married his second wife, Susan Weber, seventeen years his junior. Kaufman, *Soros. The Life and Times*, 180.

theories on open and closed societies with his expertise in finance, he was convinced that the boom-and-bust cycle did not only apply to financial markets but to societies as well. If he was to help his new friends from Eastern Europe turn closed societies into open societies, he had to exploit “far from equilibrium” moments, and Soros – like the Hungarian dissidents – believed the Polish crisis constituted such a moment.⁶⁵² His millions allowed him to capitalize on the opportunity and test his theories in practice.

The case of György Konrád best demonstrates the intellectual alignment and the mutual benefit of the network for New Yorkers and East Europeans alike. He arrived at the Institute for the Humanities probably in late 1983.⁶⁵³ Richard Sennett was exhilarated. In his review of Konrád’s *The Loser* for the *New York Times*, he had compared the Hungarian to the already successful émigré writers Joseph Brodsky and the Yugoslav in Paris Danilo Kiš, “a Proust of disillusion,” Sennett exclaimed.⁶⁵⁴ He claimed:

There is much talk about modernism being dead. [...] In fact, this is cultural provincialism. In Eastern Europe, where literary modernism is officially forbidden or strongly disapproved of, writers have kept its spirit alive. They have done so by incorporating within it the harshest realities of political power. [...] Through the plate glass of our liberty, we are watching the politically oppressed make noble use of our heritage and artistic freedom.⁶⁵⁵

The Loser fascinated Sennett because it was a fictional account reminiscent of Konrád’s autobiographical speech in Venice. Adding complexity and creative elements,

⁶⁵² The earliest Soros put his theories that combined his philanthropy, philosophy and financial expertise into writing is George Soros, *The Alchemy of Finance: Reading the Mind of the Market* (New York, N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1987). See the chapters “The Theory of Investing” and “Theory in Action” in George Soros, Byron Wien, and Krisztina Koenen, *Soros on Soros. Staying ahead of the Curve*. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1995), 65-107. See the last chapter “The Boom-Bust Pattern” in George Soros, *Underwriting Democracy. Encouraging Free Enterprise and Democratic Reform Among the Soviets and in Eastern Europe* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 222-43.

⁶⁵³ The Institute’s Ten-Year Report, which was most likely written in 1986 or 1987, lists Konrád as fellow starting 1985. That, however, is incorrect, since correspondence confirms his presence at the Institute in January 1984.

⁶⁵⁴ Konrad, *The Loser*.

⁶⁵⁵ Richard Sennett, “A Dark Novel from Eastern Europe: The Loser by George Konrad,” *New York Times*, 26 September 1982.

Konrád had produced a rendition of Jewish-Hungarian history since the nineteenth century from the perspective of a middle-aged former government official who has found himself in a psychiatric hospital. On March 30, 1984, it was Konrád's turn to present in the "Writing and Politics" series. He reiterated the familiar themes of his latest novel and his biography: the Holocaust, the revolution of 1956 and his marginalization in the current system of censorship in Hungary.⁶⁵⁶ Five years had passed since his interview in *Die Zeit*, and he had come to accept the label 'dissident', which regardless of his earlier qualms had acquired a distinct added value in the West:

How did I become a dissident? I don't like the fight – I see it as a kind of stupidity. For me censorship is not a dramatic question, but a stupid one, it is the idiotism... Crime is never smart, [it is] always somehow banal. Crime is our unficated stupidity [sic], [like] politics. It is the unified stupidity of a nation.⁶⁵⁷

Konrád portrayed himself as a humanist intellectual and peaceful, likeable victim to the historic misfortune of his birthplace. He recalled how quickly he was integrated in the New York circle of cosmopolitan intellectuals and human rights activists:

I was then invited to this party in the apartment of Jeri Laber, because she was active in this whole human rights thing. Every Wednesday morning – way too early! – we would meet in the office of Random House because the boss of Random House and other important people, probably with the support of Soros, were holding these regular meetings. And from that work, Helsinki Watch developed.⁶⁵⁸

Konrád recalls how he and Soros quickly became friends and how Soros wanted to be a different type of philanthropist:

Gyuri [Soros] had all these ideas that he wanted to pursue. His school friends István Eörsi and György Litván were part of the dissident movement here in Budapest. And he wanted to do something in that area. Once, I was again invited

⁶⁵⁶ Konrád recalled in very rich detail how he survived the extermination of his village in Southern Hungary during World War II. George Konrad: "The Dilemmas of the New Novel," 30 March 1984. NYU Archives, Series III: Audio Tapes, Subseries A.47.8.

⁶⁵⁷ George Konrad: "The Dilemmas of the New Novel," 30 March 1984. NYU Archives, Series III: Audio Tapes, Subseries A.47.8.

⁶⁵⁸ György Konrád, interviewed by the author, 24 July 2009, Hegymagas, Hungary.

to his apartment in New York, and there were all these dignified gentlemen, all of them worked in these foundations [...]. And George, Gyuri, was very eager to learn and to listen.⁶⁵⁹

The network in New York, which had expanded dramatically since the Venice Biennale in December 1977, rushed not only to assist the Poles, but also backed Konrad in time of need. Upon his arrival in New York, a smear campaign against him had started at home.⁶⁶⁰ Richard Sennett alerted the administration:

As you may know, one of the visitors at the Institute is the Hungarian novelist, George Konrad, certainly Hungary's greatest living writer and a major figure in world literature. [...] These attacks are directed at his writing: he has a new book coming out called *Anti-Politics*. The charges do not accuse him of any political activity abroad, for he has engaged in none, simply that this book is "inappropriately" internationalist in substance. A few weeks ago Mr. Konrad was called into the Hungarian consulate, and a formal statement reproaching him for his writing and statements abroad was read to him.⁶⁶¹

It is very likely that Konrad's rising star in the West displeased Hungarian authorities because of the bad light it cast on 'the happiest barrack.' The book Sennett mentioned in the letter, *Antipolitics*, to be published in 1985, would elevate Konrad to the ranks of Vaclav Havel and Adam Michnik, the theorist of East European dissent.⁶⁶² Probably, Hungarian officials sought to dissuade him from returning and instead remain in the West, where he could publish freely and reap the fruits of his fame. The latter was reinforced by an unexpected visitor, Erhard Busek, Vienna's deputy mayor, who was already widely know for his outspoken support to not only the Hungarians, but Central

⁶⁵⁹ Gyorgy Konrad, interviewed by the author, 24 July 2009, Hegymagas, Hungary.

⁶⁶⁰ Hans-Henning Paetzke, *Andersdenkende in Ungarn* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 10.

⁶⁶¹ Letter by Richard Sennett to Leslie Berlowitz, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Jerome Bruner, Director, New York Institute for the Humanities, L. Jay Oliva, Chancellor, and Richard Turner, Dean, 27 February 1984. NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group 37.4, Series I: B Box 5, Folder 41. George Konrad, 1984.

⁶⁶² Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe. Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings*, 298-306.

European dissidents generally.⁶⁶³ Busek had come to tell Konrád that he was the recipient of the Johann Gottfried Herder Prize for 1984, which recognized outstanding contributions “from Europe’s east” to European culture at large.⁶⁶⁴ Konrád remembers:

Busek asked [...] whether I was willing to give an acceptance speech in the Palais Schwarzenberg [in Vienna]. And then we deliberated about the title. That’s when we came up with: “Does the Dream of Central Europe still exist?”⁶⁶⁵

In response to the announcement, Sennett was caught between jubilation and concern. He felt that

there is now good cause to believe that if Mr. Konrad were to return to Hungary, he would not subsequently be allowed to leave; the simplest way to deal with a writer who “mis-behaves” abroad is to keep him home. Several of Mr. Konrad’s friends, including me, have counseled him to at least remain out of the country until the cultural policies of the new Soviet regime and their effects on the satellite nations become clearer. Mr. Konrad is seriously considering doing so, for the short term.⁶⁶⁶

To celebrate the award, which Konrád accepted in Vienna in March 1984, the Institute threw a large reception in NYU’s Presidential Conference Room with seventy-five invited guests at the end of April. Among the guests were of course George Soros, Svetlana Kostić-Stone, Aryeh Neier, Susan Sontag and David Rieff, Robert Silvers and Barbara Epstein as well as fellow Hungarians Árpád Göncz and Sándor Radnoti.⁶⁶⁷ Konrád’s translator, Hans-Henning Paetzke, also seized the moment of public attention and in March 1984 showed up in Budapest with a camera team from the ZDF, the West

⁶⁶³ Władysław Bartoszewski, "Der Ostreisende," in *Erhard Busek. Ein Porträt*, ed. Elisabeth Welzig (Vienna: Böhlau, 1992).

⁶⁶⁴ The award ceremony took place at the University of Vienna, in “neutral” Austria. Previous recipients from Hungary were e.g. Gyula Illyés in 1970 and Sándor Csoóri in 1981. For more, see the A.F. Toepfer Foundation’s website <http://toepfer-fvs.de/preise-bis-2006.html>. The award was discontinued in 2006.

⁶⁶⁵ György Konrád, interviewed by the author, 24 July 2009, Hegymagas, Hungary.

⁶⁶⁶ Letter by Richard Sennett to Leslie Berlowitz, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Jerome Bruner, Director, New York Institute for the Humanities, L. Jay Oliva, Chancellor, and Richard Turner, Dean, 27 February 1984. NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group 37.4, Series I: B Box 5, Folder 41. George Konrad, 1984.

⁶⁶⁷ NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group 37.4, Series I:D, Folder 11: George Konrad Reception 1984.

German public broadcaster, to shoot a documentary about the opposition. Despite attempts to obstruct the work, Paetzke produced a 15-minute-report. Thereafter, he spent months interviewing members of the Democratic Opposition.⁶⁶⁸

Since the 1977 Venice Biennale where Konrád had first met the New Yorkers, he had spent most of his time abroad: as a DAAD and Wissenschaftskolleg fellow in West Berlin, in Paris, Vienna, and by then New York. He processed these recent experiences in his theoretical approach to dissent *Antipolitics*. He considered his friends in the West just as essential to the fight against the bipolar world order as those in Czechoslovakia and Poland: “Wanderings and friendships across borders are tools in the intellectuals’ fight for independence,” he wrote in *Antipolitics*.⁶⁶⁹ With the protection of organizations like Helsinki Watch, the Fondation, the DAAD or the Institute for Humanities in mind, he was convinced that the persecution of artists and scientists “anywhere in this world” automatically provoked “the international solidarity of writers and philosophers” thanks to the “network of personal sympathies, the international circle of friends” of which he had recently become a part. *Antipolitics* was considered the Hungarian rediscovery of Central Europe, because Konrád demonstrate the cultural importance of the region, as the hearth of European culture at the turn of the century similar to what Schorske had accomplished already for Vienna. For these reasons, Stephen Beller argues:

The self-image of Central European dissidents such as György Konrád found reinforcement in the Viennese model of a modernist culture that had succeeded by leaving behind the world of ‘progress’ and ‘politics’. The Schorskean vision of retreat from politics into culture was not all that dissimilar from the concept

⁶⁶⁸ Paetzke interviewed András B. Hegedűs, Ferenc Donath as well as László Rajk, Ferenc Kőszeg, Miklós Haraszti, György Petri, Gáspár Miklós Tamás.

⁶⁶⁹ Konrád, *Antipolitik*, 197.

of an ‘antipolitics’, which sought to escape the ideological politics of *both* East and West.⁶⁷⁰

Konrád made his opposition to the bipolar world order very clear. He believed that Central Europe had been abandoned by the Western allies in 1945 and since turned into *the* battlefield of the Cold War. If there ever were to be war between the two blocs, Central Europe would bear the brunt of it. Therefore, he was not simply anti-Communist and pro-West.

In the American-Russian standoff, many keep their fingers crossed for the Americans. But I do not know a single person in Budapest, who would accept turning our city into a theatre of war, even if afterwards the Americans were here. It is more likely that *nobody* would be here anymore. Together with the Russians, we, too, would disappear.⁶⁷¹

The military threat to Central Europe emanated from both sides. It was a false conclusion to perceive his opposition to the socialist state as pro-American. This very sentiment had laid the foundations for the *two* Watch groups in New York, Konrád was pro-Western, or Westernized in the Hungarian context; what he found appealing was not Western capitalism, but the civic liberties that allowed him and his Western friends to criticize their governments without fearing persecution. The liberalism they believed in was the classical type as it had first emerged in the Habsburg Empire before the malaise of the fin-de-siècle. The East European dissidents as well as their Western friends – New Yorkers and West Germans alike – resurrected this model because of the skepticism they had developed towards the powers that be in the 1950s and 1960s. A reviewer in the *New York Times* commented acutely:

Although he finds much to criticize in the West (“I would think twice about exchanging the position of a Hungarian dissident for that of a Turkish or

⁶⁷⁰ Beller, "Introduction," 6.

⁶⁷¹ [emphasis mine] Konrád, *Antipolitik*, 31.

Southeast Asian or Latin American dissenter”), Mr. Konrad’s heart lies with the vision of a liberal democracy for his country.⁶⁷²

Konrád’s views differed significantly from the Czech émigré Milan Kundera. In November 1983, Kundera had tipped off a controversy, when the French journal *Le Debat* published his “Un occident kidnappé ou la tragédie de l’Europe central,” which in the U.S. appeared in the *New York Review of Books* in April 1984.⁶⁷³ Kundera portrayed Central Europe as integral to Europe and a haven of Western cultural values. He clearly demarcated the region from Soviet civilization, which according to the Czech émigré was aggressive and anti-democratic.⁶⁷⁴ Controversial was also Kundera’s reproachful undertone in which he accused the West of selfishly having abandoned its ‘better half.’ Possibly, Kundera’s confrontational essay provoked Western intellectuals like Robert Silvers who might have drawn a connection with the Polish crisis, the Prague Spring of 1968 and the Hungarian crisis – instances in which Soviet leaders decided the fate of Central European peoples while the West stood idly by. One could even add the Yalta and Potsdam conferences of 1945 and even the Munich Conference of 1938, in which France and Great Britain sought to appease Hitler by granting his claim to the so-called Sudetenland, to this list.

The resurgence of Central Europe in the wake of the Polish crisis confirmed Erhard Busek’s ambition to interest Austrians in their Eastern neighbors, encourage more civic engagement and redeem Austria’s historical debt to its former crown lands.

I invited the Hungarians to take part in the events of my party [the ÖVP]. Then mayor [of Vienna] Helmut Zilk [SPÖ] banned the event, because it was

⁶⁷² Walter Goodman, “Landmark: Yalta – key for current troubles,” *New York Times*, Books of the Time, Review: Konrád, George (17 May 1984). Clipping found in HU OSA 301-22-0, Folder: Europe and Central Asia: Hungary: Arts: Writers: Konrád György, 1976.

⁶⁷³ Milan Kundera, “The Tragedy of Central Europe,” *New York Review of Books* 31, no. 7 (26 April 1984).

⁶⁷⁴ For more, Philip Ther, “Milan Kundera und die Renaissance Zentraleuropas,” *Clio online. Themenportal Europäische Geschichte* (2007).

unofficial and not in the interest of the Austrian republic and because of course he had real close contact to the communists, even though he later denied that. But that is a fact. So we simply moved the event to Café Landmann; we just relocated the show. In fact, I was quite grateful for the ban because it got me great publicity [laughs].⁶⁷⁵

Busek's support for dissidents from Gdańsk to Budapest was well known. In Austria, he and some colleagues were known as "bunte Vögel," which literally translates as "colorful birds" but describes a maverick, someone who thinks outside the box. He had initiated a series of public discussions. In 1983, for instance, he had invited the Polish intellectual Władysław Bartoźsewski, the émigré philosopher Leszek Kołakowski, the Polish priest Jozef Tischner as well as Hans-Georg Gadamer.⁶⁷⁶ He insisted that Austrian neutrality should not be interpreted as an excuse for indifference:

The responsibility for peace is not abstract, and it cannot be solved here in the name of NATO or the Warsaw Pact. But Vienna's foreign policy for and with its citizens requires a conscious approach towards our neighbors, a deliberate engagement with their situation and tangible support.⁶⁷⁷

Busek wanted to translate his personal involvement with the East European opposition movements into real politics and inspire solidarity with the peoples of Central Europe "to give people, who do not live in freedom, confidence, and to irritate those, who are responsible for restricting said freedom."⁶⁷⁸ However, his support of East European dissidents did not receive wholesale approval:

⁶⁷⁵ Erhard Busek, interviewed by the author, 7 February 2012, Vienna, Austria. Café Landmann is one of Vienna's historical coffee houses on the Ring street. In 2003, Helmut Zilk, who succeeded Leopold Gratz (also SPÖ) as mayor of the Austrian capital in 1984 and remained in office until 1994, has been accused of collaborating with various East European security service and even of being a double agent. Busek was deputy mayor from 1978-1987 and then moved into national politics.

⁶⁷⁶ Busek's environmentalism is based on his Catholic faith, which he interprets as a Christian obligation to care for 'creation.' Erhard Busek, "Zurück zur Politik," in *Mut zum aufrechten Gang. Beiträge zu einer anderen Art von Politik*, ed. Erhard Busek (Vienna: Herold, 1983), 30. For the series of talks see the appendix in *Mut zum aufrechten Gang. Beiträge zu einer anderen Art von Politik* (Vienna: Herold, 1983), 193-208.

⁶⁷⁷ "Zurück zur Politik," 34.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.

I am going to tell you something very critical: the Austrian government did not care much. On the contrary, one of the Austrian Ambassadors, he has passed away but I'm still going to tell you what he said to me anyways: You are damaging the relations between Austria and [the East] and you are doing harm to Austria when you support those dissidents! I received a reprimand!⁶⁷⁹

The reasons for the reprimand were simple economic realities: Austrian companies had a stake in the construction of the Czechoslovak-Hungarian dam project at Nagymaros-Gabčíkovo, which was supposed to compensate for growing energy needs in the two states. Like the fledgling environmental movement in Hungary, Busek was opposed to the project because it also threatened to destroy irreplaceable nature resorts along the Danube River.

Konrad and Busek pursued the same interest – improving relations in the region from the bottom up and protecting Central Europe's cultural heritage. Moreover, the agreeable Konrad was less hostile towards Russia and less resentful towards a supposedly neglectful West than Kundera had been in *The Kidnapping of Europe*. Kundera's opening line had been the last radio broadcast from Budapest before the Soviet invasion on 4 November 1956:

'We are going to die for Hungary and for Europe.' 'To die for one's country and for Europe'—that is a phrase that could not be thought in Moscow or Leningrad; it is precisely the phrase that could be thought in Budapest or Warsaw.⁶⁸⁰

As Holocaust survivor, Konrad held a different view: "I owe my life to the Russians, in literature the Russian has influenced me the most, the Russians' role in European peace remains the most puzzling."⁶⁸¹ The cause for the Soviet occupation of Central Europe had been Hitler, European chauvinism and the Axis Powers' invasion of

⁶⁷⁹ Erhard Busek, interviewed by the author, 7 February 2012, Vienna, Austria.

⁶⁸⁰ Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe."

⁶⁸¹ Konrad, *Antipolitik*, 125.

the Soviet Union.⁶⁸² Whereas Kundera portrayed Russian and European culture as mutually exclusive, Konrád, although he did not deny Soviet aggression, expressed understanding:

[The Russian] historical experiences suggest that they will be encircled, attacked and judged. It seems they think they need for their protection a buffer zone of states along its borders [...].

What have [the Russians] gotten from the West? They got Napoleon, they got Hitler and in times of peace an incredible amount of contempt, arrogance and fear. They have been dismissed as barbarians, brutes, simpletons and philistines.⁶⁸³

To overcome, Konrád encouraged his readers to take the perspective of ‘the other.’ Through the eyes of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, he reminded his readers, one could “see Western Europe as the home of the petty bourgeois, a soulless civilization of callous, ragged rationalists, busybodies, individualists [...] a civilization with prosperity and technology, but without happiness or salvation.”⁶⁸⁴ Only dialogue and empathy could bring peace and harmony to Europe.

While Konrád was in New York, *Anti-Politics* was on the way to the printing press in West Germany. Finishing yet another novel, *A Garden Feast*, he regularly corresponded with his Siegfried Unseld and Suhrkamp editor Elisabeth Borchers. It seems Konrád stopped at the offices in Frankfurt on his way to accept the Herder Award in Vienna. On 22 February 1984, Unseld noted:

Good, that before the visit I was briefed on the main theses in his e.s. [edition suhrkamp] book ‘Antipolitics.’ Europe and Europe from his point of view – very interesting. I also told him about the conversation Bourdieu/ Habermas and

⁶⁸² Compare Bibó, *Die Misere der osteuropäischen Kleinstaaterei*, 42-74.

⁶⁸³ Konrád, *Antipolitik*, 42-43.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

Bourdieu's slogan, *commeçons un Europe culturel!* He was thrilled and proposed to continue the dialogue in which he would like to participate, too.⁶⁸⁵

Five days later, Borchers told Unseld that Konrád had asked whether he would contact foreign publishing houses about this "Europe book, in order to get a multilateral discussion going."⁶⁸⁶ The debate about Central Europe and Europe's future was picking up. The timing was perfect: in the 1980s, Western Europe witnessed a wave of civic movements advocating for peace and environmental protection and opposing the NATO Double Track Decision. Founded in 1980, the West German Green party maintained contact with the oppositional Church and peace groups in the GDR; from England, the Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament swept across the Western continent.

Konrád's fictional renditions of Central European history and his public announcements about Cold War politics and culture endeared him to an educated audience to the center-left of the mainstream. These were the readers to whom Suhrkamp had been catering. In March 1984, Konrád returned a signed contract to Unseld presumably for *A Garden Feast*. Sharing his excitement over the time at the Institute, he ended the letter: "We're having a snow storm today in New York. That's how our spring starts."⁶⁸⁷

With his Western supporters admiring his writing *and* his dissident courage, Konrád wiped Sennett's concerns aside. He did take precautions, however. When he returned to Budapest in the summer of 1984, Busek helped him out. The Austrian politician recalled the ingenuity with a grin:

⁶⁸⁵ "Gespräch mit György Konrád am Mittwoch, dem 22.2.1984," DLA Marbach Ordner Konrad 78-99, letter signed Dr. u., [French in the original]. Hans-Henning Paetzke always arranged for the transmission of translated manuscripts. Christian Döring, interviewed by the author, 27 June 2012, Berlin, Germany.

⁶⁸⁶ Note by Elisabeth Borchers to Unseld, 27 February 1984. DLA Marbach, Ordner Konrad 78-99.

⁶⁸⁷ Konrád does not mention the title of the manuscript. Letter by György Konrád to Elisabeth Borchers, 28 March 1984. Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach, Leitz File: Autor. György Konrád. Von 1977 bis...

I was the one who transported his manuscripts back. When he went back, he flew to [Frankfurt] and then took a boat down the Danube to Budapest. [At the border,] they seriously stripped him down to his underwear, they did not find one tiny scrap of paper on him, while I was sitting in my car comfortably driving the manuscripts to Budapest.⁶⁸⁸

III. Conclusion

The Polish crisis was a turning point for the international network of intellectuals from the U.S., West Germany and Hungary. Most importantly, due to the unexpected appearance of George Soros and the contact with the previously unknown Fondation pour une entraide, New York became a safe haven and operating center for the network.

The thriving underground culture in Poland leading up to the strikes in August 1980 had already inspired the Hungarian non-conformists to coordinate and institutionalize their activities and criticism of the Kádár regime. The first initiative actually came from the émigré community in Paris, which founded the *tamizdat* journal *Magyar Füzetek* and thus facilitated the exchange of ideas between Hungarian expats and the Budapest critics as well as with other East European dissidents. Following the Polish role model, they developed a series of private seminars, the Monday Free University, and increased the production of *samizdat*, which culminated in the establishment of the first serialized journal with the title *Beszélő*. They searched for a unique but legitimating tradition and found it in the writings of István Bibó, whose life and works provided a common ground to unite different ideological factions and generations within the critical community in Budapest.

The foundation of Solidarity suggested that, despite the grim memories of 1956 and 1968, a grass root movement could emerge and an alliance of workers, intellectuals,

⁶⁸⁸ Erhard Busek, interviewed by the author, 7 February 2012, Vienna, Austria.

and seemingly incompatible ideological convictions was possible. It inspired the human rights activists in New York to visit Eastern Europe and inquire about the dissidents' needs directly. The Polish events drew attention to a region that in the bipolar conflict had disappeared from the public eye; the New Yorkers' pre-existing expertise in European modern culture was now rewarded as the belated recognition of Carl Schorske's *Fin de Siècle Vienna* indicated. The discovery of the historical legacy of Central Europe reinforced the contemporary concern for the region; it highlighted the precarious situation of the region, the former heartland of Europe's modernity, in the Cold War.

Although the declaration of martial law in December 1981 sent shockwaves through the network, it only spurred the New Yorkers' motivation to support the dissidents, their friends, on the other side of the Iron Curtain. The Hungarians, too, doubled their efforts. Adversity only led to greater solidarity. Crucial for the expansion and long-term success of the network was the appearance of George Soros, his vision, financial resources and prompt alliance with Aryeh Neier, as well as the previously unknown Fondation and its vast connections in Western and Eastern Europe. Paradoxically, the Hungarians profited the most from the crisis. György Konrád, the Benjaminian Central European flâneur incarnate, became the kingpin of the opposition movement and its international support network because his life, ideas, and work best reflected the intellectual and political preferences of Westerners and Easterners alike. The Polish crisis of 1980-1981 fused the forces of social and financial capital and paved the way for the golden age of the international network that sought to undermine the Iron Curtain and Cold War status quo in the 1980s.

IV. Chapter. Reaching Out: The Network goes East

IV. Introduction

The following chapter highlights how New Yorkers and Hungarians redoubled their efforts of mutual support in the wake of the declaration of martial law in Poland. Although the shock ran deep, the Hungarian oppositionists were not intimidated, not even when the authorities cracked down on some of the *samizdat* producers. Not only did the community consolidate its activities, but it also established two explicit goals: first, the defense of human right and protection of the Hungarian minorities in neighboring countries; second, the rehabilitation of the Hungarian revolution of 1956. Both drew international attention: the minority situation in Czechoslovakia and particularly in Romania was notoriously disastrous; and the crushing of the Hungarian revolution in late 1956 was a historical landmark in European history that many could still remember.

The New Yorkers took the lead in founding an international umbrella organization for the various national chapters of Helsinki and human rights monitoring groups. The founding meeting in Bellagio at Lake Como in Italy in September 1982 demonstrated how quickly all over Europe human rights had become a matter of civic engagement and political commitment. Although the Hungarians were the only East European opposition movement present, the others were represented by émigré organizations and exiles. The meeting elicited great euphoria among the participants and culminated in the founding of the International Helsinki Federation.

This chapter demonstrates how the network excelled at exploiting the weaknesses of the periphery of the Cold War. They chose the Austrian capital of Vienna as the

headquarter of the newly founded International Helsinki Federation not necessarily for its post-imperial splendor and not for Austrians' predisposition towards the dissidents' cause, but because of its proximity to the East, its accessibility, and its 'neutrality' in the Cold War. Vienna epitomized the intellectuals' principle to remain detached from either superpower, to act independently, and to criticize the U.S. as well as the socialist regimes for human rights violations.

For similar reasons, the Adriatic coastal city of Dubrovnik in non-aligned Yugoslavia became a popular meeting place. The Inter University Centre (IUC) had been established independently from the network described thus far. It was the brainchild of the philosophy professor Ivan Supek and his right hand, Berta Dragičević. The IUC proves that in fear of the two blocs drifting ever farther apart, many efforts aimed at fostering an open dialogue and free exchange of ideas. The network did not exclusively support dissidents. It was not only about politics and power games, but also about academic exchanges and scholarly discourse. For that reason, Oxford dons – and later French and German scholars, too – followed the call to Prague to attend and lecture in private apartment seminars. The British scholars developed a book smuggling scheme that also brought Timothy Garton Ash and Tony Judt to Czechoslovakia. Although Judt played only a minor role at the time, having arrived in Eastern Europe intellectually and physically relatively late, he articulated views similar to the New Yorkers: contempt for his own youthful fascination with the Left, a strong identification with the repressed intellectuals in the East, disregard for consumerism and 'mainstream' opinions, and a belated fascination with his family's heritage.

For the Westerners who were banned from Czechoslovakia, Dubrovnik became a very welcome substitute. Moreover, since 1984 they could meet at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna (IWM), which had grown directly out of the Dubrovnik workshops. The IWM highlights once more the importance of Poland – here exemplified by the very explicit support from Pope John Paul II and Annette Laborey from the Fondation. Additionally, it evoked and preserved an almost lost Central European legacy: phenomenology.

Last but not least, Soros's visions were also larger than the existing network. His first relatively short-lived attempt to create his own exchange program at Columbia University, for which he enlisted the help of the noted historian István Deák, hinted at his ambition to expose younger scholars to the possibilities of Western academia. Although he had formed close friendships with many Hungarian dissidents, arriving in Budapest in a cloud of mystery and fame, he aspired to changing nothing less than society itself. He was already aware of the Kádár regime's main weakness: a lack of hard currency. Moreover, knowing the CC Secretary for Culture György Aczél from the stories of his dissident friends, he probably knew how to exploit his curious personality and sway him into a deal. In the end, the regime actually opened its doors to the 'Soros-MTA Foundation', the only legalized Western philanthropic organization in the Eastern bloc. But it had underestimated Soros, who with a lot of money and ingenuity, took over essential state functions on the way to realizing his dream of opening closed societies.

IV.1. Consolidation, 1982-1984

IV.1.1. Hungarian Sympathies

The declaration of martial law in Poland in December 1981 sent shockwaves through the small community of Hungarian dissidents.⁶⁸⁹ In January 1982, *Beszélő* no. 2 took account of the crackdown and published an appeal for donations.⁶⁹⁰ Participants of the Monday Free University issued a protest letter, which was smuggled to Vienna and read out on Radio Free Europe. The Ministry of the Interior noted the names of the 200 signatories of the declaration. Because the second planned children's camp at Lake Balaton had to be put off, one hundred people put together care packages for the kids.⁶⁹¹

Many wondered whether continuing *Beszélő* was worth the risk, Ferenc Kőszeg recalls.⁶⁹² János Kis, however, explained that the escalation in Poland would not be a reason to capitulate. Poland in 1981 differed from Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 in that "we knew exactly [...] that the Soviet world order had tumbled into a fundamental crisis, and we had to keep things from stabilizing on a level like after 1956 and 1968."⁶⁹³ Solidarność had proved that grass root resistance against state socialism across ideological camps was possible; the regime had hesitated and the Kremlin had not crushed the movement but let it rise.⁶⁹⁴ Instead of despair, Kis felt hopeful.

⁶⁸⁹ Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek*, 73-74.

⁶⁹⁰ "We mourn," the headline read, and listed five names of Poles confirmed dead after the military intervention. "We feel with their families. We stand in solidarity with our brothers in need." "Felhívás a lengyel nép megsegítésére," in *Beszélő Összkiadás*, ed. Miklós Haraszti, et al. (Budapest: AB-Beszélő, Beszélő 2 január 1982).

⁶⁹¹ See Hodosán's recollections and the BM reports, dated 30 December 1981, reproduced in *Szamizdat történetek*, 74-77.

⁶⁹² Kőszeg, *K. történetei*, 332.

⁶⁹³ Csizmadia, "Kis János," 114.

⁶⁹⁴ János Kis, "Gondolatok a közeljövőről [Beszélő 3 szeptember 1982]," in *Beszélő Összkiadás*, ed. János Rainer (Budapest: AB- Beszélő, 1992).

In lieu of a mass movement like in Poland, *Beszélő* sought to function as a second public encouraging readers to participate in the discussion.⁶⁹⁵ They received assistance from the Munich-based Radio Free Europe, which would summarize *Beszélő*'s content on air.⁶⁹⁶ The editors started printing translations of articles from Western newspapers such as *Die Zeit* about the East European opposition as evidence for their relevance and international recognition. And *Beszélő* began reviewing *samizdat* publications such as Haraszti's *The Velvet Prison* and Konrád's *The Loser*.

The opposition's defiance did not pass unnoticed. Plain-clothes policemen started harassing the *samizdat* publishers as soon as they stepped onto the street.⁶⁹⁷ Subject to special treatment were Gábor Demszky, his AB colleague Jenő Nagy, and the *Beszélő* editors Ferenc Kőszeg and János Kis. Their paths were blocked, their cars and apartments searched; they were cornered and humiliated with anti-Semitic slurs – even in the company of their children. During the entire summer, two or three BMWs and Opels, quite noticeable vehicles in the streets of Budapest, followed Demszky's every move.⁶⁹⁸

Defiantly, Demszky, Rajk, Haraszti and Bálint Nagy printed and distributed flyers calling for a protest on 30 August 1982 on the symbolic Bem Square to honor the anniversary of the Gdańsk Agreement.⁶⁹⁹ Józef Bem had been a Polish general on the side of the Hungarians in the war of independence from the Habsburgs in 1848. On 23 October 1956, the student march from the Technical University had ended there, too, to express solidarity with the workers' uprising in Poznań. Róza Hodosán, who did not

⁶⁹⁵ "Tisztelt Olvasónk!" ["Our dear Readers!"] *Beszélő*, no. 4. (May 1982).

⁶⁹⁶ See e.g. "The Third Issue of "Beszelo" Appears in Hungary", 16 November 1982. HU OSA 300-8-3-3952.

⁶⁹⁷ Paetzke, "Ungarische Kulturpolitik zwischen Verbot und Toleranz," 17. Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek*, 85-87.

⁶⁹⁸ Twenty members of the opposition wrote a letter of complaint to the public prosecutor, 22 June 1982. See *Szamizdat történetek*, 91-92.

⁶⁹⁹ Flyer in Forschungsstelle Osteuropa, György Dalos, private depository, I 186, "Depozit. Szamizdat etc."

have her passport revoked, travelled to Warsaw to observe the solemn anniversary celebrations there.⁷⁰⁰

Nevertheless, the Hungarian authorities refrained from the large-scale arrests of the Poles and Czechoslovaks. Instead, they strive to discredit the opposition. On October 15, 1982, at the Hungarian Writers' Association Convention in Budapest, György Aczél suggested that János Kis's "Thoughts on the Near Future" indicated the opposition's inevitable demise.⁷⁰¹ Shortly thereafter, in December 1982, Péter Rényi, deputy editor-in-chief of the party's organ *Népszabadság*, condemned the dissidents as reckless, irresponsible instigators. They would antagonize the harmonious, peaceful Hungarians but "it will be our people who will have to pay the price." He warned: "Whether they want it or not, behind them stands a huge arsenal, an extraordinarily great power, the entire anti-socialist, anti-Communist potential and reserve of the West with its economic, and political, military and propaganda machine."⁷⁰²

Three days later, on 14 December 1982, plainclothes and regular police searched the apartments of Demszky, Nagy, Rajk and several others. Everyone's IDs were checked in the crowded 'Rajk butik'. All copies of *Beszélő*, documents from Solidarność, writings by György Petri, György Konrád, the Yugoslav émigré Danilo Kis and even the populist writer Gyula Illyés were confiscated.⁷⁰³ The moratorium for the Rajk 'butik' had expired:

⁷⁰⁰ Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek*, 93-100.

⁷⁰¹ "Tájékoztatjuk olvasóinkat (1982. december 18.)," in *Beszélő Összkiadás*, ed. János Rainer (Budapest: AB- Beszélő, 1992). The editors surely took up the challenge of a political program in the following issue. "Hogyan keressünk a válságból? A Beszélő javaslatai (Beszélő 5-6, január 1983)," in *Beszélő Összkiadás*, ed. János Rainer (Budapest: AB- Beszélő, 1992)..

⁷⁰² Péter Rényi, "Nem babra megy a játék," *Népszabadság*, 11 December 1982.. Excerpts here: <http://beszelo.c3.hu/keretes/nem-babra-megy-a-jatek>. The title is a Hungarian saying. Paetzke translates it into German as "Das Spiel ist keineswegs harmlos" [The game is not at all harmless]. Paetzke, "Ungarische Kulturpolitik zwischen Verbot und Toleranz," 15.

⁷⁰³ Róza Hodosán, who was also detained on December 21, produced a capturing account of all three searches. Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek*, 104-15.

at the end of January 1983, László Rajk had to evacuate his apartment. Police packed up his belongings and re-located him to the outskirts of Budapest.⁷⁰⁴

In New York, the shock of martial law encouraged the intellectuals and activists to press yet harder for the respect of human rights. The second Helsinki Review Conference had opened in 1980, but even after months of negotiations it remained inconclusive. Upset by the stagnation, Jeri Laber, who had been an observer to the conference's start, returned to Western Europe in June 1982 to personally invite Western Helsinki and human rights groups to the Rockefeller Foundation's conference center in Bellagio, Italy.⁷⁰⁵ The New Yorkers wanted to survey the possibilities of coordinating the activities with other like-minded West Europeans.

On 6 September 1982, Robert Bernstein, president of U.S. Helsinki Watch, gave the opening address in Bellagio in front of groups from Norway, the Netherlands, Austria, England and France.⁷⁰⁶ Several East European émigrés were in attendance: Ludmilla Alexeyeva, founding member of the very first Helsinki group from Moscow, Jiří Pelikan, editor of the Czech émigré journal *Listy* and by then member of the European parliament for the Italian Socialists, František Janouch, organizer of the Charta 77 Foundation in Stockholm, and from Hungary György Bence.⁷⁰⁷ Péter Kende, the publisher of the Hungarian *tamizdat Magyar Füzetek*, and Pierre Emmanuel, founder and honorary chairman of the Fondation pour une entraide who elaborated on the situation of

⁷⁰⁴ "Tájékoztató a december 14-én és 21-én Budapesten lezajlott házkutatásokról (1982. december 27.)," in *Beszélő Összkiadás*, ed. János Rainer (Budapest: AB- Beszélő, 1992). *Szamizdat történetek*, 125. Dalos, *Archipel Gulasch*, 79.

⁷⁰⁵ Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 120-26; 74-78.

⁷⁰⁶ From New York, Orville Schell, Aryeh Neier and Jeri Laber organized the event. Laber's daughter Abigail Laber attended the Bellagio conference, too.

⁷⁰⁷ International Helsinki Federation, Report, International Citizens Helsinki Watch Conference, Bellagio Study & Conference Center, Lake Como, Italy, September 6-10, 1982. HU OSA, 318-0-5 Box 6.

the stranded Poles, arrived from Paris. Listed as ‘observers’ were George Soros and Svetlana Stone.⁷⁰⁸

Jiří Pelikan summarized the lessons from the Polish crisis and then “ended the session with a reminder that totalitarian regimes can be changed only by the people themselves and that those peoples need as much outside support as possible.”⁷⁰⁹

Everyone agreed. It was time to act:

The atmosphere of intensity and excitement that attended the conference was exceptional, stemming from a sense of purpose and of urgency. New friendships were made, old ones renewed, information was exchanged and plans for future contacts were developed. It was clear from the outset that an international citizens’ movement would be created.⁷¹⁰

At the end of the conference, participants founded the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, a new umbrella organization for the various national groups in attendance. Monitoring and reporting became the International Helsinki Federation’s key tools in the fight for human rights. Through ‘public shaming’, the organization sought to force regimes to comply with the Helsinki Final Act.⁷¹¹ The foundation of the Federation could not have been better timed: on the same day, they learnt that under pressure the Moscow Helsinki Group had been dissolved.⁷¹²

The conference participants decided on Vienna as the Federation’s headquarters, because it reinforced the Federation’s emphasis on non-partisanship. However, neutrality

⁷⁰⁸ Laber somewhat erroneously noted: “In France, there was Pierre Emmanuel, an elderly poet who had formed what appeared to be a non-functioning ‘Paris Helsinki Committee.’” Apparently, she was not aware of Emmanuel’s role or the Fondation’s significance. Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 178.

⁷⁰⁹ International Helsinki Federation, Report, International Citizens Helsinki Watch Conference, Bellagio Study & Conference Center, Lake Como, Italy, September 6-10, 1982. HU OSA, 318-0-5 Box 6.

⁷¹⁰ Jeri Laber, Background Report: “Concerted Action in Defense of Human Rights,” in International Helsinki Federation. Report, International Citizens Helsinki Watch Conference, Bellagio Study & Conference Center, Lake Como, Italy, September 6-10, 1982, p. 29-40. HU OSA, 318-0-5 Box 6.

⁷¹¹ Letter of Intent, adopted at the International Citizens Helsinki Watch Conference at Bellagio, 9 September 1982, p. [39-42]. HU OSA, 318-0-5 Box 6. Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 177-82.

⁷¹² *Ibid.*, 182.

did not equal indifference, as the Austrian representative Anton Pelinka explained: “Austria does not distance itself from issues of international concern, human rights being one of them.”⁷¹³ Most journalists who reported on Eastern Europe operated from Vienna, and to make public shaming effective, they needed direct access to the media. Although Central European infrastructure was not perfect, the Austrian capital was the gateway to the East.

One of the most articulate members in Bellagio and Madrid had been the Swedish businessman Gerald Nagler. Within months, he had put together a Swedish Helsinki Committee, which would coordinate all Watch Groups in Scandinavia. Sweden’s participation was important, because like Austria it was a ‘neutral’ country.⁷¹⁴ Meeting again in Madrid, in November 1982, Gerald Nagler offered Jeri Laber to leave his business to set up the International Federation’s offices. Two weeks later, Nagler and his family visited New York to discuss the details with Laber, Neier and Bernstein. Unaware of the holiday, the Naglers arrived at her place in the middle of Thanksgiving dinner. Four Hungarians were already seated around the table: György Bence, Mária Kovács, Vilmos Soós and Zsolt Csálog – the fellows at the Institute for the Humanities whose stipends Soros had covered.⁷¹⁵ Nagler and his wife Monika already owned a second home in the Austrian capital. Monika née Wittgenstein was born in Vienna in 1935. The family had fled Austria’s ‘Anschluss’ with Nazi Germany in 1938. Her brother Heinz joined the

⁷¹³ Second International Conference of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 10-11 March 1984, Report, p. 1, HU OSA 318-0-5 Box 6. Ibid., 201-09.

⁷¹⁴ Second International Conference of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 10-11 March 1984, Report, pp. 4-5, HU OSA 318-0-5 Box 6.

⁷¹⁵ Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 201.. Letter by Edmund White to George Soros, 12 July 1982. NYU Archive, NYUIH Box. No. 1, Group No. 37.4, Series no I:A, Folder II—Board of Directors – George Soros.

Federation's staff. A radio journalist and writer by training, she also happened to be the grandniece of the Austrian fin de siècle philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein.

In early 1983, the Federation moved into the new office a few blocs behind the nineteenth-century neo-Gothic Votive Church. In March 1984, the Federation convened its Second International Conference in Vienna. Delegates from fourteen national groups attended, among them George Soros and Svetlana Stone, both by then members of the U.S. Helsinki Watch board. Péter Kende again arrived from Paris. In his company was Annette Laborey, who officially represented the Fondation pour une entraide intellectuelle européenne.⁷¹⁶ With the exception of Hungary, the East European groups were only represented by émigrés.

György Konrád and György Bence, both staying abroad at the time, drafted the monitoring reports for Hungary. A sincere commitment to human rights could only spring from civil society, Konrád insisted, because the “worldwide defense of human rights is a new ideology that lies outside the conceptual framework of communism versus anticommunism.” Human rights were not to be left in the hands of governments, partly because he did not think very highly of the official Helsinki process:

One can only regret that violations of human rights have become occasions for moral triumphs on the part of the American delegates on international forums, creating the impression that the culture of human rights has been deliberately degraded into a propaganda instrument in the superpower contest. [...] The fact that the American administration tolerates in Turkey and El Salvador the same

⁷¹⁶ Other participants were Gerald Nagler, Monika Nagler, Stephen Neff (UK), Aryeh Neier, Spencer Oliver (Staff director, US Congressional Helsinki Committee), Anton Pelinka (Austria), Annemarie Renger (West Germany), Stefan Rosenmayr (Austria), George Soros, Jana Starek (Austria), Heinz Wittgenstein, Pieter Van Dijk (Netherlands), Bronislaw Wildstein (Polish Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Austria). Second International Conference of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 10-11 March 1984, Report, p. 10, HU OSA 318-0-5 Box 6.

practices that it condemns in Poland or Nicaragua puts this kind of patronage in a particularly ironic light.⁷¹⁷

Again, Konrád articulated the same skepticism towards governments that the New Yorkers cherished and that had motivated them to found two watch groups. His emphasis on change from below already indicated the coming fascination with the concept of civil societies, which soon became a remedy for disenfranchisement in the East and paternalistic governance in the West. György Bence, on the other hand, humbly admitted that compared to the other East European countries, “the Hungarian situation [...] was not that ‘urgent.’”⁷¹⁸ Bence, who had fallen out with most of the dissidents back home, used the external vantage point for a clear-headed assessment.⁷¹⁹ His role as Hungarian spokesperson abroad and liaison is remarkable because the direction that his former friends and colleagues in Budapest were taking had alienated him. He and Mária Kovács would spend the next years mostly on fellowships in the U.S.

In Vienna in 1984, Bence argued that the most pressing human rights violation in the Hungarian context actually occurred outside of Hungary, in Czechoslovakia and Romania, where the Hungarian minority suffered from state-imposed discrimination. He singled out the fate of Miklós Duray, the ethnic Hungarian, Charta 77 signatory and a contributor to the *Bibó Book*. The year before, the *New York Review of Books* and the *Magyar Füzetek* had published an open letter to the Hungarian Prime Minister protesting

⁷¹⁷ György Konrád, “Human Rights and East-West Relations,” Background Report for the Second International Conference of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, March 1984, Report, pp. 48, HU OSA 318-0-5 Box 6.

⁷¹⁸ International Helsinki Federation, Report, International Citizens Helsinki Watch Conference, Bellagio Study & Conference Center, Lake Como, Italy, September 6-10, 1982. HU OSA, 318-0-5 Box 6.

⁷¹⁹ Ferenc Kőszeg, “Féloldalas emlékezés Bence Györgyre,” *Beszélő* 12, no. 3 (2007). Csizmadia, “Kis János,” 113.

Duray's arrest.⁷²⁰ Within the framework of the International Helsinki Federation, Bence was about to found the 'Duray Committee' to lobby for his release.

In the fall of 1982, the clashes with the police subsided, and *Beszélő* continued its publication. On its agenda were the economic crisis, Hungary's relations with the superpowers, and the persecution of Hungarian minorities in neighboring countries.⁷²¹ It also honored the success story of SZETA, the Fund for the Support of the Poor. Founded in 1979, SZETA had been one of the first concerted activities of the opposition, although it was primarily run by Otilia Solt, a sociology student who had worked with István Kemény on poverty and the Roma in Hungary.⁷²² Like her mentor, Solt had lost her position. "She was a serious thinker, she was an activist – the regime chucked her out, but she would never complain and never accept assistance," remembers a friend.⁷²³ Solt had been in charge of the Polish children's summer camp at Lake Balaton in 1980. By 1983, she was the only woman on *Beszélő*'s editorial board.⁷²⁴

The April 1983 issue of *Beszélő* featured an interview with Sándor Rác, the leader of the workers' council in Budapest during the 1956 revolution.⁷²⁵ The regime was concerned because of the upcoming 25th anniversary of Imre Nagy's execution in June. To preempt trouble, the police increased its surveillance again.⁷²⁶ The regime had

⁷²⁰ Susan Sontag Irving Howe, and Kurt Vonnegut Jr., "The Case of Miklos Duray," *New York Review of Books* 30, no. 5 (1983). K.P., "Duray Miklós és a csehszlovákiai magyar kisebbségi jogvédelem fölszámolása," *Magyar Füzetek*, no. 12 (1983).

⁷²¹ "Magyarország 1983 tavaszán (*Beszélő* 7, április 1983)," in *Beszélő Összkiadás*, ed. János Rainer (Budapest: AB- *Beszélő*, 1992). Ferenc Kőszeg, "A mélypont ünnepélye (*Beszélő* 7, április 1983)," *ibid.* Mihály Hamburger, "Erdélyi utazás (*Beszélő* 7, április 1983)," *ibid.*

⁷²² Csizmadia, "A Magyar Demokratikus Ellenzék " 31-34.

⁷²³ Béla Rasky, interviewed by the author, 18 August 2011, Vienna, Austria.

⁷²⁴ László Kardos, "SZETA," *Beszélő* III, no. 11 (1998). Demszky, "Lengyel gyerekek a Balatonnál (*Beszélő* 1. szám Október 1981)." Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek*, 50-57.

⁷²⁵ Sándor Szilágyi, "Interjú Rác Sándorral. A Munkástanács mint egy Pecset hitelesítette a Forradalmat (*Beszélő* 7, April 1983)," in *Beszélő Összkiadás*, ed. János Rainer (Budapest: AB- *Beszélő*, 1992).

⁷²⁶ Róza Hodosán noted that the police surveillance tightened again. Day in and day out, policemen parked in front of their house. Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek*, 121-23.

legitimate reason to worry about possible disruptions.⁷²⁷ In an official journal, the secretary of the Writers' Union had published a poet that in content and form – the letters NI were capitalized – explicitly mentioned the “murder” of Imre Nagy.⁷²⁸

In 1983, oppositional activities revolved around the anniversary of Imre Nagy's execution, the prime minister during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. For a few years already, several Fifty-Sixers had been meeting privately.⁷²⁹ Some of them, such as Ferenc Donáth, the patron of the *Bibó Book*, and Árpád Göncz, had joined the activities of the younger dissidents, knowing full well that their previous imprisonment, an embarrassment for authorities by then, gave them a sort of immunity. Now they joined forces and bridged the generational divide in an attempt to rehabilitate the revolutionaries and expose the illegitimacy of the Kádár regime. Others felt tied to László Rajk because of their friendship to his late mother.⁷³⁰ Miklós Vásárhelyi described the unmarked graves at the far end of the Rákoskeresztúr cemetery on the outskirts of Budapest:

Anonymous graves, weathered wooden crosses, a pot plant, carnations in a vase, a bouquet of roses. That is all [...] Otherwise, deathly quiet. Imre Nagy, the legal prime minister of the country, and the thousands of other victims, are denied what is granted to any murderer: [...] a gravestone, a nameplate in a prisoners' cemetery. Who will assume responsibility for all this?⁷³¹

⁷²⁷ See a background report by the Hungarian Research Section of Radio Free Europe, “History: Written, Unwritten, and Rewritten,” 16 March 1983, HU OSA 36-8-14.

⁷²⁸ Gáspár Nagy's poem ‘Perpetual Summer’ in *Új Forrás*: „a sír Nincs sehol/ a sír a gyilkosok/ a test se I T T Nincs sehol/ a test se O T T/ a csont a gyilkosok Nincs sehol/ a csont/ (p.s.) Egyszer majd el kell temetNI / és nekünk nem szabad feledNI / a gyilkosokat néven nevezNI!” [the grave is nowhere/ the grave the murderer/ the body is neither here/ the body is neither there/ the bones the murdered a nowhere/ the bones/ (p.s.) We then have to lay to rest, and we must not forget, to name in the name of the murderers], quoted in János Rainer, “Regime Change and the Tradition of 1956”, *The Roundtable Talks of 1989* (Budapestorig. 2002).

⁷²⁹ Oral History Archive, 56-os Intézet, “Vásárhelyi Miklós,” p. 881-883, készített Budapest, 1987. Október 2-án, Budapest, II Hankóczy u., Hegedűs B. András és Kozák Gyula. Thanks to Mária Vásárhelyi for the permission to access the interview.

⁷³⁰ Kardos, “SZETA.”

⁷³¹ Translation quoted in Rainer, *Imre Nagy*, 189.

On 16 June 1983, Vásárhelyi, Göncz, Áliz Halda, and György Krassó went to the overgrown plot 301 where they suspected the remains of Imre Nagy and hundreds of others.⁷³² On 23 October 1983, a commemoration was held in Ferenc Kőszeg's apartment. At the end the assembled rose to sing the 'Himnusz,' the Hungarian national anthem.⁷³³ A special issue of *Beszélő* in October 1983 was dedicated to 1956.⁷³⁴

Between the two anniversaries of June 16 and October 23, the authorities apparently tried to set an example. On 24 September 1983, the police stopped Gábor Demszky's car. Although he had just been interrogated for days for another allegation, the police forced him out of his car and requested to search his belongings. Demszky carried with him a copy of an interview with Andrei Sakharov in *Die Zeit* and a personal letter to György Konrád. Róza Hodosán, who accompanied Demszky, ran to the nearby apartment of László Rajk but as they returned to the scene, attempting to retrieve his private correspondence, Demszky was sprayed with tear gas and beaten unconscious.⁷³⁵ Not the officers, but the *samizdat* producer was charged with civil disobedience. In December 1983, he was sentenced to six months on probation. Hans-Henning Paetzke attended the appeals hearing in May 1984: "There were only very few, no one dared to attend. The Western journalists were all too cowardly. There were maybe some five, six journalists, mostly French. On the last day, I was the only one left."⁷³⁶

⁷³² János Rainer, "Nagy Imre újratemetése – a magyar demokratikus átalakulás szimbolikus aktusa," (Budapest: 56-os Intézet, orig. 2001).

⁷³³ BM Report, "Kalocsai's" Report, 17 June 1983, reprint in Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek*, 61.

⁷³⁴ Content: György Petri's poem about Imre Nagy, a transcription of the above-mentioned radio broadcast, biographies of the Nagy, Pál Maléter, Miklós Gimes, Géza Losonczy and József Szilágyi, a review of Bill Lomax's *The Hungarian Revolution*, which had just come out in the AB Independent Publishing House.

⁷³⁵ Paetzke, "Die unverbrämte Wahrheit ist das Überwältigende des Samizdat.' Interview mit Gábor Demszky," 158-60. Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek*, 128-31.

⁷³⁶ Hans-Henning Paetzke, interviewed by the author, 24 November 2011, Budapest, Hungary. However, in 1986, Paetzke wrote that ten journalists plus an interpreter attended, and not only five or six. Paetzke, "Ungarische Kulturpolitik zwischen Verbot und Toleranz," 17.

As the result of international protests, Demszky's supporters could sit in the gallery during the appeal. Paetzke conceded: "Since the authorities carefully guarded their liberal image, the [appeals hearing] was much fairer."⁷³⁷ Despite the backlash, *Beszélő* weathered the storm. János Kis concluded:

For us, the one and a half years from the end of 1982 until the spring of 1984 were a critical period. Afterwards, we were already too well known, and the police, if they wanted to make an example, they would rather pick some less known journal or editor as target. That however does not mean they left us completely alone.⁷³⁸

By the spring of 1984, the Hungarian regime faced a dilemma: on the one hand, the opposition was undermining its authority; on the other hand, it felt compelled to guard its 'liberal' image abroad, because the country's economy had come to rely so heavily on Western investments and loans that it was vulnerable to criticism. György Dalos imitated the official reasoning: "Would it really be worthwhile to jeopardize the image of the most liberal country in the East just because of a small group of non-conformists?"⁷³⁹ With hindsight, the answer was no. The dissidents' Western supporters might have revolted if they had detected signs for a return of systemic persecution.

IV.1.2. Trial and Error: Columbia University

István Deák, a professor of European history and the head of Columbia University's East Central European Institute, recalls an already familiar episode from the early 1980s, most likely 1982. He had received a phone call from a friend in Paris telling him that a "very rich" Budapest-born American by the name of George Soros was interested in supporting Hungarian dissidents. Like Laber and Neier, Deák had never

⁷³⁷ Ibid.

⁷³⁸ Csizmadia, "Kis János," 114.

⁷³⁹ Dalos, *Archipel Gulasch*, 80.

heard of him before. They met up and Soros explained that he needed assistance in establishing an exchange program with Columbia University. He thought Deák might take care of the selection of fellows, since he was an émigré well-connected and welcomed in Budapest. The Open Society Fund would provide the money. "It was all very simple," Deák remembers, "he asked me how much it would cost, and I said around \$15,000 – which was a lot of money at the time – and he just wrote a check. One phone call and it was done."⁷⁴⁰

Born in Budapest in 1926, Deák had left Hungary for Paris just before the Communist takeover in 1948.⁷⁴¹ In 1956, he had immigrated to New York, where he had finished his PhD at Columbia University in 1964. Originally, he had specialized in twentieth century German history, but soon his scholarly interest turned to Hungary. Ironically, Béla Király, the commander-in-chief during the Hungarian revolution who was fourteen years his senior, had been his PhD student. Király then became an history professor at nearby City University of New York, who at the end of his career became an avid organizer for conference on East Central European history and co-directed the East European Monographs series.⁷⁴²

In the wake of Hungary's liberalization in the 1960s, the émigré Deák was allowed to return and soon became a respected visiting scholar at the Historical Institute

⁷⁴⁰ István Deák, interviewed by the author, 20 February 2012, New York, NY, USA.

⁷⁴¹ István Deák, interviewed by Holly Case, 29 April 2009, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. <http://ecepastandpresent.blogspot.com/2009/06/interview-with-istvan-deak-seth-low.html>.

⁷⁴² For more see Béla Király's personal documents at the Open Society Archive, Budapest. Margalit Fox, "Bela Kiraly Dies at 97; Led Revolt in Hungary," *New York Times*, 8 July 2009. Lee Congdon, "Obituary: Béla K. Király, 1912-2009," *H-Net* (2009).

of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.⁷⁴³ In 1973, however, after a research visits, Deák suddenly found himself detained:

Two polite men in business suits offered me the customary tiny cup of espresso and informed me that since I was guilty of grave crimes against the People's Republic, I ought to be arrested and put on trial; but in view of the somewhat improved relations between the United States and Hungary, I would, they said, only be expelled.⁷⁴⁴

In response, the International Research and Exchange Board, an independent organization dedicated to academic exchanges between the U.S. and the Eastern bloc, suspended the Hungarian program. Deák speculated that "as a scholar at Columbia University [...] I was apparently something worse – a likely agent of the US government sent to spread hostile propaganda about the Communist regime."⁷⁴⁵ He was probably a victim to the Hungary's secret service's paranoia, which remembered Columbia University's early Cold War activities. The Russian Institute, the big brother of Deák's East Central European Institute, had been founded in 1946 by former members of the Office for Strategic Services, the C.I.A.'s predecessor, and is until today considered a training ground for the U.S. service.⁷⁴⁶ The Hungarian officers were clearly unaware of the intricate position of Deák's small-understaffed institute, traditionally dwarfed by the more prestigious Russian Institute.⁷⁴⁷

⁷⁴³ On the role of the Historical Institute in Hungarian historiography, see Maciej Janowski, Constantin Iordachi, and Balász Trencsényi, "Why bother about historical regions? Debates over Central Europe in Hungary, Poland and Romania," *East Central Europe* 32, no. part I- II (2005): 7- 23.

⁷⁴⁴ István Deák, "Scandal in Budapest," *New York Review of Books* (2006).

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁶ Catharine Theimer Nepomnyashchy, ed. *The Harriman Institute, 1946-2006* (New York: Trustees of Columbia University of New York City, 2006). The Russian Institute/ The Harriman Institute, ed. *Fifty Years, 1946-1996* (New York: Columbia University 1997), 28-29.

⁷⁴⁷ The Russian Institute at Columbia was the first area study institute in the U.S. focusing on the Soviet Union. In 1982, it was renamed after the former Ambassador to Moscow, former Governor W. Averill Harriman in recognition of his \$10 million grant in. In 1997, the two institutes, Harriman and the East Central European institute, merged under the name of the former.

George Soros knew better. Instead of aggravating them, István Deák contributed to easing relations between the U.S. and Hungary. In the 1970s, as part of President Carter's 'New Eastern Europe policy, the State Department was considering returnin the Holy Crown of Saint Stephen, the symbol for Hungarian sovereignty. In 1945, the Hungarian Crown Guards had handed it to U.S. Army officers to prevent it from falling into the hands of the advancing Red Army. Since then, it had been held at the U.S. Gold Depository at Fort Knox, Kenntucky. Most Hungarian émigrés had been strongly opposed to repatriation.⁷⁴⁸

Although also disinclined, National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, once a colleague at Columbia, had asked Deák for his professional opinion on the matter. Despite ferocious attacks and denunciations from some émigré communities, Deák as well as Béla Király, who testified in front of the Congressional Subcommittee, approved of the gesture.⁷⁴⁹ President Carter and then U.S. Ambassador to Budapest Philip Kaiser decided in favor of repatriation, hoping it would support the reform wing in the Hungarian party during the ongoing negotiations to make Hungary a most favored nation. The administration only requested that János Kádár would not attend the ceremony to demonstrate that "the Crown is returned to the Hungarian people by the American people."⁷⁵⁰ A member of the U.S. delegation, the ban agianst István Deák was dropped and he was allowed to resume research in Hungary.⁷⁵¹

⁷⁴⁸ See for instance: "Protesters want Hungarian Crown to stay here," *Washington Post*, 30 November 1977. Tibor Glant, *A Szent Corona Amerikai Kalandja, 1945-1978* (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 1997), 87-102.

⁷⁴⁹ István Deák, interviewed by the author, 20 February 2012, New York, NY, USA. László Borhi, "In the power arena. US-Hungarian relations, 1942-1989," *Eurozine* (2010).

⁷⁵⁰ Gough, *A Good Comrade*, 201-02.

⁷⁵¹ István Deák, interviewed by the author, 20 February 2012, New York, NY, USA.

With the exception of György Ránki, the former director of the Academy's Historical Institute who held a chair at Indiana University in Bloomington since 1979, Deák was the only U.S. scholar familiar with Hungarian academia.⁷⁵² Soros sought his help in identifying young scholars, in order to give them the opportunity to experience top-notch education and open debates in the U.S. Revolted by paperwork, Soros has never asked for a budget; he put all his trust in Deák's expertise.⁷⁵³ It seems Soros wanted a simple yet efficient program, which would not demand much of his time but would contribute to opening a closed society. He might have been discouraged by such bureaucratic behemoths like the Ford Foundation, while he probably had just come to appreciate the nonchalance of Annette Laborey and the significance of personal connections. Among the grantees were known dissidents as well as junior scholars, for whom the grants represented an otherwise unobtainable ticket to the U.S.⁷⁵⁴ As a student of György Ránki and promising young scholar, Gábor Gyáni was among the first recipients. He confirmed the adventurous nature and impact of these three-month-long Soros scholarships at Columbia.⁷⁵⁵

For Deák, however, the program held few rewards. "It did not occur to [Soros] that it costs money; [...] phone calls were extremely expensive, especially to Europe," he

⁷⁵² György Ránki's colleague and co-author Iván T. Berend succeeded him as president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1982. Iván T. Berend, *History In My Life* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), 119-32.

⁷⁵³ For problems with this policy of minimal oversight and 'trust' see George Soros, *Soros on Soros: Staying Ahead of the Curve* (New York: J. Wiley, 1995), 114.

⁷⁵⁴ Thanks to Prof. John S. Micgiel for sharing a list of 'Soros fellows' he and Deák have put together. It is possible that some of these intellectuals were actually fellows at the Institute for the Humanities, but 'visited' Columbia. Other documents do not exist. For some: Kaufman, *Soros. The Life and Times*, 84. "Bence, Gyorgy; Benda, Gyula; Csalog, Zsolt; Frank, Tibor; Fustos, Laszlo; Hamburger, Mihaly; Hanak, Peter; Horvath, Janos; Jeszenszky, Geza; Karpati, Zoltan; Klaniczay, Gabor; Kovacs, Maria; Litvan, Gyorgy; Magyar, Balint; Miszlivetz, Ferenc; Mizsei, Kalman; Nemeth, Zsolt; Orban, Viktor; Orkeny, Antal; Spiro, Gyorgy; Szorenyi, Laszlo; Tamas, Gaspar Miklos; Vajda, Mihaly; Vasarhelyi, Miklos; Wilhelm, Andras." [no diacritics in the original]

⁷⁵⁵ Gábor Gyáni, interviewed by the author, 10 June 2010, Budapest, Hungary.

recalls, “and then there were the jealousies, the suspicions” which made his voluntary engagement emotionally taxing.⁷⁵⁶ The East Central European Institute did not have an institutional set-up like NYU’s Institute for the Humanities to accommodate the visitors. ‘Entertaining’ the fellows was a time-consuming commitment for which Deák did not receive any compensation.⁷⁵⁷ Eventually, the fellowships at Columbia petered out, and Deák resumed his research visits without the burden of selecting grantees.

IV.1.3. Vienna, Dubrovnik and the Importance of Outliers

The Fondation continued to benefit from the Polish crisis. In March 1984, the Ford Foundation recognized its outstanding work with another \$ 225,000 for three years.⁷⁵⁸ Finally, matching funds were coming: George Soros signed another check for \$ 30,000; the West German tax-exempt ‘Verein für den Wissenschaftlichen Austausch in Europa’, which Marion Dönhoff had helped set up specifically to support the Poles, collected over FF 50,000 (about \$ 6,250) in donations; the French philosopher and last president Raymond Aron and Leszek Kołakowski, both recipients of the 1984 Erasmus Prize, donated the FF 55,000 (about \$ 6,800) in award money. In the fall, the Fondation successfully established the ‘American Friends for Cultural Exchange in Europe.’ That year, the Fondation gave travel grants to almost two hundred East Europeans, including 37 from Hungary.⁷⁵⁹

⁷⁵⁶ István Deák, interviewed by the author, 20 February 2012, New York, NY, USA.

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁸ Ford Secretary Barron M. Tenny to Dr. Andreas Gerwig, president of the Fondation since Kurt Reiniger’s resignation at the board meeting on December 4, 1982, 14 March 1984. HU OSA 26/ 2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991 Box 5, Folder: Ford Foundation 1984.

⁷⁵⁹ FF 55,000 at the time were about \$34,000. Réunion du Conseil de la Fondation, 24 March 1984. HU OSA 27 / 4 Réunions du Conseil de fondation, 1975-1991. Among the Hungarians: the sociologists Mihály Csakó and Géza Saska, architects Bálint Nagy and László Rajk, Béla Nové and Miklós Sulyok. Bourses 1984. HU OSA 27 / 5 Listes des boursiers et documents divers [sd], Catégorie: Conseil de Fondation / secretariat.

At the same time, Laborey regularly visited Vienna. In March 1984, she took Pierre Emmanuel's spot at the second International Helsinki Federation conference. The founder was terminally ill and would pass away in September.⁷⁶⁰ Laborey already knew the city from previous Fondation projects. But by 1984, she had found another pet project. In 1980, the Fondation had given a grant to a Polish philosopher by the name of Krzysztof Michalski. Born in 1948, Michalski was a representative of Poland's 1968 generation. The Fondation's grant allowed him to go to Heidelberg to work with Hans-Georg Gadamer. The two had met earlier, and Gadamer had asked Michalski to join his research team on phenomenology. Michalski, who had written his dissertation on the controversial German philosopher Martin Heidegger, planned to focus his attention on Edmund Husserl. Both had been Gadamer's teachers.⁷⁶¹

Working with Michalski apparently intrigued Gadamer for several reasons: his dissertation advisor in Cracow, the priest and philosopher Józef Tischner, had proposed to seek the advice from the presumably more knowledgeable philosopher Jan Patočka in Prague. In 1977, Patočka had been one of the first spokespersons of the Charta 77. Right away, Patočka had recommended Michalski to contact Gadamer; they had been friends since their days as students of Heidegger and Husserl. Michalski did so in 1978, a few months after Patočka's tragic death following days of police interrogations.⁷⁶² Since the mid-1970s, Gadamer had been working with philosophers from all over Europe, East and

⁷⁶⁰ In the obituary, his family asked for donations to the Fondation in honor of his lifelong activism. Annette Laborey in a letter to Stephen Marks, program officer at the Ford Foundation, 24 October 1984. HU OSA 26'2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991 Box 5, Folder: Ford Foundation 1984.

⁷⁶¹ The Fondation's grant, financed by the West German Thyssen Foundation, applied to the academic year 1981/82. Letter by Kurt Reiniger to Howard Dressner, 5 September 1980. HU OSA 26'1 Ford-Foundation corresp. 1977—1982 A. Folder [blue grey]. [already mentioned in chapter III, fn 157] For more on his earlier life, see Timothy Snyder, "Krzysztof Michalski (1948-2013)," *New York Review of Books* 60, no. 5 (2013).

⁷⁶² Klaus Nellen, interviewed by the author, 3 June 2013, Vienna, Austria. Patočka died on March 13, 1977, from poor health after days of police interrogation.

West. In 1975, he and his friends Paul Ricœur, Jacques Derrida, and the art historian Gottfried Boehm had been invited to a course on “Phenomenology and Marxism: problems of practical philosophy” at the Inter University Center in Dubrovnik.⁷⁶³

The Inter-University Centre in Dubrovnik was an extraordinary institution in Yugoslavia, a blind spot of the Cold War. The internationally recognized physicist and philosopher Ivan Supek, who had studied with Werner Heisenberg in Nazi Germany and then joined the anti-fascist resistance in Croatia in 1940, had first conceived of the idea for the center in 1970. He envisioned an independent institute where scholars from all around the world could freely exchange their ideas. Picturesque Dubrovnik with its diverse heritage of the Roman Empire, the Italian city-states, Byzantium, Central Europe and the Balkans seemed like the perfect location. It so happened that the University of Zagreb, of which Supek was rector, owned a renaissance city palace there overlooking the Old Town and the Adriatic Sea.

In August 1971, representatives from over thirty quite renowned universities from either side of the Iron Curtain had convened in Dubrovnik for the founding meeting of the IUC.⁷⁶⁴ Supek proposed:

Through their long history, universities have always been torchbearers of scientific progress and leaders in international cooperation. [...] Preparing the ground for the present day scientific revolution, the university community has also prepared the ground for a better world, the world of human understanding and peace. The need for cooperation among universities has never been so acute

⁷⁶³ “Phänomenologie und Marxismus: Probleme der praktischen Philosophie,” 16 February to 19 March 1975. IUC Dubrovnik. Secretariat of the Director, IUC Posters 1974-1990 Public Lectures, Folder: orange “Posters (from 1974... until 1989) big & small.

⁷⁶⁴ Among them UC Santa Barbara, University of Hamburg, Farleigh Dickinson University, Brandeis University, University of Vienna, University of Göttingen, University of Manchester, University of Oxford, Copenhagen School of Economics, University of Budapest, University of Rome, University of Heidelberg, University of Bergen, University of Nottingham, University of Trieste.

as it is today when scientific research has become so complex and [...] more importantly perhaps, when problems facing the world have become so urgent.⁷⁶⁵

As a non-aligned state, Yugoslavia was accessible to visitors from Eastern and Western Europe. Yugoslavia represented a sort of “freer terrain,” one participant said.⁷⁶⁶ Berta Dragičević, general secretary of the IUC from 1971 until 2010 and “the heart and soul” of the IUC, explains:

The regime was not comparable to the other countries, we had to [remind ourselves] it was a *communist* regime. We could travel, we could have foreign visitors, books, movies, whatever... it was very, very different. When people came from the “real” communist countries, we understood how it was there and [that] we were so much luckier.⁷⁶⁷

The IUC’s council consisted of the member universities, who then elected the director general and the executive committee.⁷⁶⁸ The IUC’s structure and composition was intentionally international. Most of the team-taught courses at the IUC lasted between one to two weeks. Organizers had to come from at least two, ‘resource persons’ from three different countries. The Director General was to be a foreigner.⁷⁶⁹ The Norwegian Johan Galtung, the creator of ‘Peace studies’, was elected the IUC’s first Director General. At the opening ceremony on 7 January 1974, he argued:

⁷⁶⁵ Ivan Supek, “The Inter University Centre for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IUCHSS) in Dubrovnik,” in *Inter-University Centre for postgraduate studies in humanities and social sciences*, University Zagreb, October 1971, p. 3. In IUC Dubrovnik Archive, Folder [mauve]: IUC Foundation, 10th anniversary, various. The University of Zagreb provided the buildings and covered maintenance costs and staff salaries. Additional expenses were paid for by donations, e.g. the West German DAAD, the Thyssen and Ford Foundations.

⁷⁶⁶ István Teplan, interviewed by the author, 22 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

⁷⁶⁷ Berta Dragičević, interviewed by the author, 12 May 2012, Zagreb, Croatia. For more: Berta Dragičević and Ørjar Øyen, eds., *Fragments of Memory of Life and Work at the Inter-University Centre Dubrovnik, 1971-2007* (Dubrovnik: IUC Dubrovnik, Krunoslav Pisk, 2007).

⁷⁶⁸ The executive committee met mostly in Dubrovnik, but also in New Jersey, Hamburg, Great Britain and in the Netherlands. *Beyond Frontiers. 30th Anniversary of Inter-University Centre Dubrovnik* (Dubrovnik: IUC, 2002), 39.

⁷⁶⁹ List of Director Generals: 1973-1976 Johan Galtung (Oslo), 1977-1987 Siegfried Kroninger (Vienna), 1987-1996 Ørjar Øyen (Bergen), 1996-1998 Hylke Tromp (Groningen), 1998-2002 Helmut Moritz (Graz), 2002-2004 Ivo Banac (Yale), 2004- Krunoslav Pisk.

... we live in a troubled world, a world so threatening that anything we build can be destroyed the next moment. But that should never lead to any [pretext] for apathy, for doing nothing. On the contrary, we have to go on – seek a deeper understanding of this world – and if the Inter-University Centre can be an ever so small force on the right side in the processes we are witnessing today its basic task would be fulfilled. And I can think of no place more appropriate than Dubrovnik for this purpose: a city with a tradition of autonomy, of peaceful coexistence with its neighbors, of skillful diplomacy located in a country, Yugoslavia, which [has] managed to combine unity and diversity not by melting diversity into one mould, but by keeping it divers [...] we shall contribute to making Dubrovnik an intellectual free port, a place for the meeting of minds, for the free exchange of ideas and knowledge.⁷⁷⁰

Supek's vision to bridge national and bloc boundaries was an almost instant success. Scholars from all over the world flocked to Dubrovnik. From 1972 to 1991, the IUC hosted 598 courses and 266 conferences with almost 40,000 participants.⁷⁷¹ It attracted several international heavy weights: since 1976, Jürgen Habermas and Richard Bernstein had been co-teaching courses in Dubrovnik.⁷⁷² In 1978, their class coincided with Gadamer's seminar on "Theory and Literature of Marxism," in which the Lukács student Mihály Vajda and the Canadian-born philosophers Bill Newton-Smith and Charles Taylor participated.⁷⁷³ For 1980, Gadamer and Boehm invited Krzysztof Michalski to co-organize their Dubrovnik seminar.⁷⁷⁴

⁷⁷⁰ Prof. Johann Galtung, Acting Director General, Opening Address, in Centar Za Postdiplomski Studij Dubrovnik. IUC Dubrovnik, Secretariat.

⁷⁷¹ Berta Dragičević, interviewed by the author, 12 May 2012, Zagreb, Croatia. Statistics in "35th Anniversary of the IUC & International Conference. Mobility in Bologna Process," 27-29 September 2007, Dubrovnik, p. 13. IUC Dubrovnik Archive, Secretariat.

⁷⁷² Habermas co-organized "Sozialwissenschaft und Philosophie" from April 5th to 24th, 1976; "Critical Approaches to Sociology," with Richard Bernstein from March 28th to 15 April 15th, 1977; "Philosophy and Science: Rationality in the Natural and the Social Sciences" again with Bernstein from 20 March to 7 April 1978. He skipped 1980, because he was at the New School in New York. IUC Poster Academic Year 1975-1976, IUC Dubrovnik Archive, Secretariat, Folder: orange "Posters (from 1974... until 1989) big & small. IUC Dubrovnik, Academic program 1979/80. IUC Dubrovnik Archive, Secretariat, Folder: orange "Posters (from 1974... until 1989) big & small.

⁷⁷³ "Theorie und Literatur des Marxismus," 27 February – 18 March 1978. IUC Academic Program 1978/80. IUC Dubrovnik Archive, Secretariat, Folder: "Posters (from 1974... until 1989) big & small.

⁷⁷⁴ "Die Hermeneutik und die Künste," received at the IUC on January 10, 1980. "Hermeneutik und die Künste II, (Das Problem der Sprache)," 20 March – 3 April 1981. IUC Dubrovnik. Secretariat of the Director, IUC Posters 1974-1990 Public Lectures, Folder: orange "Posters (from 1974... until 1989) big & small, Poster: Academic Program, Academic Year 1980/1981 II, 1 January – September 30, 1981.

The IUC demonstrated that a genuinely *European* dialogue could be possible. Thinking of the first years that he participated in the Dubrovnik seminars, Michalski realized the inherent paradox of détente:

That the two parts of Europe were visibly drifting apart, everyone could see that. It was [still] the time of détente, but only a détente – a good thing in and of itself, no doubt – between governments but not for the governed.⁷⁷⁵

But the IUC was not to be the only institute that sought to bring together East and West. Michalski's mentor, the Polish priest and philosopher Józef Tischner had also participated in the Dubrovnik seminar in 1980. Later in the summer, shortly before the strikes in Gdańsk, Pope John Paul II invited Michalski and Tischner to a workshop at Castel Gandolfo, the papal residence at Lake Albano. Tischner knew the pope since their days at the University of Cracow.⁷⁷⁶ The Pope wholeheartedly supported the idea of an independent, non-partisan and non-denominational institute for advanced studies uniting East and West.⁷⁷⁷ Shortly thereafter, the strikes in Gdańsk broke out and when Solidarność was founded, Tischner became its ordained advocate.

Michalski convinced two of his friends from Cologne, Cornelia Klinger and Klaus Nellen, to start the institute. Despite all the uncertainty, the two agreed.⁷⁷⁸ For the same reasons as for the Helsinki Federation, Vienna transpired as ideal location: "In the geopolitical context of the Cold War, it was the least controversial place to invite people from Eastern Europe. It was a whole lot easier to get [visitors] to Vienna than to Berlin,"

⁷⁷⁵ [Thanks to Klaus Nellen for sharing the manuscript.] Krzysztof Michalski, "Acceptance Speech for the Theodor Heuss Award (excerpts)," (Theodor Heuss Stiftung, 2004).

⁷⁷⁶ Karol Wojtyła was ordained in Cracow in 1946. In 1954, he defended his dissertation on phenomenology and Catholic ethics there at the Jagiellonian University.

⁷⁷⁷ Krzysztof Michalski, "Das Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen. Wie es dazu kam," *IWM Newsletter*, no. 34 (1992).

⁷⁷⁸ Klinger and Nellen had met Michalski during his first stay in West Germany in 1978. Klaus Nellen, interviewed by the author, 3 June 2013, Vienna, Austria. Ibid.

Klaus Nellen recalls.⁷⁷⁹ On October 30, 1981, barely two months before the declaration of martial law in Poland, the Institute for Human Sciences was founded and Józef Tischner agreed to serve as the president of its board.⁷⁸⁰ By the end of 1982, Michalski, Klinger, and Nellen moved into a small three-room-apartment, the IWM's first office.⁷⁸¹ In 1983, Pope John Paul II declared himself a "friend" of the institute; thereafter, he would host the annual board meetings and regular conferences in Castel Gandolfo.

The main obstacle for the IWM was as so often money. Asked about funding, Klaus Nellen responded laughing:

It has always been complicated [laughs]. But Busek... he has helped us tremendously, because he is from the black side, from the ÖVP [Austrian People's Party] and he convinced [Leopold] Gratz, then Mayor of Vienna, so one from the red side [SPÖ, the Social Democratic Party of Austria] that his whole idea is a good thing.⁷⁸²

Vienna's deputy mayor Erhard Busek, who was known for reaching bipartisan deals, convinced the mayor, the City Council and the Ministry of Education to cover maintenance costs and rent – knowing that foundations were disinclined to pay operating costs. The West German Robert Bosch Foundation agreed to fund fellowships, and Michalski turned to his former benefactor Annette Laborey.⁷⁸³ She immediately agreed to serve as the institute's treasurer, although she was in the midst of negotiations with Ford again.⁷⁸⁴

⁷⁷⁹ Klaus Nellen, interviewed by the author, 3 June 2013, Vienna, Austria.

⁷⁸⁰ Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen. Thanks to Klaus Nellen for sharing the 'Timeline of the Institute.'

⁷⁸¹ "Time Line of the Institute." Klaus Nellen, interviewed by the author, 3 June 2013, Vienna, Austria.

⁷⁸² Michalski, "Das IWM - Wie es dazu kam." Klaus Nellen, interviewed by the author, 3 June 2013, Vienna, Austria.

⁷⁸³ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁴ The Ford Foundation was to provide an additional \$100,000 reserve funds. Procès verbal de la Réunion du Conseil de la Fondation du 24 Mars 1984 à Paris. HU OSA FEIE 27 / 4 Réunions du Conseil de fondation, 1975-1991. As of 2013, Laborey still holds that position in the IWM. <http://www.iwm.at/the-institute/boards/>.

Meanwhile, the Fondation's financial crisis persisted. Although the Polish crisis had sparked unusual generosity, the extra cash barely met the demand that had also skyrocketed since December 1981. In late 1984, she informed Frank Sutton at Ford:

[...] we now feel that we are in a position to satisfy a small part of the demand from many scholars, theatre people and other opinion-formers in Eastern Europe to spend a few months in America. We can choose suitable candidates (each one carefully screened by other grantees whom we have brought to the West and who understand the requirements, ranging from willingness, ability to return to their country and their former job to a good knowledge of English); make the arrangements to this end; and pay the travel expenses. What we need is more American universities and other institutions willing to receive East European scholars etc. for three or four months [...].⁷⁸⁵

Frank Sutton was serving as president to the Board of the American Friends of the Fondation. Although himself predisposed, he warned that academic interest in Eastern European affairs in the U.S. was low:

As you probably know, the study of Eastern Europe isn't in a very flourishing condition in this country. Columbia and Indiana have the most substantial programs. I don't think their present financial resources are very good and whether they would give welcome to people you might propose would depend on the distinction and quality of these people.⁷⁸⁶

After years of frustration at the Fondation, Laborey might have looked to the IWM as an opportunity to redefine herself. Since her Paris apartment had become a safe haven for Poles after 13 December 1981, she strongly identified with the Polish cause. In March 1983, before the legal foundation of the IWM, the minutes of the Fondation's board meeting noted her new commitment:

Annette Laborey has informed the Council of the demand from Polish friends that she would get involved in an institute 'Europäisches Institut für die Wissenschaft vom Menschen', which will eventually be established in Vienna. This project is still vague but it has the goal to allow young university students

⁷⁸⁵ Letter by Annette Laborey to Frank Sutton, 5 December 1984. HU OSA 26/ 2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991 Box 5, Folder: Ford Foundation 1983.

⁷⁸⁶ Apparently Sutton had been in Paris in December 1984 to visit the Fondation and Annette Laborey. Letter by Francis Sutton to Annette Laborey, 14 January 1985. HU OSA 26/ 2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991 Box 5, Folder: Ford Foundation 1985.

and artists, especially from Eastern Europe, to spend a year of studying in Vienna. This activity, if it is to succeed, will be very separate from the Fondation. This project cannot receive funds from the Fondation and the Council gives its approval to Annette Laborey to commit herself as she sees fit.⁷⁸⁷

Laborey was optimistic about the IWM's future. In November 1983, she informed the Ford Foundation:

I have been recently to Vienna and I was personally very impressed by the progress of the development of the Institut. So far the Institut has been financed by the City of Vienna and different scientific Foundations in Germany that are interested in its program. But it goes without saying that financial problems occur particularly in the creation-phase of such an institution.

The present chairman of the Institut [sic], Dr. Krzysztof MICHALSKI from Poland is particularly interested in opening the scientific exchange program of the Institut towards the United States on one hand, in Eastern Europe on the other. Therefore the Institut would need a specific financial support in order to have American scientists come for several months to work in Vienna and on order to be able to invite more scientists from Eastern Europe.⁷⁸⁸

Suggesting that the exchange would include the U.S. and not be exclusively European proved successful: the Ford Foundation supported the IWM throughout the eighties.⁷⁸⁹ By 1984, the IWM needed bigger offices and it moved to a larger, centrally located apartment. However, its quick expansion and growing network also raised suspicions: until the end of the Cold War, the Institute was either suspected to be part of Opus Dei, the Freemasons, Mossad, the KGB or the C.I.A.⁷⁹⁰

Such allegations did not deter George Soros. Probably, Annette Laborey told him about the IWM, maybe already during the International Helsinki Federation's Conference

⁷⁸⁷ Procès verbal de la réunion du conseil de la Fondation pour une Entraide intellectuelle européenne du 14 mars 1981 à Paris. HU OSA, FEIE 27 / 4 Réunions du Conseil de Fondation, 1975-1991.

⁷⁸⁸ Letter by Laborey to Barry Gaberman, 17 November 1983, HU OSA FEIE, 26'2 Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991 Box 5, Folder: Ford Foundation 1983.

⁷⁸⁹ Klaus Nellen, interviewed by the author, 3 June 2013, Vienna, Austria.

⁷⁹⁰ János Mátyás Kovács, interviewed by the author, 30 June 2010, Vienna, Austria. Klaus Nellen, interviewed by the author, 3 June 2013, Vienna, Austria. Michalski, "Das IWM - Wie es dazu kam."

in March 1984, which both attended.⁷⁹¹ Laborey might have used the opportunity to introduce Soros to Krzysztof Michalski personally. Soros was intrigued: by 1985, he was not only giving money to the IWM but also actively participated in its events.⁷⁹² He has remained a member of the IWM's board until today.

IV.2. The Network's Expansion, 1982-1985

IV.2.1. Crisscrossing the Continent: Oxford, Prague, Dubrovnik

In 1984, the IWM initiated a new project that was going to become one of its cornerstones: the Jan Patočka's archive. Klaus Nellen, who has since been in charge of the archive, explains:

After Patočka had died, his students [...] worried that [his] estate [...] would be confiscated by the secret police. That's why right after the foundation of the Institute we started smuggling copies of all the manuscripts, which they had reproduced in secret, to Vienna. I travelled back and forth with my bags full of copies. However, it wasn't particularly dramatic, they never arrested nor even interrogated me – nothing which I could write on my CV [chuckles]. [...] They did snoop around, and they did know [what we were doing]; a large part also made it here through 'diplomatic channels,' so that within a short time we had his entire estate here in copy.⁷⁹³

In the 1980s, the shared interest in philosophy, particularly Central European phenomenology at the turn of the century, emerged as a common reference for the East-West network. It developed into a strong motivation to consolidate the cooperation across the Iron Curtain. This network did not only involve the IWM, but also Oxford University. On 20 May 1978, Julius Tomin, an unemployed philosopher in Prague, sent a letter to four renowned universities in the West, Oxford among them, in which he described the

⁷⁹¹ Second International Conference of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 10-11 March 1984, Report, HU OSA 318-0-5 Box 6.

⁷⁹² Documentary evidence has not been available. In 1985, Soros' active participation is documented in Michalski, "Das IWM - Wie es dazu kam."

⁷⁹³ Klaus Nellen, interviewed by the author, 3 June 2013, Vienna, Austria.

harassment, the confiscation of mail, and the travelling ban that he and his students endured.⁷⁹⁴ Banned from the university, he was running discussion groups in his home. Tomin, who believed education was a human right, suggested: “There is no discipline, no subject we can possibly exclude out of hand. There is only one condition – you need to have the desire to come and see us, to share with us the fruits of your own study and research.”

In January 1979, Bill Newton-Smith, a Canadian-born philosophy professor who since 1977 had participated in Gadamer’s courses in Dubrovnik, read it out at a faculty meeting. To his surprise, the motion of sending lecturers was approved, although it would require taking a leave from teaching and research and would probably have to be paid out of pocket.⁷⁹⁵ When Steven Lukes, a fellow at the university’s Balliol College, heard about the philosophers’ decision, he called his old friend Jan Kavan to preempt disaster.⁷⁹⁶ Kavan, a Czech émigré, ran a tamizdat publishing house out of London, the Palach Press, named after Jan Palach, the student who had set himself on fire in January 1969 in protest of the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968 and the ensuing ‘normalization.’ In 1952, his father Pavel, a committed Communist, had been a co-defendant in the infamous Slansky trial in which he was sentenced to prison on trumped up charges.⁷⁹⁷ Steven Lukes and Kavan had become friends in 1968, when Lukes was a foreign student in Prague and Kavan a student activist during the Prague Spring.⁷⁹⁸ In 1970, Kavan had immigrated to England, and the two had remained close since.

⁷⁹⁴ Thanks to Barbara Day for sharing her collection of documents. Julius Tomin, “We wish to establish scientific contact,” open letter, 20 May 1978. Copies were sent to Harvard, Oxford, the Free University Berlin, and University of Heidelberg. There is no evidence that the other letters have ever been received.

⁷⁹⁵ Barbara Day, interviewed by the author, 13 January 2010, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁷⁹⁶ Bill Newton-Smith, interviewed by the author, 4 November 2011, Budapest, Hungary.

⁷⁹⁷ Rosemary Kavan, *Love and Freedom* (1988), 2 ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 2009).

⁷⁹⁸ Day, *The Velvet Philosophers*, 34-35.

Katherine Wilkes, a tutor at Oxford, volunteered to be the first to visit the underground seminars. To prepare her, Lukes arranged a meeting with Kavan and travelled to Prague himself to encourage some of his Czech friends to assist Wilkes when she arrived in April 1979. She met some of the most prominent members of the Czech dissidents.⁷⁹⁹ Wilkes returned exhilarated and published articles about her experience for *The Guardian* and the *New Statesman*. The Czechs, however, came under fire. In May 1979, the new Charta 77 spokesmen, Jirí Dienstbier and Václav Benda, were detained. A week later, strangers assaulted fellow spokeswoman Zdena Tominová, Julius Tomin's wife. The authorities exploited the moment when Western attention was focused on Pope John Paul II's visit to Poland to settle scores.⁸⁰⁰

The Czechoslovak authorities were mistaken to think that they could deter the Oxford philosophers. Instead, the visiting lecturers engaged colleagues from other schools, such as Roger Scruton, a conservative thinker from Birkbeck College. In 1979 alone, Oxford University sent twelve lecturers to Prague. Steven Lukes, Roger Scruton, and Kathy Wilkes used their connections to journalists and newspapers to create public awareness, hoping such publicity would protect their Czech contacts. But instead, the situation deteriorated: in early 1980, Kathy Wilkes was expelled from Czechoslovakia. In March, Bill Newton-Smith's lecture was broken up, and after hours of interrogation, he was escorted to the border, making him a *persona non grata* in Czechoslovakia.⁸⁰¹ In

⁷⁹⁹ For example Petr Rezek, Ludvík Vaculík and Radim Palouš. *Ibid.*, 36-37.

⁸⁰⁰ "The Velvet Philosophers' Twenty Years Later (on the occasion of Alain Montefiore's 85th birthday)," in *Barbara Day Private Collection*(2011), 39-41.

⁸⁰¹ Bill Newton-Smith, interviewed by the author, 4 November 2011, Budapest, Hungary. For details, see *The Velvet Philosophers*, 52-53.

April, Anthony Kenny, the Master of Balliol College, and his wife, were taken to a police station for a ten-hour-long “friendly conversation.”⁸⁰²

In response, Roger Scruton and Kathy Wilkes decided to institutionalize the exchange. In June 1980, they founded the Jan Hus Educational Fund (JHF). To sustain unemployed philosophers, the Fund would pay honorariums for translations of foreign texts, and smuggle books in and manuscripts out.⁸⁰³ In 1981-82, the Fund spend £1,700 on books in addition to those copies Oxford professors acquired free of charge directly from British publishing houses.⁸⁰⁴ About a trip in early 1984, Klaus Nellen remembers:

[...] when I went over there, I bought books at the expense of the [Jan Hus] Fund. I carried them in two shopping bags, and most of them I gave to my friend Petr Rezek, who compiled a pretty nice library— but always under the precondition that he would grant his colleagues access, too!⁸⁰⁵

For the Tomins, life in Prague had become unbearable. In October 1979, when the Chartists were convicted, Tomin and other members of the Prague underground were detained. In August 1980, Wilkes sneaked back into Czechoslovakia to collect the family.⁸⁰⁶ After his wife, a spokesperson for the Charta, had been assaulted, Julius Tomin accepted the invitation as a short-term lecturer at Oxford University.⁸⁰⁷ In the summer of

⁸⁰² "Oxford dons battle Czech Secret Police," *Montreal Gazette*, 4 June 1980. For Anthony Kenny's recollection, see *The Velvet Philosophers*, 58-59.

⁸⁰³ Jan Hus Educational Fund, "Academic year 1981-82," Barbara Day, private collection. Also see Jessica Douglas-Home, *Once Upon Another Time. Ventures behind the Iron Curtain* (London: Michael Russell Ltd., 2000).

⁸⁰⁴ Jan Hus Educational Fund, "Academic year 1981-82," Barbara Day, private collection. Note that it was the Jan Hus Foundation who brought the first copies of Friedrich von Hajek's *Road to Serfdom* to Prague. Most of the books landed in the hands of Ladislav Hejránek, Radim Palouš, Karel Palek, and Petr Rezek. *Ibid.*, 30-37.

⁸⁰⁵ Klaus Nellen, interviewed by the author, 3 June 2013, Vienna, Austria. According to Barbara Day's accounts, in March Nellen carried £25 and in October 1984 £70 worth of books to "Urbinus," and in August 1985, another load of books worth £40. Barbara Day's notebook, private collection.

⁸⁰⁶ Wilkes had confused authorities with a new passport, which had been issued in her full name of Vaughan-Wilkes.

⁸⁰⁷ Once Tomin arrived in England, he clashed with the establishment. An illustration of the problems can be deducted from Tomin's letter to Ralph Walker, founding member of the Jan Hus Fund. Julius Tomin, "A Letter to a Velvet Philosopher," Barbara Day's private collection, undated [probably late 1999 or early 2000]. For what happened to Zdena and the two sons, see Day, *The Velvet Philosophers*, 66-67.

1982, he received a fellowship at the Institute for the Humanities in New York, at the same time as the Hungarians György Bence and Mária Kovács, András Kovács and János Kenedi.⁸⁰⁸

In 1980, the French philosopher Catherine Audard, who was married to Balliol College lecturer Alain Montefiore, initiated the Fund's French equivalent, the 'Association Jan Hus.'⁸⁰⁹ In 1981, Paul Ricœur and Jacques Derrida, the two philosophers who were frequent visitors to the Institute for the Humanities and regular participants in Dubrovnik, visited Prague on the Fund's behalf. Derrida's trip in December ended in a disaster: Just before his departure, he was detained. Drugs had been planted in his suitcase and he was taken to a nearby jail. Montefiore and Audard informed the French Foreign Ministry, which then called the Czechoslovak President Gustav Husák demanding his release. On New Year's Eve 1981, the police escorted Derrida to the border, where a crowd of journalists was already waiting.⁸¹⁰

In response to the incidence, the British Foreign Council advised the Jan Hus Fund to suspend visits. Jürgen Habermas, another Dubrovnik course organizer and frequent visitor to New York, had set up a branch of the Jan Hus Fund in West Germany. In March 1982, a German cultural attaché warned him that the West German government might not be able to help in cases of arrest.⁸¹¹ Nevertheless, the intellectuals persisted and

⁸⁰⁸ "Annual Report 1982/83," NYU Archive, NYUIH, Group 37.4, Series I: A, Box 2, Folder 14: Board of Trustees—Meeting 5/6/1983.

⁸⁰⁹ In May 1980, Audard invited Kathy Wilkes and Montefiore to share their experiences at the Sorbonne in Paris. Apparently, asked to follow a British initiative, rubbed some French scholars the wrong way. The 'Association Jan Hus' wasn't founded until December. In February 1981, Jean-Pierre Verrant was elected President, Jacques Derrida Vice-President and Audard Secretary.

⁸¹⁰ Barbara Day, interviewed by the author, 13 January 2012, Prague, Czech Republic. Douglas-Home claims the French President François Mitterand intervened personally. Douglas-Home, *Once Upon Another Time*, 20.

⁸¹¹ Day, *The Velvet Philosophers*, 177-78.

Barbara Day, member and chronicler of the Jan Hus Fund claims that the Czechoslovak secret service never figured out the full scope of their activities.⁸¹²

In January 1984, the British journalist and historian Timothy Garton Ash travelled to Prague to deliver money and meet with “Urbinus,” Rudolf Kučera’s cover name. Kučera was running a *samizdat* journal, *Střední Evropa* [Central Europe], and he asked Garton Ash about potential contributors from Hungary and Poland.⁸¹³ With *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*, his eyewitness account of the Polish crisis, Garton-Ash had propelled himself to a position of an expert on the East European opposition movements.⁸¹⁴ However, “he wasn’t much interested,” Barbara Day remembers, and soon quit the Jan Hus Fund.⁸¹⁵ Kathy Wilkes also withdrew and put all her energies into the Inter University Centre, to which Newton-Smith had introduced her, once she had been expelled from Czechoslovakia.⁸¹⁶ Dubrovnik became her second home.⁸¹⁷ In August 1985, Wilkes would unanimously be elected to the IUC’s Executive Council.⁸¹⁸

For many, Prague was a formative experience.⁸¹⁹ In December 1986, the Jan Hus Education Fund sent another Oxford scholar by the name of Tony Judt to Prague. Like George Soros, Judt claims the ‘discovery’ of Eastern Europe and the friendship with dissidents helped him to get out of a deep midlife crisis: After a year in the U.S., Judt had returned to Oxford depressed and divorcing. However, the year abroad changed his life:

⁸¹² Barbara Day, interviewed by the author, 13 January 2012, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁸¹³ Timothy Garton Ash, “Report for Jan Hus Foundation,” January 1984. Barbara Day, private collection.

⁸¹⁴ Tony Judt remembers the significance of the book and Garton Ash’s quick rise to intellectual stardom in Tony Judt, *Thinking the Twentieth Century. With Timothy Snyder* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 204-05.

⁸¹⁵ Barbara Day, interviewed by the author, 13 January 2012, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁸¹⁶ Day, *The Velvet Philosophers*, 67.

⁸¹⁷ Bill Newton-Smith, “Kathy Wilkes. Bold academic forging philosophical links with eastern Europe,” *The Guardian*, 19 September 2003. Berta Dragičević, interviewed by the author, 12 May 2012, Zagreb, Croatia.

⁸¹⁸ Minutes of the 8th Meeting of the Council of the Inter-University Centre, held at Dubrovnik, 30-31 August 1985, p. 6. IUC Dubrovnik, Archive, Secretariat, [part of yellow file folder: IUC documents 1986-87, Book IX...]. IMG_0886

⁸¹⁹ Douglas-Home, *Once Upon Another Time*.

in Atlanta, he had befriended the two Polish émigrés, Irena Grudzińska-Gross and Jan Gross. Until then he had only identified Eastern Europe as the former home of his immigrant parents.

Jan and Irina Gross had put Judt in touch with their Polish friends in Paris, the exiles Barbara Toruńczyk, Alexander Smolar and Wójciech Kárpiński, fellows of the Fondation, and therefore friends of Annette Laborey and Péter Kende.⁸²⁰ In his autobiography, Judt explained:

Through Poland [...] and my newfound friends there and in exile, I was able to make links with my own East European Jewish past. Above all, and to my continuing embarrassment, I discovered a rich and seductive literature of which I had been almost completely unaware until then: a shortcoming doubtless attributable to the parochial qualities of even the best British education, but my own responsibility all the same.⁸²¹

Their stories did not only inspire him to explore his own East European roots, but he also came to reassess previous convictions. As a student, Judt had been infatuated with French intellectual history and strongly identified with the May 1968 protests in Paris. In contrast, for Jan and Irina Gross the memories of Poland in 1968 recalled repression, anti-Semitism and forced emigration. Sympathizing with their experiences, Judt dismissed the revolutionary enthusiasm for communism in his youth. Their stories, a corrective to his own experiences, have informed his writing ever since.⁸²²

Back in Oxford, Tony Judt decided to teach himself not Polish, but Czech. He volunteered as “a foot soldier in the little army of book smugglers recruited by Roger Scruton to assist lecturers and students expelled from Czech universities or forbidden to

⁸²⁰ Judt, *Thinking the Twentieth Century*, 199-204. In 1984, Judt returned to Atlanta for another short-term appointment – spending time with Jan and Irina was the main motivation, he claimed.

⁸²¹ *The Memory Chalet* (New York: Penguin, 2010), 169.

⁸²² *Thinking the Twentieth Century*, 6-15. "Revolutionaries," *New York Review of Books* 46, no. 3 (2010).

attend.”⁸²³ In late 1986, Barbara Day prepared him for a five-day trip during which he was to give two lectures.⁸²⁴ Back in England, on New Year’s Eve 1986, Judt drafted a genuinely enthusiastic report, which already reflects the reassessment of the convictions he had held prior to befriending Jan and Irina. Judt explained:

The second talk had to be canceled. According to Alena H. this was partly because Christmas causes other preoccupations, but mostly because the previous speaker to Urbinus’ group had been a frenchman, of the marxo-liberation-theology persuasion. There had been complete mutual incomprehension and, eventually, hostility. He had presumed to teach a bunch of czech intellectuals working as stokers, window-cleaners, etc, what the proletariat is really like... They decided never to hear another word about or by the French Left! I sympathise, but it shows a need for improved communications [...].⁸²⁵

To preempt further misunderstandings, in 1987, Roger Scruton and Barbara Day put together a booklet about Czechoslovakia and Central European history and culture at large. The cover warned any reader: “Please make sure that it does not fall into the wrong hands.”⁸²⁶ Scruton explained:

Nowhere has communism been such a cultural calamity as in Czechoslovakia, whose capital is now further than it has ever been from fulfilling its 650-year old ambition to be the equal of Paris. Despite communism, however, the culture of Czechoslovakia endures, and if this book has no other merit, it may at least serve as a testimony to its fascination.⁸²⁷

By the time of the publication, the Jan Hus Fund’s network had expanded considerably. It counted supporters in Vienna, Bonn, Paris, Stockholm, New York, and elsewhere. Among these was also Count Karl Johannes von Schwarzenberg, the illustrious son of the Schwarzenberg family, descendant of Bohemian nobility. In 1985,

⁸²³ "Saved by the Czechs," *New York Review of Books* (2010).

⁸²⁴ [Barbara Day] “Tony Judt, Prague, 15-20 December 1986,” Barbara Day, private collection.

⁸²⁵ Whereas the first lecture took place in Hejdánek’s apartment, the one in Rudolf Kučera’s fell through. Tony Judt, “Report,” 31 December 1986, Barbara Day, private collection. [spelling in original] Such cases happened. Barbara Day, interviewed by the author, 13 January 2010, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁸²⁶ Thanks to Barbara Day for giving me one of the two copies still in her possession. Roger Scruton, ed. *Czechoslovakia. The Unofficial Culture* (London: The Claridge Press, 1987).

⁸²⁷ "Preface," in *Czechoslovakia. The Unofficial Culture*, ed. Roger Scruton (London: The Claridge Press, 1987), 2.

the former Social Democratic Chancellor of Austria, Bruno Kreisky, had introduced Schwarzenberg, a member of the Austrian People's Party and good friend of Erhard Busek, to Aryeh Neier and Jeri Laber.⁸²⁸ Schwarzenberg had been born in Prague in 1937; in 1948, his aristocratic family had fled the Communist take-over.⁸²⁹ Schwarzenberg spoke German, English and Czech; he was well connected, knowledgeable in Central European history, and a charming mediator even in socialist Eastern Europe – assets that swept early reservations about his background under the rug. In 1985, he was named the Federation's president, partly because he was the quintessential Central European.⁸³⁰

Not mentioned in the booklet was George Soros, although he was actively involved in the Oxford-Prague exchange. Accounts on when and how contact to Soros was first established vary from spring 1984 to as early as October 1982.⁸³¹ There is evidence that Soros supported the Oxford professor Dr. Zbigniew Pelczynski, a former soldier in the Polish Home Army. He had convinced the Polish Ministry of Education to allow exchanges despite martial law so that some 60 Polish students could go to Oxford.⁸³² Additionally, since 1981, Soros's Open Society Fund was sending František Janouch, founder of the Stockholm-based Charta 77 Foundation donations.

Like others before him, Newton-Smith remembers that one day his phone rang and out of the blue Soros's secretary invited him to a dinner meeting. Instead of Eastern

⁸²⁸ Erhard Busek, interviewed by the author, 7 February 2012, Vienna, Austria.

⁸²⁹ Barbara Tóth, *Karl von Schwarzenberg. Eine Biographie* (Vienna: Ueberreuter, 2005), 96-107. In 1990, Schwarzenberg became Václav Havel's chancellor. As of 2013, he is the Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic.

⁸³⁰ Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 240-42.

⁸³¹ Douglas-Home, *Once Upon Another Time*, 58. Barbara Day refers to notes from a board meeting in October 1982. Day, *The Velvet Philosophers*, 264.

⁸³² See Nancy Durham, "The Dons who went out in the Cold," *Oxford Today* 3, no.2, (Hilary term 1991), HU OSA 203-20-8, Fonds 203: Records of Central European University, Subfonds 20: Secretary General's Office, Series 8: Public Relations and Events. Soros, *Underwriting Democracy*, 14.

Europe, however, they argued over the verifiability of Karl Popper's theories. "In the end, George knows I was right," Newton-Smith remembers laughing.⁸³³ Regardless of the philosophical dispute, since 1984, Soros was making regular donations. Without his continued support, Barbara Day insists, "the future [of the Jan Hus Fund] would have been in doubt."⁸³⁴

IV.2.2. The Soros-MTA Foundation, Budapest

Within only three years, Soros had cast a wide net of friends among intellectuals and dissidents. His earlier initiative at Columbia University demonstrates that his vision went beyond investing in existing connections and propping up struggling organizations. While President Reagan declared the Soviet Union an "evil empire" and signed off the Strategic Defense Initiative in March 1983, Soros's gaze turned to Budapest, where he knew the regime to be the most vulnerable.⁸³⁵ Soros looked at Hungary as a possible test case for Popper's theories.⁸³⁶ György Dalos remembers:

Soros showed up in Budapest in 82 [...]; there were all these parties. The entire Hungarian Opposition came together to debate [...], with a lot of wine, a bit of dancing, and an incredible amount of smoking. And suddenly a friend asks me: "Do you want a scholarship for the US?" I said: "No, I don't speak English." "Soros is in the kitchen." Who is Soros? – I wondered. A millionaire! At the time, they just called him 'the millionaire.'⁸³⁷

János Betlen, a radio journalist at the time and today a well-known television anchor, remembers that in the spring of 1983, Soros called him to invite him for dinner. When Betlen arrived at the restaurant, Hungary's Deputy Prime Minister József Marjai

⁸³³ Bill Newton-Smith, interviewed by the author, 4 November 2011, Budapest, Hungary.

⁸³⁴ Day, *The Velvet Philosophers*, 264. Thanks to the mediation of the American participants, significant grants came from the National Endowment for Democracy.

⁸³⁵ Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida," ed. The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation & Library (1983).

⁸³⁶ Gabriella Ivács, "An Appendage to the History of Democracies in Transition: A Preliminary Appraisal of the Records of the Soros Foundation Hungary," *Comma*, no. 3-4 (2004): 84-86.

⁸³⁷ György Dalos, interviewed by the author, 9 June 2009, Berlin, Germany.

and Ferenc Bartha, in charge of the country's international economic relations, were already seated at the table. Betlen recalls:

Bartha asked me: 'How did *you* get in touch with Mister Soros?' And I said: 'Well, he gave me a phone call and he asked me whether I was kind enough to pay a visit to him [...].' And – 'why did he call you?' I said: 'I believe that Hungarian dissidents have been his guests in New York, [...] – I don't know but I presume they must have told him that I am someone at the National Public Radio – so I must be acceptable to the authorities without being a police agent.' Whereupon he asked: 'How many people are there in the public radio that are acceptable without being a police agent?' There weren't that many, and he knew that.⁸³⁸

In September 1983, Soros visited Budapest for another meeting with József Marjai and György Aczél. Again, the beginnings are shrouded in a cloud of documentary uncertainty. Allegedly, Soros received the go-ahead for setting up a foundation in Hungary, only that there was no legal framework for the type of private foundation he had in mind.⁸³⁹

In November 1983, Soros looked up Alajos Dornbach, the 'dissident lawyer' who was known to make the impossible possible.⁸⁴⁰ Soros called Dornbach's home, but he was out so he informed his wife he would drop by later. Dornbach still shakes his head:

He said he wanted my help to found a foundation [...]. I thought it was a foolish thing. I had done [something similar] about three years before. Then I asked him: "What is the purpose? What is the budget?" He said: "One million." It took my breath away! "You mean one million in toto?" – "No, one million in the first year."⁸⁴¹

Flabbergasted but intrigued Dornbach began working out the legal preconditions for an *independent* foundation. Between September 1983 and May 1984, Soros made

⁸³⁸ János Betlen, interviewed by the author, 21 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary. Ferenc Bartha was the state secretary of the Council of Ministers' Secretariat for International Economic relations, Aczél the CC secretary for Culture

⁸³⁹ Béla Nóvé, *Tény/Soros* (Budapest: Balassi, 1999), 18.

⁸⁴⁰ Dornbach had set up the Károlyi Mihály Fund, which Katinka Andrassy, the widow of the former prime Mihály Károlyi, had established.

⁸⁴¹ Alajos Dornbach, interviewed by the author, 21 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

three trips to Budapest. His plan was controversially discussed at the highest levels, the Politburo and the Central Committee.⁸⁴² “The officials thought they were dealing with a well-meaning expatriate, the proverbial American uncle, whom they could humor and take advantage of,” Soros remembers.⁸⁴³ János Betlen exclaims : “It was a great idea to have a source for subsidies for intellectual, cultural initiatives and it was not under control of the authorities. It was revolutionary!”⁸⁴⁴

Since his more notorious dissident friends would ruin any deal with the regime, Soros had to identify critical but acceptable officers. To that end, he consulted the American Ambassador to Budapest Nicolas Salgó as well as his friends Ferenc Donáth and the economist Márton Tardos.⁸⁴⁵ Soros’s frequent visits to the U.S. Embassy were a sensitive point for the state security and the regime.⁸⁴⁶ Allegedly, János Kádár himself was deeply skeptical about it. However, others, particularly György Aczél, sought to capitalize on the hard currency and technical equipment Soros would bring. In return, Soros was willing to give up the name “open society.” But negotiations stalled. At some point, with a hand on the doorknob, Soros threatened Aczél that he would abandon the project. According to legend, Aczél inquired what he truly needed and Soros replied: “An independent executive director.” They decided on a dual structure in which half of the organization consisted of Soros’s appointees, the other of members of the Hungarian

⁸⁴² See e.g. the document of the Politbureau meeting on May 22, 1984, reprinted Nóvé, *Tény/ Soros*, 457.

⁸⁴³ Soros, *Underwriting Democracy*, 7.

⁸⁴⁴ János Betlen, interviewed by the author, 21 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

⁸⁴⁵ Nóvé, *Tény/ Soros*, 27-30. Gyula Kozák, "Kardos Laci is meghalt," *Beszélő* 11, no. 07/08 (1999).

⁸⁴⁶ The III/III duly noted how the word spread: From a conversation between István Deák, who was visiting, and Mária Kovács and György Bence they learned that the American Ambassador Nicholas Salgó had stepped into the planning stage. Belügyminisztérium, III/III-B Önálló Alosztály, 186. sz. napi jelentés, Budapest, 1983. Október 26. ÁBTL 27.1. NO17 III/III – 186/2 1983.Október 16. (2)

Academy of Sciences (Magyar Tudományos Akadémia).⁸⁴⁷ On May 28, 1984, Soros signed the contract for the 'Soros-MTA Foundation.'⁸⁴⁸

Additionally, Soros created a separate office within the larger Open Society Fund in New York, which took care of the Soros-MTA's business in the U.S. Contrary to the male-dominated foundation in Budapest, three dynamic women ran the 'director's office' in New York.⁸⁴⁹ The former Ambassador to Hungary, Philip Kaiser, who had arranged for the return of Saint Stephen's Crown, as well as Soros's friend from the Institute for Humanities, the Soviet émigré economist and Nobel Prize laureate Vassily Leontieff, became members of the Board of Trustees.

However, the Soros-MTA was not yet in the clear. During the summer of 1984, Soros watched how Hungarian authorities tried to manipulate the Budapest secretariat. He was not used to monitoring the various projects that he supported since all of them had existed prior to his involvement. But this was his brainchild. Because he could not be present in Budapest himself, he considered appointing a personal representative. Miklós Vásárhelyi had visited New York in 1983, when he had spent a few months at Columbia University.⁸⁵⁰ One day, Soros called to invite him and his wife to dinner. Vásárhelyi remembered:

Others were there, too. Pista [István] Deák for example. It was a pretty large crowd. Soros showed particular interest in me, obviously because of my role in

⁸⁴⁷ Soros found his MTA-counterpart in Kálman Kulcsár, deputy secretary of the Academy. János Quittner, a bureaucrat within the Academy's administration, represented the MTA in the secretariat. For years, Quittner had worked in the department for International Cultural Affairs, which was notoriously infested with agents; suspicions ran high that he had been planted as informant to the Ministry of the Interior. Kaufman, *Soros. The Life and Times*, 194. Nóvé, *Tény/ Soros*, 42-43. Alajos Dornbach, interviewed by the author, 21 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

⁸⁴⁸ Confirmed by several interviewees. Also see Kaufman, *Soros. The Life and Times*, 194-96. Soros, *Underwriting Democracy*, 7.

⁸⁴⁹ Liz Lorant, Maria Lonyai and the treasurer Jackie MacGregor.

⁸⁵⁰ Konrád claims he was the one who suggested Vásárhelyi. György Konrád, interviewed by the author, 24 July 2009, Hegymagas, Hungary.

56. [...] I sat on his right, for his distinct attention. [...] Then we began talking, and it was clear his interest did not cease, because afterwards he invited me over several times and from these conversations emerged – I would have to lie, if I said it evolved, because the idea was already planted in his head [...] – the idea that we should do something in Hungary. Especially since previously quite many had been abroad on his money, among them the boys from the opposition.⁸⁵¹

In October 1984, Soros returned to Hungary to discuss the matter with his friends.⁸⁵² He was very much aware of growing tensions among the *népi* and *urbánus* intellectuals, so that if he wanted to install a personal representative with veto powers, it had to be someone who could mediate between *all* sides, including the regime. Although some resisted, he considered Vásárhelyi a perfect fit: “He was an elder statesman of the unofficial opposition but at the same time enjoyed the respect of officials,” Soros explains.⁸⁵³

In the fall of 1984, the Soros-MTA Foundation finally began operations. It had devised a simple, but brilliant scheme: anyone could apply for grants in U.S. dollars – e.g. for the purchase of equipment, books or technology from the West. In a country where hard currencies were notoriously short, even authorities welcomed the idea. The Foundation handed out the foreign currency and accepted payment in Hungarian forints, which it then used for grants within Hungary itself, thereby spending the same money twice, so to speak.⁸⁵⁴

⁸⁵¹ Oral History Archive, 56-os Intézet, “Vásárhelyi Miklós,” p. 886, készített Budapest, 1987. Október 2-án, Budapest, II Hankóczy u., Hegedűs B. András és Kozák Gyula. Thanks to Mária Vásárhelyi for the permission to access the interview. In Hungarian, Vásárhelyi says “az ellenzéki fiúk.”

⁸⁵² At the dinner table were amongst others: Miklós Meszöly, Mátyás Domokos, Pál Réz, Miklós Vásárhelyi as well as István Csurka and Sándor Csoóri. Nóvé, *Tény/Soros*, 43.

⁸⁵³ Soros, *Underwriting Democracy*, 6. Oral History Archive, 56-os Intézet, “Vásárhelyi Miklós,” p. 889, készített Budapest, 1987. Október 2-án, Budapest, II Hankóczy u., Hegedűs B. András és Kozák Gyula. János Betlen, interviewed by the author, 21 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

⁸⁵⁴ Ivács, “A Preliminary Appraisal of the Records of the Soros Foundation Hungary ” 86.

The Soros-MTA supported the humanities, arts, social sciences, and sciences and facilitated foreign exchanges and research opportunities abroad. Among the Hungarian non-conformists, like the Jan Hus Fund it paid for instance János Kis for translations and gave Árpád Göncz, Mihály Kornis, and Péter Nádas writing grants.⁸⁵⁵ “We carefully arranged our activities so that programs considered constructive by the government outweighed those that would be regarded with suspicion by the authorities in charge of ideology,” Soros explained the strategy.⁸⁵⁶ Yet, it was the Xerox copy machine program that made ‘the Soros’, as it became known, truly famous. Until 1984, copy machines were rare in Hungary, the number of typewriters limited, conventional duplicating machines inefficient, and imported copy machines simply too expensive. In 1984 alone, the Soros-MTA paid for 113 xerox machines for public libraries, universities, and research centers.⁸⁵⁷ The program became the Foundation’s best PR story.⁸⁵⁸ The possibility to disseminate any type of, not just subversive, information quickly and cost-effectively undermined the control of the state and called into question its ability to provide for its citizenry. Xerox machines came to lay the foundation for an open society in Hungary.⁸⁵⁹

Moreover, the Soros-MTA wanted to lead by example in upholding strict standards of transparency, it publicized all calls for applications and disclosed its budget and the names of grant recipients. In its first year, the Soros-MTA spent almost 2 million U.S. dollars and 11.5 million Hungarian forints.⁸⁶⁰ In 1986, it received over 2,300

⁸⁵⁵ Soros-MTA Alapítvány, *Évkönyv* 1985, Budapest.

⁸⁵⁶ Soros, *Underwriting Democracy*, 9.

⁸⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-13.

⁸⁵⁸ Nóvé, *Tény/Soros*, 60-64. Confirmed by several interviewees.

⁸⁵⁹ The ‘real’ dissidents, however, would not start using copy machines for *samizdat* productions for another year. Ivács, “A Preliminary Appraisal of the Records of the Soros Foundation Hungary ” 88.

⁸⁶⁰ Nóvé, *Tény/Soros*, 33-55.

applications for funding and support. Under the leadership of Miklós Vásárhelyi, more and more programs focused on secondary and higher education.⁸⁶¹ Among the new programs in 1986 was a ten-month-scholarship for Oxford University as well as grants for summer classes at the Inter-University Center in Dubrovnik.⁸⁶² Additionally, in May 1986, Kathy Wilkes informed the IUC board it would receive \$10,000 from the Open Society Institute.⁸⁶³ Not only had Soros learnt from other foundations, the various organizations that he was involved in also came to reinforce one another.

IV. Conclusion

In the three years following the declaration of martial law in Poland, the network reached its largest expanse. Bridging the Iron Curtain, by the mid-1980s, it had optimized efficiency and effectiveness. The outbreak of the strikes and the founding of Solidarity in Poland inspired hope and questioned the system of the Cold War. The Polish crisis demonstrated that the periphery of the East-West confrontation could significantly alter the dynamics of the bloc system and influence the centers of power. Neither Moscow nor Washington had a say in the events in Poland in 1980 and 1981. Moreover, Solidarity's success restored the belief in grassroot movements and the possibility of popular sovereignty for which the Western intellectuals and Eastern dissidents had barely dared to hope. Poland validated their turn to cultural liberalism, skepticism towards authorities, and the Western activities in the defense of human rights in the East.

⁸⁶¹ Soros, *Underwriting Democracy*, 10.

⁸⁶² Eleven Hungarian students went to Oxford already in the fall of 1985, another 25 followed in 1986. Among them were József Z. Szájer, a law student, who today represents FIDESZ in the European Parliament, and the sociologist Attila Melegh. Soros-MTA Alapítvány, *Évkönyv* 1986, Budapest, p. 29.

⁸⁶³ (mentioned earlier) The grants are mentioned twice, once in the Director General's report and in the Minutes of the 35th meeting of the Executive Committee, convened by Professor Fatemi, Chairman of the EC, and held at Wroxton College from 23 to 25 May 1986. Documents, Book XIII, Academic year 1985-86. IUC Dubrovnik, Secretariat, [part of yellow file folder: IUC documents 1986-87, Book IX...].

The declaration of martial law in December 1981 came as a shock; what mattered more, however, was that no one despaired or surrendered. On the contrary, Hungarian dissidents as well as their Western supporters doubled down their efforts. They all believed the Cold War status quo prior to August 1980 could not be restored and they were convinced that civic initiatives – such as Solidarity and the Helsinki monitoring groups – were the key to cracking the bipolar world system. Since Poland had encouraged faith in the potential of the periphery, the network established itself exactly there: in the borderlands of the Cold War.

Austria had been neutral and Yugoslavia non-aligned before. But only in the wake of the successful strikes and founding of Solidarity in Poland in the summer and fall of 1980 did they become pillars of the international support network for the opposition movements to state socialism in Eastern Europe. Even Hungary can be considered an exception in the Eastern bloc, a country on the ideological periphery of the Cold War, because of the Kádár regime's relative liberalism and Hungary's peculiar 'goulash communism.' The practical implications of this reevaluation benefitted from the synergy of forces, the combination of managerial ingenuity, social and financial capital between people like Robert Bernstein, Aryeh Neier, Jeri Laber, Annette Laborey, Ivan Supek, Krzysztof Michalski, and most importantly, George Soros.

Poland had opened the eyes of the West and door to the Eastern bloc; now it was essential to keep either from shutting again. That is the underlying motivation of locating the newly founded International Helsinki Federation and the IWM in Vienna, and using the Austrian capital as well as Dubrovnik as meeting place for critical thinkers aspiring to engage in an international dialogue and free exchange of ideas between East and West.

This re-evaluation of the periphery in the early 1980s, the establishment and expansion of institutes and organizations dedicated to the East-West dialogue were important precursors to the reconceptualization of that same region as ‘Central Europe’ that took place in the following years.

Considering the support György Konrád had received in the West and how much his ideas aligned with those of his Western supporters, it is little surprising that his understanding of Central Europe in *Antipolitics* varies significantly from Milan Kundera’s. Unlike Kundera, the post-1968 exile, Konrád did not and could not resent the West. Neither could he demonize the Soviet Union as an alien civilization bound to destroy Eastern Europe, because he owed his surviving of the Holocaust to the Red Army. Almost by default, his Western friends, who came to discover their family histories and East European-Jewish roots through the lens of their dissident friends, identified more with Konrád’s version of Central Europe, and his demand for European emancipation from the superpowers, demilitarization, democratization and peace.

V. Chapter. Dissent Triumphant: The End of Communism

V. Introduction

As this chapter demonstrates, the years 1985 and 1986 were the golden age of the network. Despite minor obstacles, the events, protests and publications that they had conceived worked out as planned, and they garnered unprecedented media attention. Developments on the international stage seemed little conducive to such success. The West underwent a neoconservative turn with Margaret Thatcher in the U.K., Helmut Kohl in West Germany and a re-elected Ronald Reagan. The Federal Republic experienced a fierce scholarly controversy about its Nazi past and “national” history, the so-called “Historikerstreit.” In the midst of this debate, Suhrkamp published György Konrád’s *Antipolitik*, which appeared as a welcome alternative to the existing Cold War discourse. This key document of East European dissident thought proposed a welcome pacifist and cultured alternative to the status quo. Enzensberger’s essays collected in *Europe, Europe* and Karl Schlögel’s *The Center Lies to the East* indicate why this “Hungarian” proposal of a Third Way was so well received among West German intellectuals.

The network of Hungarian dissidents and their Western supporters sought to exploit Kádár’s generous offer to host one of the Helsinki review conference in 1985, and the event became its biggest success yet. The so-called Alternative Forum and the participants’ solidarity declaration for the other East European opposition movements displayed the Cold War version of the Enlightenment ‘Republic of Letters’ at its best.

However, the media coverage, enthralled by the presence of Western intellectual heavyweights, largely ignored the tensions among the two camps, the cosmopolitan and the populist writers, within the Hungarian opposition. But the common front against the Kádár regime was faltering as the Monor meeting in June 1985 demonstrated. At times, it seemed that unintentionally the portrayal of the cosmopolitans by some of the Westerners actually aggravated the tensions, which in this chapter is reflected in the juxtaposition of 'Central Europe' and 'Trianon Hungary.' Attempts to alleviate the growing division continued but were sidelined once the dissidents wrought more and more concessions from a receding party state.

V.1. Hungarian Dilemmas

V.1.1 The Alternative Cultural Forum, October 1985

In the decade of the neo-conservative turn, 1985 was a year of tremendous changes.⁸⁶⁴ In March 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became the General Secretary of the Soviet Union, the fourth leader within only five years. On 5 May 1985, Chancellor Kohl welcomed U.S. President Ronald Reagan for a visit to the cemetery of Bitburg to commemorate the fallen soldiers of the Second World War. Kohl had proposed the ceremony as a closing of ranks between the two protagonists of the neo-conservative revolution of the 1980s and as a reward for West German support for the NATO Double Track decision. But not even the preceding visit to the concentration camp Bergen-Belsen could calm the outrage at the fact that not only regular Wehrmacht soldiers lay buried in Bitburg, but also members of the Waffen-SS, the Nazis' elite force notorious for its war crimes.

⁸⁶⁴ Tony Judt, "The New Realism," in *Postwar. A History of Europe* (New York: Penguin, 2005).

Chancellor Kohl's comments about the past and public interventions made it "in the eyes of left-leaning commentators a representative of a historical exoneration offensive."⁸⁶⁵ The "Bitburg Affair" contrasted starkly with President Richard von Weizsäcker's speech in the West German parliament a few days later on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the end of World War II:

We Germans are commemorating this day only amongst ourselves, as is indeed necessary. We must find our own means. Sparing our emotions by ourselves and others will not help us. We need and we have the strength to look the truth straight in the eye – without embellishment and without bias.

For us, May 8th is above all a date to remember the suffering people had to endure. It is also a day of reflection on the course our history has taken. The more we face this course honestly, the freer we will be to deal with its consequence responsibly.

For us Germans, May 8th is not a day of celebration. Those who still remember that day in 1945 recall very personal and thus very different experiences. Some returned home, others lost their homes. Some were liberated, for others it was the start of captivity. Many were simply grateful that the bombing at night and the fear had ended and that their lives had been spared. Others felt first and foremost grief over the complete defeat of the fatherland. Some Germans felt bitterness about the shattered illusions, whilst others were grateful for the gift of a new start.⁸⁶⁶

While von Weizsäcker honored the multitude of individual experiences, he embraced Germany's historical responsibility and asserted 1945 as a moment of liberation. In the following months, however, a "polemic battle of mutual allegations [was] fought on the pages of Germany's dailies and weeklies."⁸⁶⁷ Leftist historians, among them many Suhrkamp authors, had been worried over Helmut Kohl's erratic reassessments and his plans for a national museum to overcome the nation's "spiritual-

⁸⁶⁵ Große Kracht, *Zie Zankende Zunft*, 96.

⁸⁶⁶ Richard von Weizsäcker, "Rede von Bundespräsident Richard von Weizsäcker bei der Gedenkveranstaltung im Plenarsaal des Deutschen Bundestages zum 40. Jahrestag des Endes des Zweiten Weltkrieges in Europa," (8 May 1985). Gerhard Spörl, "Erinnerungen an Richard von Weizsäcker: Er hat uns befreit," *Der Spiegel* (2015).

⁸⁶⁷ Große Kracht, *Zie Zankende Zunft*, 107.

moral crisis.”⁸⁶⁸ The Historikerstreit broke out when, a few days after von Weizsäcker’s speech, the historian Ernst Nolte published “The past that will not pass” in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Nolte interpreted the extermination of Europe’s Jewry as a reaction to the Asiatic threat of bolshevism.⁸⁶⁹

Intellectuals like Jürgen Habermas feared the dawn of a new era of apologetics and revisionism. Habermas, who had headed the Max Planck institute with the president’s brother, the physicist and pacifist Carl von Weizsäcker, had welcomed the von Weizsäcker’s speech as responsible and timely, and had rejected Nolte’s approach as irredentists and morally reprehensible.⁸⁷⁰ Worried about the officially condoned return of nationalistic history, Habermas upheld his concept of ‘constitutional patriotism’ as the only cure for the destructive forces of German nationalism.⁸⁷¹

In this charged atmosphere, Suhrkamp published György Konrád’s much-anticipated *Antipolitik*. Konrád repudiated the continued reference to the historic confrontation between communism and fascism that pervaded Nolte’s narrative.⁸⁷²

Instead, he firmly announced:

I am not a Communist, but I am not an anti-Communist either; I am not a capitalist, but I am not an anti-capitalist either. If one has to choose at all costs to be in favor of or against something – then I consider an open democracy the most desirable asset, [and] the ideological battle that paints the haunting ghost of a nuclear war on the wall, the worst evil.⁸⁷³

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid., 96-98.

⁸⁶⁹ Ernst Nolte, "Die Vergangenheit, Die Nicht Vergehen Will," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6 June 1985.

⁸⁷⁰ Jürgen Habermas, "Die Entsorgung der Vergangenheit," *Die Zeit* 17 May 1985.

⁸⁷¹ Volker Kronenberg, "'Verfassungs-Patriotismus' im vereinten Deutschland," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. 28 (2009). For a collection of the main articles of the Historikerstreit, see 'Historikerstreit'. *Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung*. (Munich: Piper, July 1987).

⁸⁷² Konrád, *Antipolitik*, 17.

⁸⁷³ Ibid., 37-38.

It was important that the Hungarian Holocaust survivor differentiated his vision of Central Europe from Hitler's 'Mitteleuropa' and 'Drang nach Lebensraum' in the East. Free from finger pointing at the Germans, Konrád claimed that all European elites were responsible for the disasters of the twentieth century. But *Antipolitik* also emphasized that the apocalyptic militarization of the two blocs again used the same region as parade ground for their nuclear arms. Konrád's sympathizers in the West realized the paradox and historic injustice of Yalta Europe: forty years since the end of the Second World War, the perpetrator nations had arrived at unprecedented levels of prosperity and welfare, whereas Eastern Europe once more experienced poverty, shortages, and repression.

The driving force behind the ongoing West European integration had been of the French and West German rapprochement, which in September 1984 had been captured in the iconic picture of Chancellor Helmut Kohl and President François Mitterrand holding hand at the World War I memorial in Verdun. Konrád's friend, Hans Mangus Enzensberger, always a contrarian, preferred Europe's periphery to such well-choreographed gestures. In 1981, the editor of Sweden's largest daily, the *Dagens Nyheter*, had asked him to cover the upcoming Swedish general elections, but Enzensberger turned the assignment into a provocative study of Swedish state paternalism. Its publication was "an enormous shock."⁸⁷⁴ In response, Enzensberger convinced other newspapers, for instance *Die Zeit*, to sponsor a tour along Europe's periphery for comparable studies.⁸⁷⁵

⁸⁷⁴ Martin Chalmers and Robert Lumley, "Enzensberger's Europe " *New Left Review* I, no. 178 (1989).

⁸⁷⁵ Lothar Baier, "Europa - eine Schauergeschichte," *Der Spiegel*, no. 42 (1987). Chalmers and Lumley, "Enzensberger's Europe ". The articles later appeared in the book: Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Europe, Europe (orig. Ach, Europa!)*, trans. Martin Chalmers (New York: Random House, 1989 (1987)).

In 1984 and 1985, he visited Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Hungary – all countries considered peripheral to the continent’s Franco-German core. “I [...] feel very strongly that the smaller countries are underrepresented in our imaginary [...]. Just because you have a higher Gross National Product it doesn’t follow that you have more to offer our civilization,” he argued.⁸⁷⁶ In preparation of his trip to Budapest, Enzensberger contacted his friend György Dalos, who spent the years 1984 to 1986 in West Berlin, Bremen and Vienna. Dalos remembers: “I talked to Magnus [...]. He asked me, who he should talk to. Then he put together this list and he really managed to speak with almost everyone who was in Budapest at the time.”⁸⁷⁷ In Budapest, Enzensberger stayed as a guest with György Konrád. His host remembered:

We also made a trip to the countryside with my wife and his Roswitha [Quadflieg]. [...] Magnus enjoyed the trip a lot, and our friends made these surprises for us, because Magnus’s car was a Jaguar, which was unusual here. But he also came along for those parties, which were en vogue then, one could not meet in public spaces, but in apartments. Somehow he had a really good grasp of these transitory moments.⁸⁷⁸

Enzensberger retold the story of their trip in the corresponding article “Hungarian confusions” alongside a summary of the dire situation of the peasants that the *népi* writer Gyula Illyés had described in 1936 in *The People of the Puszta*. Konrád was one of the very few Enzensberger later mentioned by his full name. Mostly, the essay is set in Budapest. Enzensberger described the many paradoxes of goulash communism.⁸⁷⁹ His visit did attract unsolicited interest, too, as György Dalos recalled:

When he came back, I asked him, how it went and he said: ‘[...] It was really interesting.’ He “had learnt a lot.” But one thing he did not understand, and that

⁸⁷⁶ Chalmers and Lumley, "Enzensberger's Europe".

⁸⁷⁷ György Dalos, interviewed by the author, 9 June 2009, Berlin, Germany.

⁸⁷⁸ György Konrád, interviewed by the author, 24 July 2009, Hegymagas, Hungary.

⁸⁷⁹ He talked to a manager in the Duna Intercontinental, clad in Armani suit and with a Harvard Business School diploma on the wall. In another case, although the interlocutor remains anonymous, Enzensberger discussed “dialogue and peace” with Péter Rény, the controversial deputy editor of *Népszabadság*.

is [György Aczél] [laughs]. No matter where he went, everywhere they talked about Aczél. With animosity or love, but all did. [...] My wife [Rima] worked in the party's own publishing house; [...] the director of [Magvető] had called: 'Comrade Aczél knows Enzensberger is in Budapest and he would like to talk to him.' [...] Of course, [Magnus] went. So I asked him how it was. Well, after all, what he had heard from the dissidents before, he felt he was like a very good publisher. And then he said an excellent phrase which describes the Hungarian spirit so well: 'But, you know, I would not tell my publisher everything about my sex life either.'⁸⁸⁰

Enzensberger's rendition of the meeting went as follows:

György Aczél is a master of many roles: at once the brave pioneer who looks far into the future, the refined cynic, the wise statesman, the workhorse, and the weary traveler who's had enough of wandering in the desert. Above all, though, he is the legendary father figure of Hungarian culture, both admired and hated; he is also a member of the Politburo. He quotes half the literatures of the world, he argues well, he knows his trade; but one sentence, which he lets fall quite casually, as if self-evident, I find unforgettable: 'I'm in the habit of being in prison.'⁸⁸¹

In the end, Enzensberger did not produce a flattering image of Hungary but Paetzke commented: "Enzensberger, who was here for only a few days, understood everything. He had a very, very refined sense of understanding which is almost impossible [in the Hungarian context]."⁸⁸² Especially Enzensberger's characterization of the populist writers raised controversies. He described them in *Die Zeit*:

Democracy doesn't seem to interest them. They would be prepared to cooperate with any 'good Hungarian government' that recognized that the 'historic injustice' the world has done to Hungary must be redressed. It is also said that they have a certain aversion to the Jews. Their true *bêtes noires*, however, are the Romanians.⁸⁸³

According to Enzensberger, the populist Hungarians were the antagonists of the "Central Europeans," that is his cosmopolitan dissident friends. Mainly assigned and self-assigned ethnic identity separated the "red-white-and-green Populists" from the Central

⁸⁸⁰ György Dalos, interviewed by the author, 9 June 2009, Berlin, Germany.

⁸⁸¹ Enzensberger, *Europe, Europe*, 131-32.

⁸⁸² Hans-Henning Paetzke, interviewed by the author, 24 November 2011, Budapest, Hungary.

⁸⁸³ Enzensberger, *Europe, Europe*, 96.

Europeans; for the populists true Magyardom was a birthright, which the cosmopolitan, westernized Central Europeans with their Jewish ancestry could not claim. He argued.

[The cosmopolitan opposition] owes its exceptional strength not least to the fact that Eichmann could effect the 'final solution' only in part in Hungary. [...] Not only is it thanks to them that Budapest can continue to lay claim to the rank and flair of a metropolis, but without them, 'universal Magyardom' would certainly look more provincial.⁸⁸⁴

The populists were not amused. György Dalos remembers: "It was a scandal."⁸⁸⁵ The outrage was so intense that Enzensberger rewrote parts of the essay for the republication in *Ach, Europa*.⁸⁸⁶ Dalos remembers:

Csoóri, Csurka, and the others were outraged. In [October] 1985 the so-called Alternative Forum took place in Budapest [...]. The populists were going to be there, too. [Enzensberger] knew that. Back then – just to reconcile the populists – he had published Gyula Illyés' *The People of the Puszta* in *Die Andere Bibliothek*. [...] He asked me for two things: a biography and an appraisal of Illyés and to translate his famous poem "One Sentence on Tyranny."⁸⁸⁷

To honor the achievements of the *népi* tradition, Enzensberger re-published Illyés' *The People of the Puszta* in 'Die Andere Bibliothek', a brand-new bibliophile series he edited.⁸⁸⁸ According to Dalos, on his next visit to Enzensberger brought a copy of the book along and handed it to Sándor Csoóri, the new leader of the populists after Illyés had passed away in 1983.

Enzensberger's next visit to Budapest was in October 1985 on the occasion of the Helsinki Review Conference on Culture. It was the first time that the Helsinki Review conference would take place in a Warsaw Pact country. For the Hungarian authorities, the conference was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it would bring in hard currencies

⁸⁸⁴ Ibid., 97.

⁸⁸⁵ György Dalos, interviewed by the author, 9 June 2009, Berlin, Germany.

⁸⁸⁶ Chalmers and Lumley, "Enzensberger's Europe".

⁸⁸⁷ György Dalos, interviewed by the author, 9 June 2009, Berlin, Germany.

⁸⁸⁸ Illyés's book was just the tenth publication in this series. Gyula Illyés, *Die Puszta. Nachricht von einer verschwundenen Welt*, ed. Hans Magnus Enzensberger (Frankfurt am Main: Die Andere Bibliothek 1985).

and the regime could promote its image as ‘the happiest barrack in the East bloc.’⁸⁸⁹ On the other hand, it could lead to undesired exposure, an opportunity that the International Helsinki Federation realized, too.⁸⁹⁰ In March 1985, Jeri Laber and Gerald Nagler travelled to Budapest to secretly prepare a counter-forum.⁸⁹¹ Back in New York, Laber began sending invitations to the dissidents’ Western friends. In June 1985, she wrote to Hans Magnus Enzensberger:

Dear Mr. Enzensberger, I am writing at the suggestion of George Konrad, who asks that I send you his warm regards. As you may know, there will be a “Cultural Forum” in Budapest in October of this year. [...] Susan Sontag has enthusiastically agreed to participate. [...] George Konrad was especially eager that you be one of the participants. [...] The International Helsinki Federation will pay for your travel and hotel expenses.⁸⁹²

Enzensberger of course accepted the invitation. In preparation of the conference, he dedicated the September issue of the *Kursbuch* to ‘The other half of Europe.’⁸⁹³ It was a show of international solidarity with Central Europe’s opposition movements: among the authors were Václav Havel, Miklós Haraszti, István Eörsi, György Konrád and György Dalos as well as the Austrian writer Martin Pollack, Timothy Garton Ash, and Enzensberger’s close friends, the Swedish journalist Richard Swartz and the Romanian Richard Wagner. Miklós Haraszti was probably more thinking of Poland than Hungary

⁸⁸⁹ See the tentative official program, document 26, “Nádor György tájékoztatója a kísérőrendezvények előkészítéséről (1985. Augusztus 26.), in Rolf Müller, ed. *Európai Kulturális Fórum és ellenfórum. Budapest, 1985*, Közelmúltunk Hagyatéka Sorozat (Budapest: Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára, 2005), 126-34.

⁸⁹⁰ At a Politbureau meeting just a few weeks before the opening session, János Kádár articulated his irritation: “we acted like someone who had won a leopard or a flea circus in the lottery, but then he doesn’t know what to do with it.” Document 29. “Kádár János felszólása a PB ülésén, a Tudományos, Köz Osztály, illetve a Külügyi Osztály jelentése a PB-nek a Fórum ügyében és a PB határozata (1985. szeptember 24.), in *ibid.*, 143.

⁸⁹¹ Sources are ambivalent about the date of Laber’s visit. Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 242. Compare with Mink, *The Defendant: The State*, 42.

⁸⁹² Letter from Jeri Laber to Enzensberger, 5 June 1985 in HU OSA 318-0-5, Box 1, Folder: Cultural Forum, Budapest: General Information, 1985.

⁸⁹³ Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Karl Markus Michel, and Tilman Spengler, eds., *Kursbuch 81, Die andere Hälfte Europas* (1985).

when he argued that the defense of human rights would bridge social divides: “The human rights movement defines itself as an avant-garde of gentrification [literally: making bourgeois] and the working class at the same time.”⁸⁹⁴

In “My dream of Central Europe,” Konrád warned: “If we do not manage to weave Central Europe together, then our cities will become even greyer than they already are. [...] Without Central Europe, all of our cities will remain dead ends, border towns, maybe even front cities.”⁸⁹⁵ Konrád expressed a sense of urgency and need to act in unison indicative of the general debate about Central Europe. Europe was at a crossroad, and the *Kursbuch* tried to intervene before the two halves drifted apart even further, to one another’s detriment. Enzensberger had selected articles demonstrating that, in the Eastern half of Europe, the idea of a common culture was very much alive. He showcased authors that expressed values that were commonly considered *West* European. While European integration in the West was relegated to political negotiations from which citizens were largely excluded, the East produced culturally progressive ideas. Behind the Iron Curtain, the desire for a democratic, civic Europe and European unity seemed much stronger. The conceptual flaw that Enzensberger unintentionally committed did not emerge until years later: with hindsight, it is questionable how much the dissidents were representative of Eastern Europe.

Most Hungarian dissidents were adamantly opposed to the Helsinki Final Act. János Kis argued that only independent civic organizations such as the Charta 77 had

⁸⁹⁴ Miklós Haraszti, “Zum Verrücktwerden. Kopfnoten eines Menschenrechtlers,” *Kursbuch*, no. 81 (1985). See Tony Judt’s reference to Haraszti: Judt, *Postwar*, 567. István Eörsi, “Der Sowjetmensch: ein verlorenes Vorbild,” *Kursbuch*, no. 81 (1985).

⁸⁹⁵ György Konrád, “Mein Traum von Europa,” *ibid.*: 193.

given the document real meaning.⁸⁹⁶ Konrád had also rejected Helsinki as a farcical confirmation of Yalta Europe.⁸⁹⁷ However, he claims that while a fellow at the Institute for the Humanities, he thought of exploiting the review process to the dissidents' advantage by staging a counter-forum.⁸⁹⁸

Authorities sought to prevent any disruptions and kept a close watch over the activities of the internal opposition.⁸⁹⁹ However, due to the increasing intra-party tensions between reformers and old-timers, their actions in 1985 seemed ever more arbitrary and indecisive. Already in 1983, a bill on changes to the election process had been submitted and publicized.⁹⁰⁰ In May 1985, the Democratic Opposition sought to exploit the recent unusual changes to the electoral law: to demonstrate openness, each district should register a choice of two candidates. The dissidents wanted to test the sincerity of the reforms: László Rajk and Gáspár Miklós Tamás had tried to run for a parliamentary post. Although they were quickly shown the door and their candidacy suppressed, nothing else happened to them.⁹⁰¹

In March 1985, Hans-Henning Paetzke, who was negotiating with Unseld a publication of interviews with the dissidents, was banned from Hungary.⁹⁰² The West German weekly *Die Zeit* published a protest letter signed by Hans Magnus Enzensberger,

⁸⁹⁶ János Kis, "Das Jalta-Dilemma in den achtziger Jahren," *ibid.*: 150, 60-61.

⁸⁹⁷ Konrád, *Antipolitik*, 13.

⁸⁹⁸ György Konrád, interviewed by the author, 24 July 2009, Hegymagas, Hungary. Aryeh Neier, interviewed by author, New York, NY, USA, February 27, 2012. Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 242.

⁸⁹⁹ Mink, *The Defendant: The State*, 37.

⁹⁰⁰ "Hungary Unveils Draft Electoral Law and Submits it to Public Debate", 26 September 1983. HU OSA 300-8-3-3963.

⁹⁰¹ "Ungarn: Zu Naiv," *Der Spiegel*, no. 19 (1985); Barnabas Racz, "Political Participation and Developed Socialism: The Hungarian Elections of 1985," *Soviet Studies* 39, no. 1 (1987).

⁹⁰² Hans-Henning Paetzke, interviewed by the author, 24 November 2011, Budapest, Hungary. Paetzke, *Andersdenkende in Ungarn*.

Heinrich Böll and Günther Grass.⁹⁰³ A few months later, West Germany's Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher invited him as an official delegate to the Helsinki Review Conference, which took place in Budapest in October 1985.⁹⁰⁴

One of the most radical non-conformists, the *samizdat* publisher György Krassó, had been under house arrest, but when shortly before the conference, the Interior Ministry learnt about the opposition's plans to expose this case, the surveillance was lifted just in time for the opening speeches.⁹⁰⁵ Two weeks prior, the Interior Ministry had learnt about the International Helsinki Federation's plans to rent a conference room at the Intercontinental Hotel.⁹⁰⁶ Qualified sources soon communicated the details of the counter-conference and the list of attendees.⁹⁰⁷

The Federation, however, did not know that the plans had been discovered. On October 14, the dissidents' Western friends arrived in Budapest alongside several hundred official delegates and journalists. Although non-governmental participants, such as Günter Grass, could participate in the official proceedings, predictably, not one East European dissident writer or artist was present. One day before the conference's opening, Jeri Laber, Schwarzenberg and Nagler were informed that the banquet hall in the Intercontinental Hotel had become "unavailable." Schwarzenberg's dinner reservation in the Hotel Gellert for 150 participants on the 16th was cancelled. The Federation issued an

⁹⁰³ Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Heinrich Böll, "Schriftsteller protestieren," *Die Zeit*, 7 June 1985.

⁹⁰⁴ Hans-Henning Paetzke, interviewed by the author, 24 November 2011, Budapest, Hungary.

⁹⁰⁵ See e.g. letter by Mészáros Béláné, r. alex. Elvtársnak, BM III/III-B. Alosztály vezetője, O-19619-11 – 'Lidi' – kut.pl, BM III/II-9 Osztály, 27 December 1984, ÁBTL. Document 27, "A BM jelentése a Fórummal kapcsolatos ellenzéki elképzelésről (1985. szeptember 19.) in Müller, *Európai Kulturális Fórum és ellenfórum*, 135-36.. Also see Mink, *The Defendant: The State*, 51-52.

⁹⁰⁶ The report noted famous foreigners, such as "Entensberg – NSZK, Sonntagh – USA, Timothy Gordon Ash – USA [all sic]." Document 32, "A BM jelentése az ellenzék tervezett akciójáról (1985. Október 3.), in Müller, *Európai Kulturális Fórum és ellenfórum*, 164-66.

⁹⁰⁷ Document 34, "Csejtei István feljegyzése az ellenfórumra vonatkozó információkról (1985. Október 7.)," in *ibid.*, 170-73.

official protest, and Laber rushed off in search of alternative venues. The crowd of Hungarian dissidents, émigrés, and Western friends gathered in the Intercontinental lobby until under-secretary Gyula Horn from the Foreign Ministry appeared to express the government's regrets. However, the regime was not obliged to comply with their request since they had entered the country as tourists and were not registered delegates to the conference.⁹⁰⁸

Outraged but not discouraged, in proper dissident fashion, the group decided to gather in István Eörsi's apartment, which was large enough to accommodate 150 to 200 visitors. Conveniently at the time, Eörsi resided in West Berlin as a DAAD fellow and could not object.⁹⁰⁹ The attendees had to squat down on the floor. Nagler and Schwarzenberg noted: "Crowded rooms with people sitting on chairs and floors – the atmosphere could not have been more "gemütlich" [cozy] and at the same time electric. All the participants were aware of the fact that they were part of a unique, historical event."⁹¹⁰

Due to the international attention, participants did not only feel cozy but also safe. To prepare participants, the Federation had distributed György Bence's report on alternative culture and repression in Hungary, so that they would be better equipped to assess the situation once in Budapest. A few days later, Radio Free Europe reported that the President of the Hungarian Parliament exempted the organizers of the counter-forum from prosecution. The regime would not concern itself with a minority of non-

⁹⁰⁸ On day 2 and 3 of the counter-forum, the meetings took place in Anikó Kiss's and András Jeles's apartment. Mink, *The Defendant: The State*, 47-49. On the Hotel Gellert cancellation, see also document 39, "A BM jelentése az ellenzéki tevékenységről (1985. Október 16.), in Müller, *Európai Kulturális Fórum és ellenfórum*, 188.

⁹⁰⁹ György Bence, "Censored and Alternative Modes of Cultural Expression in Hungary," copy in HU OSA 318-0-5 Box 2, Folder: Cultural Symposium, 1985 Oct Budapest.

⁹¹⁰ Gerald Nagler and Karl von Schwarzenberg, "Preface," in *Report on the Cultural Symposium*, 2-3, Budapest, October 1985, HU OSA 318-0-5 Box 2, Folder: Cultural Symposium, 1985 Oct Budapest.

conformists, he sneered.⁹¹¹ Laber later acknowledged the regime's ingenuity: "Hungarian officials had played it both ways. Neither the Soviet nor the American delegates could protest: We had been forbidden to meet and we were meeting."⁹¹²

Among the participants were a number of prominent Western intellectuals, such as Susan Sontag, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Timothy Garton Ash, the American writer and member of U.S. Helsinki Watch Rose Styron, the French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut, the Israeli writer Amos Oz, the Yugoslav émigré writer Danilo Kis, and the Swiss journalist and member of the Fondation, François Bondy. East European dissidents had not received travel permissions and could not attend. Prominent Hungarian dissidents represented them.⁹¹³

The International Helsinki Federation disseminated English translations of the counter-forum's speeches.⁹¹⁴ The Hungarians had prepared an appeal to the official conference protesting the violations of basic human rights in their and other signatory countries and petitioned for a better treatment of ethnic and cultural minorities in Eastern Europe. Additionally, participants of the counter-conference petitioned for a better treatment of ethnic and cultural minorities in signatory countries of the Helsinki Final Act and demanded respect for religious freedom. "More culture, less state interference," they

⁹¹¹ See RFE, B-Wire, 22-Oct-85 at 15:26, "Keine Massnahmen gegen Teilnehmer von 'Gegenforum'." HU OSA 300-40-1, Box 314, Folder: Európai Kulturális Fórum 1985.

⁹¹² Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 243.

⁹¹³ Among others, János Kis, György Bence, Mária Kovács, Miklós Meszöly, Sándor Csoóri, István Csurka, László Rajk, Ottilia Solt, János Kenedi, Miklós Haraszti, György Krassó, György Petri, Gábor Demszky, and Gáspár Miklós Tamás. As to be expected, the Interior Ministry planted informants at the counter-forum. See the two reports on day 1, documents 38 & 39, "A BM jelentése az ellenzéki tevékenységről (1985. Október 16.)," in Müller, *Európai Kulturális Fórum és ellenfórum*, 183-89.

⁹¹⁴ Among others, they called for 1.) parliamentary legislation on the freedom of the media, an end to any type of censorship, covert or overt and the state monopoly on publishing and the media, 2.) the legalization of private printing devices, 4.) the freedom and independence of science and education, 5.) the end of publishing bans for non-conformist authors and scholars, 6.) free import and export of published material, 7.) free access to the entire collection of public libraries and archives, 8.) and the toleration of émigré publications. Appeal: "Cultural Freedom for Hungary," International Helsinki Federation, list of signatories attached. HU OSA 318-0-5, Box 1, Folder: Cultural Forum, Budapest: General Information, 1985.

declared.⁹¹⁵ Last but not least, the Hungarians made clear that these were common causes uniting the opposition movements of Eastern Europe:

The cause of Polish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Czech, Slovak, Croat and Romanian Catholics is our cause, too. The grievances of Bulgarian Turks, of Estonians, Latvians, Tartars and Jews in the USSR are our grievances.

We know that Géza Szöcs and Károly Király of Transylvania, Miklós Duray of Bratislava, Václav Havel of Czechoslovakia, Stefan Heym of East Germany, who has spoken out against censorship, Jacek Kuroń and Adam Michnik of Poland, and Yuri Orlov, Anatol Sharansky, and the many others in the Soviet Gulag are fighting for us, too.⁹¹⁶

Freedom of expression was a main concern at the Alternative Forum. On 16 October, Per Wästberg, the President of the International PEN and co-founder of the Swedish Amnesty International, also expressed his solidarity with the dissidents: like his home country, he “[liked] to be non-aligned, floating around [...]. [But] in the last six years, I have seen too much to stay neutral in my heart.”⁹¹⁷ Western parochialism and complacency motivated him just as much as Eastern censorship to stand up for the freedom of expression – a feeling he shared with many Austrians in the network.⁹¹⁸

In his speech “The Reform of Censorship?”, György Konrád declared self-censorship, though a common practice among writers in socialist states, unacceptable. It damaged a writer’s integrity, he argued. Alluding to the Nazis’ book burning of 1933, Konrád declared: “In a state where books are burned the whole culture is party to the crime. There the books that are not burned are in their way responsible for the burning of

⁹¹⁵ Appeal: “Cultural Freedom for Hungary,” International Helsinki Federation, list of signatories attached. HU OSA 318-0-5, Box 1, Folder: Cultural Forum, Budapest: General Information, 1985.

⁹¹⁶ Ibid.

⁹¹⁷ Per Wästberg, “On the Writer and Integrity,” in *Report on the Cultural Symposium*, ed. International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Vienna 1985, p. 14. HU OSA 318-0-5-Box 2, Folder: Cultural Symposium 1985 Oct Budapest.

⁹¹⁸ In our interview, Konrád remembered the Alternative Forum only as “the conference about censorship.” György Konrád, interviewed by the author, 24 July 2009, Hegymagas, Hungary.

those that are.”⁹¹⁹ Familiar themes pervaded his speech. Ridiculing the paternalism of Hungarian authorities, he described the life of a non-conformist:

I must ask Daddy State if I may visit my friend in Paris. In a month, or maybe two, he will grant me a reply, and his answer might be negative. He has the right to say no, for I, a citizen, am still a dependent. [...] Let us suppose that there is a literary republic, a republic that is by nature self-selective and aristocratic. Its members are elected citizens themselves [...]. A nowhere club with no chairman or clubhouse, whose members discourse invisibly among themselves. [...] There is no majority vote here, no verdict, there is only exchange of ideas, communication, correspondence and controversions [sic], but in this club, or in this republic if you like, there is public opinion.⁹²⁰

This imaginary, meritocratic society of writer-*citoyens* derived its legitimacy and power from the universality of literature:

We all know of each other, see each other sometimes, keep account. An imaginary republic. It has members from all over Europe. It is only natural that American and Russian literature belong here too, for with Pushkin and Emerson it was Europe that expanded in the 19th century. What nationality is [Nabokov]? Russian? European? American?⁹²¹

Konrád evoked the 18th century concept of a Republic of Letters to embrace his international friends and benefactors. In his vision of Europe, nationality mattered little:

We sit here like another Europe. Writers from both sides of the military block-boundaries who are not here to represent the state but themselves. A little like the ‘hommes de lettres’ in the 18th century, who wandered enthusiastically all over Europe to seek each other out. Borders and calamities separated them from each other but they created the Europe of reflection beside the Europe of kings.⁹²²

Eastern Europe was represented by émigrés like the Czech émigré Jiří Gruša who talked about “The Writer as Prophet,” and the Yugoslav émigré Danilo Kis presented on

⁹¹⁹ Reference is to Heinrich Heine’s 1821 “Where they burn books, they will end up burning human beings, too.” The quote gained unparalleled significance in May 1933, when the Nazi Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels ordered the public burning of books by such writers like Heine, Heinrich Mann, Erich Kästner, and others.

⁹²⁰ György Konrád, “The Reform of Censorship?”. HU OSA 318-0-5-Box 2, Folder: Cultural Symposium 1985 Oct Budapest. Probably, Konrád did not mean ‘aristocratic’ as his IHF friends translated. He probably thought of the Hungarian “némes,” which *primarily* means aristocratic, but also noble, refined, grand.

⁹²¹ György Konrád, “The Reform of Censorship?”. HU OSA 318-0-5-Box 2, Folder: Cultural Symposium 1985 Oct Budapest.

⁹²² Ibid.

“Censorship – Self-Censorship. A friend of Géza Szócs, the imprisoned ethnic Hungarian activist in Transylvania, presented an emotional account of the writer’s dire situation in neighboring Romania.”⁹²³

Meanwhile, delegates from Warsaw Pact countries filibustered the official conference with “long speeches citing cultural accomplishments and stressed the ‘historic responsibility’ of the artists for peace.” According to John Fry, Budapest was just “another example of political non-communication.” At most, Fry explains, the final statement could serve as “the springboard for Western discussion of cultural issues at [the following conference in] Vienna.”⁹²⁴ In the grander narrative about the Cold War, Budapest is but a footnote, assigned to oblivion due to the momentous first meeting between the Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and U.S. president Ronald Reagan in Geneva the following month.⁹²⁵

In the history of the Hungarian dissidents, however, the Alternative Forum 1985 marks a caesura. It was also the network’s greatest triumph in raising international awareness. Several times a day, Radio Free Europe reported on the proceedings of the official conference and the counter-forum.⁹²⁶ Michael T. Kaufman, later George Soros’s biographer, wrote about it in the *New York Times*, and François Bondy argued in the

⁹²³ Gáspár Miklós Tamás, “Censorship, Ethnic Discrimination and the Culture of the Hungarians in Romania,” (16 October 1985); Danilo Kis, “Censorship – Self-Censorship,” (16 October 1985); Géza Szócs and Enikő Bollobás, “A personal report on the present situation of the writer,” in *Report on the Cultural Symposium*, ed. International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Vienna 1985. HU OSA 318-0-5 Box 2, Folder: Cultural Forum, Budapest: Reports, 1985. Alain Finkielkraut’s speech was published in the *New York Review of Books*. Alain Finkielkraut, “What is Europe?,” *New York Review of Books* 32, no. 19 (1985).

⁹²⁴ Fry, *The Helsinki Process*, 100-01.

⁹²⁵ Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*. Marc Trachtenberg, *The Cold War and After. History, Theory and the Logic of International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

⁹²⁶ For example, 1985-10-15 RFE A-Wire 18:16 Intro Forum: New US Speech; “The U.S. told the Budapest Cultural Forum tonight that it should address the problems of censorship [sic!], the free transmission of ideas, the jamming of international radio broadcast, and the freedom of travel...”; RFE B-Wire, 21-Oct-85 12:11, “Susan Sontag on Budapest Cultural Symposium, (Interview with Audio). HU-OSA 300-40-1 Box 314, Folder: Folder: Európai Kulturális Fórum 1985 [4 of 8].

Swiss *Die Weltwoche*: “There are no repressive nations, only repressive systems.”⁹²⁷ The Austrian *Die Presse*, the French *Libération*, the Swiss *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, the West German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Die Welt* published several articles, too.⁹²⁸ Western journalists mentioned György Konrád, Danilo Kis, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Amos Oz, Alain Finkielkraut, and, most prominently, Susan Sontag. These were the most recognizable names, other participants faded into the background. An experienced conference attendee, Sontag reminisced about her exceptional experiences in Budapest in the *New York Times*:

Nadine Gordimer, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Mario Vargas Llosa, Alberto Moravia, Octavio Paz, George Konrad, Umberto Eco, Danilo Kis, Joseph Brodsky, Carlos Fuentes - these are some of the reliables, fellow graying and gray eminences who I know, from past conferences, [...]. I am often the only American - as, for instance, in mid-October, when I was in Budapest under the auspices of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, one of nine writers brought from as many different countries [...]. I have a certain feeling of *deja vecu* [sic] at these roundtables. For it's as odd - and as easy, too easy - to be the only American as it was when, once upon a time, in many professional situations, I used to be the only woman.⁹²⁹

Sontag successfully used the occasion to dramatize her role. However, her phrasing was ambiguous: She was the only American writer *presenting* at the Forum, but she was *not* the only American present. Participating in the meeting fulfilled her “strong

⁹²⁷ M. T. Kaufman, “Hungarians abruptly cancel private Helsinki Review Unit,” *New York Times*, (16 October 1985), and “Nyet in Budapest,” *ibid.*, (20 October 1985); C.G. Ströhm, “Den Ruf des Helsinki-Forums nach Freiheit durfte das Volk nicht hören,” *Die Welt* (17 October 1985); C.G. Ströhm, “Wir lachen nicht, wenn der Beamte unser Manuskript beschlagnahmt,” *Die Welt* (18 October 1985); C.G. Ströhm, “Wir werden von der Realität ausgeraubt,” *Die Welt* (19 October 1985); François Bondy, “Mit Freunden in der Altbauwohnung. In Budapest trafen sich Schriftsteller trotz offiziellem Verbot,” *Die Weltwoche*, (24 October 1985), in HU OSA 318-0-5-Box 2, File: Cultural Forum Press Clippings 1985.

⁹²⁸ Peter Martos, “Kulturforum stärkt Ungarns Image. Kritisches Symposium am selben Tag,” *Die Presse* (14 October 1985); Burkhard Bischof, “Wenn der Staat die Kultur befreit,” *Die Presse* (16 October 1985); “L’opposition hongroise réunit la contre-culture en apartment,” *Libération* (19/20 October 1985); “KSZE-Kulturforum in Budapest eröffnet. Ansprache Lazars/ Dissidenten planen eigene Veranstaltung,” *FAZ* (16 October 1985); “Erster Schatten über dem Kulturforum. Dissidenten treffen sich in Privatwohnung,” *FAZ*, (17 October 1985); “Kultur contra Politik am Budapester Forum. Durchführung der ‘Parallelveranstaltung’ in Privaträumen,” *NZZ* (18 October 1985); all in HU OSA 318-0-5-Box 2, File: Cultural Forum Press Clippings 1985.

⁹²⁹ Susan Sontag, “When Writers Talk Among Themselves,” *New York Times* 5 January 1986.

civic sense” – a writer’s responsibility to side with the ‘repressed,’ a virtuous notion she employed to boost her public image.⁹³⁰ She then borrowed from Konrád’s speech:

Writers are often said to belong to a shadow state - the republic, as some call it, or the aristocracy of letters. [...] My own sense of literature and of the writer's vocation has always been enthusiastically international, which must be why I'm more susceptible than most American writers to the lure of these international meetings - where I meet representatives of literatures that count as much for me as, if not more than, the literature of my own country.⁹³¹

What transpired from Sontag’s account was not only the international solidarity among like-minded, cosmopolitan thinkers, but also the exotic appeal of the Counter-Forum. Combined with the claim that she had been the only American, this was as close as she could get to being a dissident herself.

Overall, the Hungarian dissidents and their Western friends were content with the success of the Alternative Forum. In the introduction to Danilo Kis’s speech, which was reprinted in the *New York Times’ Book Review*, Jeri Laber claimed the “three-day literary symposium [...] last month has made history.”⁹³² In her autobiography, she concluded:

It was in Budapest that the International Helsinki Federation came into its own. [...] The tactics we used at the Cultural Forum – testing and pushing the limits of official tolerance – became our strategy, and we went on to use it whenever and wherever possible.⁹³³

Together, they had endured and overcome the regime’s (half-hearted) attempt to ban the event. Encouraged by the Budapest experience and confirmed in the rightfulness of their cause, the Helsinki Federation and the intellectuals looked to Czechoslovakia, where they wanted to stage a similar event on the occasion of the 1988 anniversaries of

⁹³⁰ Marithelma Costa and Adelaida López, "Susan Sontag: The Passion for Words (reprint from *Revista de Occidente*, December 1987)," in *Conversation with Susan Sontag*, ed. Leland Pague (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi 1995), 235-36.

⁹³¹ Sontag, "When Writers Talk Among Themselves."

⁹³² Jeri Laber, "The State, the Imagination, and the Censored I," *New York Times Book Review*, (3 November 1985), clipping found in HU OSA 318-0-5-Box 2. File: Cultural Forum Press Clippings 1985.

⁹³³ Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 244.

1918, 1938, 1948 and 1968.⁹³⁴ However, with regards to the aftermath of the counterforum in Hungary, the overrepresentation of the cosmopolitan dissidents in the Western press neglected the growing tensions between the *népi* and the *urbánus* writers.

V.1.2. Central Europe, Trianon, and the West

The British journalist Timothy Garton Ash had also presented at the counterforum.⁹³⁵ However, his Hungarian audience found his talk on West German arrogance and European anti-Americanism a bit bland. György Konrád remembered that

Timothy didn't understand: people might argue passionately, even angrily, and we were still amongst friends [...]. I don't like him very much, we were friends, but then he wrote all these stupidities about me. He wrote that I would be a regular customer in the Café Landmann in Vienna, where I have never been, and things like that, he wanted to treat these matters *ironically*.⁹³⁶

Garton Ash had been profiting from the success of his eyewitness account *Solidarity: The Polish Revolution*.⁹³⁷ Trained as a historian of twentieth century Germany, he had quickly appropriated the dissidents' concept of Central Europe as it was coming into vogue. His 1984 remarks about Poland's relevance to the rest of Europe substantiated Konrád's contemporary demands:

Once upon a time there was Europe. Europe stretched from the Atlantic to the Urals. It included Budapest, Prague, and Petersburg as well as Paris and Madrid. No account of European culture could ignore the voices of Kant from Königsbrg, or Tolstoy from Yasnaya Polyana [...]. Before the First World War an Englishman or American of means and spirit could personally discover the whole of this heritage, passing freely, without passport, let or hindrance, from

⁹³⁴ When the workshop "Czechoslovakia 88" was to start, Václav Havel stormed into the restaurant with police on his heels and enough time to declare the conference open, before hand-cuffs clicked around his wrists. Garton Ash, seated at the restaurant table, reported on the dramatic event in *The Spectator* ("Black Comedy in Prague," 19 November 1988). For more, see "Czechoslovakia 88," International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights. HU OSA 318-0-5 Box 2.

⁹³⁵ Timothy Garton Ash, "A few ideas – nothing new!" in *Report on the Cultural Symposium*, ed. International Helsinki Federation, Vienna 1985, pp. 42-47. HU OSA 318-0-5-Box 2. File: Cultural Symposium 1985 Oct Budapest.

⁹³⁶ György Konrád, interviewed by the author, 24 July 2009, Hegymagas, Hungary.

⁹³⁷ Garton Ash, *Solidarity*.

Barcelona to Kraków, or from Naples to Aberdeen. Geographically, Poland lies at the heart of this old Europe. [...] Warsaw is as close to Brussels as it is to Moscow. Historically and culturally the Poles have at least as strong a claim to belong to any European Community as the British.⁹³⁸

The touch of self-reproach Garton Ash articulates here was quite common among the Westerners; the perceived need to moderate the ‘big’ European countries’ presumptuousness had already inspired Enzensberger’s essays from Europe’s periphery. Intellectuals like Sennett and Sontag revered Eastern European dissidents and their bohemian life style reminiscent of the *fin de siècle*. They propagated an idealized image of the banned writer and repressed East European, free from political corruption and content with his modest means as long as his integrity remained untouched, to point to the historic injustices of Eastern Europe’s fate, an important check at a time West European integration accelerated in the run-up to the Single European Act of 1986.

Shortly after the Alternative Forum and only days before János Kádár paid a state visit to Britain, Garton Ash aspired to educate his readers about the true face of Hungarian liberalism in *The Spectator*: “In these pages, I hope to describe how all is not quite what it seems in Budapest, and how you can sometimes be so cunning that you tie yourself in knots.”⁹³⁹ It seems the Alternative Forum had offered important lessons, which enhanced Garton Ash’s expertise in all of Eastern Europe. His career in the U.S. began with “The Hungarian lesson,” a reworked account of the Alternative Forum, in the *New York Review*. As in *The Spectator*, he promised to unravel the complexities of Eastern Europe. Dramatically, he described Hungary as “a garden maze, a maze in which mirrors conceal the hedges, giving the illusion of open space and free movement, but also

⁹³⁸ Ibid., 318.

⁹³⁹ Timothy Garton Ash, “Culture and Anarchism,” *The Spectator* (26 October 1985). Clipping in HU OSA 318-0-5 Box 2, Folder: Cultural Forum, Budapest, Press Clippings 1985.

distorting wildly, as in a fairground hall of mirrors.”⁹⁴⁰ Garton Ash resorted to a familiar practice among experts on Eastern Europe: To explain the differences between the Hungarian *népi* and *urbánus* writers, he compared them to the pre-1914 rivalry of German *Kultur* and French *Zivilisation*, an antagonism with which his readers were probably familiar. He then invited his readers on an imaginary journey:

After the symposium György Konrad invites you to a small evening party at his apartment. When you arrive, you are surprised to find yourself sat down, rather solemnly, between Susan Sontag and Danilo Kis, in a small circle in front of the Leader of the Populists, a writer called Sandor Csoori, and a few of his associates. Konrad stands modestly aside, next to the tiled oven, and says, "I would like my friends to tell you about Transylvania." This they, or rather he—the Leader of the Populists—proceeds to do, at length, with some quite chilling stories of Romanian persecution, slowly, almost ceremoniously translated (for, as befits a true Populist, the Leader speaks only Hungarian) by a member of his court.⁹⁴¹

In the wake of the counter-forum, Garton Ash became one of the *New York Review of Books*' most frequent contributors on European affairs. In 1988, Jeri Laber invited him again for their next conference in Prague “Czechoslovakia 88,” modeled on the Alternative Forum. The relationship between the New Yorkers and the British journalist proved mutually beneficial: the latter got free publicity and the former material to publish.⁹⁴²

As the example of Enzensberger's “Hungarian Confusions” already demonstrated, a derisive characterization of the populist writers was common among the dissidents' Western friends. Sándor Szilágyi, the organizer of the Monday Free University, wrote a rebuttal to Garton Ash's piece in the *New York Review of Books*. He paid respect to Garton Ash as a gifted observer, but objected to the idea populists would only speak

⁹⁴⁰ Timothy Garton Ash, "The Hungarian Lesson," *New York Review of Books* 32, no. 19 (1985).

⁹⁴¹ Ibid.

⁹⁴² Timothy Garton Ash, "Black Comedy in Prague," *The Spectator*, 19 November 1988. "The Prague Advertisement," *New York Review of Books* 35, no. 20 (1988).

Hungarian. Unlike many of the Western visitors, Szilágyi pointed out, many of his populist friends did speak foreign languages. Moreover, the Western press exaggerated and misrepresented the difference between Sándor Csoóri and Konrád: “Konrad [made a valuable gesture of friendship] because both of them love their homeland.”⁹⁴³ In a conciliatory tone, Szilágyi tried to strike a balance between the two sides – in a more sympathetic, though likewise problematic fashion:

Konrad loves it as a wandering guru, comparing Budapest with the other big cities in the West, trying to teach Hungarians to be more similar to the Western type, free citizens. Csoóri loves his homeland in a different mode, as a vicar; carefully listening to the people's complaints and trying to console them.⁹⁴⁴

Whereas Enzensberger and Garton Ash returned to their home, applauded for their keen observations, their friends were left with an offended, publicly humiliated ‘partner’ in the struggle against the Kádár regime. György Konrád explains how they were trying to patch up the widening division: “Back then the trend became obvious. But one was still standing together in one’s kitchen. Timothy Garton Ash did not understand anything [about that]. We were having heated debates, even angry ones, but one was still among friends.”⁹⁴⁵ János Kis confirmed attempts to keep the groups together looking at “landmark events [...] like the Bibó Festschrift in 1980, [...], or the Monor meeting [see below] and also the [participation] of the populist writers in the Alternative Forum... I would say that there were serious efforts made on both sides.”⁹⁴⁶

Away from the international limelight, in June 1985, a few months before the Alternative Forum, members of the critical intelligentsia had met in Monor, a small town southeast of Budapest, to salvage the union between the *népi* and *urbánus* camps. Under

⁹⁴³ Sándor Szilágyi, "An Event in Hungary. A Response," *ibid.*33, no. 4 (1986).

⁹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁵ György Konrád, interviewed by the author, 24 July 2009, Hegymagas, Hungary.

⁹⁴⁶ János Kis, interviewed by the author, 24 April 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

the patronage of Ferenc Donáth, Monor was hailed as a sign of unity.⁹⁴⁷ The initiative sought to revive the spirit of a popular front, which in 1938 had tried to unite the *népi* and *urbánus* in the fight against fascism. Radio Free Europe remarked: “The meeting was a resounding success, although it is not yet known how the opposition plans to follow up this initiative or how the regime will respond to it.”⁹⁴⁸

However, according to Barbara Falk, the Monor meeting suffered from “the usual political nitpicking in terms of favored issues and causes [...]” afterwards, “the opposition was unable to keep up the momentum.”⁹⁴⁹ János M. Rainer concedes that the most important question seemed to be “who was there and why?”. The more radical members from the cosmopolitan camp had been excluded.⁹⁵⁰ Éva Karadi recalls rumors about balancing the selection of participants to avoid an over-representation of Jewish cosmopolitans.⁹⁵¹

Meanwhile, the *Beszélő* circle had increasingly tied economic to political reforms. Hungary was home to a number of outstanding economists, who were part of the ‘grey zone’, those who were officially employed at the various research institutes where they had access to reliable data and Western information, but very critical of the existing system. Many maintained contact with the opposition and participated in their events. The economist János Mátyás Kovács, who would move to Vienna to become the IWM’s third permanent fellow in 1986, explains:

⁹⁴⁷ János Rainer, “Húsz éve a ‘másik Magyarország’ Monoron, 1985-ben,” in *A Monori Tanácskozás. 1985. Június 14-16.*, ed. János Rainer (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2005), 7.

⁹⁴⁸ Steven Koppany, “Hungarian Opposition Groups Hold Meeting to Discuss Nation’s Future,” RAD Background Report/24, (13 February 1986). HU OSA 37-3-9.

⁹⁴⁹ Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe. Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings*, 137-38.

⁹⁵⁰ Rainer, “Húsz éve a ‘másik Magyarország’ Monoron, 1985-ben,” 16.

⁹⁵¹ Éva Karadi, interviewed by the author, 7 January, 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

At the Monor meeting, you see the economists [...] immediately start[ed] quarreling with the populists. There is an open debate between Csurka and Marton Tárdos, and [Tamás] Bauer and [László] Lengyel – people who belong to the economic profession. I do not think that there was any significant economist in Hungary in the seventies or eighties who belonged to the populist camp. [...] There was some kind of conflict, the kind of anti-Semitism [...] – high proportion of Jews and former Communists [among the economists], so no populist temptation.⁹⁵²

At Monor, István Csurka's contribution to the economic perspective of the country had been limited to a condemnation of the degenerative effects of Western-style consumerism on Hungarian society and the threat of emigration, alcoholism, staggering suicide rates, and declining birth rates to the nation's health.⁹⁵³ As a remedy, he proposed a "new third, or rather fourth way" towards "Hungarian Self-Reconstruction."⁹⁵⁴ The presentation that Csurka gave a few months later at the Alternative Forum sounded less apocalyptic, less *völkisch*-magyarized. But he maintained deep resentments towards the West, articulating inherently anti-modernist worldview:

Is it the reality, that man is sick? Is Europe very sick? Well, yes. The reality of contemporary man is that with his sclerotic heart he cannot become an alpinist, with his varicosed [sic!] artificial legs he cannot become a champion athlete, with his doped brain he cannot become a prodigy of mental arithmetic [...].⁹⁵⁵

According to Csurka, Hungarians had for centuries fought for their independence courageously. Alien and foreign forces were to blame for its crippled existence today, he claimed. And he worried about the detrimental temptations of the West:

The West as it seems from here to our envious and eager eyes, became a masturbating society that lives in the spell of Money, as if it has totally wasted its earlier ability to give a pattern for the organizing of societies. The wealth of

⁹⁵² János Mátyás Kovács, interviewed by the author, 30 June 2010, Vienna, Austria.

⁹⁵³ István Csurka, "Uj Magyar Önépítés (1985)," in *A Monori Tanácskozás. 1985. Június 14-16*, ed. János Rainer (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2005). Also see Radio Free Europe, Eva Lengyel, "Hungary's Disquieting Demographic Trends", 3 July 1984. HU OSA 300-8-3-3975.

⁹⁵⁴ Ibid. For more, see Thorpe, '89. *The Unfinished Revolution*, 48.

⁹⁵⁵ Csurka, István, "The Unacceptable Reality", in *Report on the Cultural Symposium*, ed. International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Vienna 1985, pp. 27– 33. HU OSA 318-0-5-Box 2, File: Cultural Symposium 1985 Oct Budapest.

goods is not the same as the liberation of man, and liberal democracy is hardly more than a light French comedy [...]. And however much the economist strives to prove that there is no connection between the two, the Christian soul – the foundation of Europe – cannot accept this cruel backdrop of the welfare society.⁹⁵⁶

Although Csurka was considered one of the leaders of the populist camp, second only to Sándor Csoóri, not one Western newspaper article actually gave an account of his speech. On the contrary, the populists defined the Hungarian nation increasingly in exclusively ethnic terms, ignoring the “Jewish” elements of Hungarian history just as much as Hungarian complicity in the Holocaust and World War II.⁹⁵⁷ The populists’ historical narrative revolved almost exclusively around *Hungarian* victimhood, as evidenced by the legitimately disastrous situation of the Hungarian minority in neighboring Romania.

The difference in prioritizing the victims in Hungarian history that the *népi* and *urbánus* thinkers made is crucial in understanding the different reception in the West. Whereas the former prioritized the Treaty of Trianon, the peace settlement after World War I, the latter promoted Central Europe as the alternative to the Yalta Treaty. The populists echoed the argument of Hungary’s martyrdom for the defense of Europe that had already been prevalent in the interwar period.⁹⁵⁸ They exonerated the Horthy regime because of its rightful fight against Communism. Responsibility for the Holocaust of Hungarian Jews was relegated to the Germans, if at all. Hungarians and the Hungarian nation were the victims in 1920 as well as in 1945.

⁹⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁵⁷ See also Sándor Csoóri, "Eltemetetlen Gondok a Dunatájon (1985)," in *A Monori Tanácskozás. 1985. Június 14-16.*, ed. János Rainer (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2005). Compare with Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary*, condensed ed. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000).

⁹⁵⁸ Paul Hanebrink, "Transnational Culture War: Christianity, Nation, and the Judeo-Bolshevik Myth in Hungary, 1890–1920," *The Journal of Modern History* 80(2008).

Karl Schlögel explained how he came to appreciate the dissidents', especially Konrád's, Central Europe. A year in the Soviet Union in 1983 had significantly changed his view on Eastern European history and culture.⁹⁵⁹ When *Antipolitics* appeared in 1985, it inspired the West German historian to write *The Center lies to the East*: "The Germans live in the middle of Europe, but the debate about Europe's center did not start in Berlin, but in Prague, Warsaw, Budapest and in the East European diaspora in Vienna, Paris, New York and Canberra."⁹⁶⁰

The surging debate of Central Europe proved the bipolar world order, which suggested a general incompatibility of East and West, wrong. Konrád had already denounced the "Wall in our Heads." "The current situation is unnatural and disconcerting," he had said.⁹⁶¹ Having travelled through Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Schlögel felt his own impressions about this coherent cultural region confirmed:

The problem is that 'Mitteleuropa' in reality does not exist anymore. There does not exist a no man's land between East and West, only a death strip. Where in a Europe that has been divided into East and West is space left for the center? That is the crux: Central Europe [...] could challenge the monopoly of the East-West-binary in our heads.⁹⁶²

His travels to Moscow had shown him the common legacy of East and West that dated back to the period before the First World War. Just like Enzensberger at about the same time, he sympathized with the dissidents' protest against 'Yalta Europe': "What do the borders in post-war Europe actually have to do with the historical region, which they arbitrarily patched together? In the end the Central European perspective opens up not

⁹⁵⁹ Karl Schlögel, *Moskau lesen. Die Stadt als Buch* (Frankfurt am Main: Siedler, 1984).

⁹⁶⁰ "Die Mitte liegt ostwärts. Die Deutschen, der verlorene Osten und Mitteleuropa," in *Die Mitte liegt ostwärts*, ed. Karl Schlögel (Berlin Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 2009), 7.

⁹⁶¹ Konrád, *Antipolitik*, 12,110.

⁹⁶² Schlögel, "Die Mitte liegt ostwärts," 7.

only a new way of thinking, but the view on reality.”⁹⁶³ Such new thinking led János Kis for instance wonder:

Can we reach an interpretation of the agreements made in Yalta, which on the one hand abrogates the Soviet Union’s right to use force and which on the other hand protects certain basic human rights better than in the past? On that depends, whether the countries of Eastern Europe find a way out of the social and economic dead end.⁹⁶⁴

Forty years after the end of World War II, the dissidents’ talk about a shared legacy and common future allowed German intellectuals to discuss the German East without the resentments. Schlögel’s book, *The Middle lies to the East*, found prominent admirers:

[Richard von] Weizsäcker and later [Marion] Dönhoff [...] were stunned that a young man [...] could suddenly be interested in something that used to be totally normal in their youth, but that had disappeared in post-war Germany. [...] This older generation was really moved that someone spoke knowledgeably about this region that they had ‘lost’. For Dönhoff, this was her home! To write about the East, the lost Eastern provinces, only the revisionists and expellee organizations had done that in post-war Germany. [...] Talking about this region without making revisionist claims! One just did not do that in Germany because it was associated with Nazism and refugees.⁹⁶⁵

Probably no other intellectual in West Germany has done more for German compensation and German-Polish reconciliation than Marion Dönhoff, the editor-in-chief of *Die Zeit*. Born into an aristocratic family in Eastern Prussia in 1909, she had fled the advance of the Red Army in 1945. She had been a vocal supporter of Willy Brandt’s ‘Ostpolitik’ and had approved of his Warsaw Treaties, which recognized Poland’s Western border relinquishing any claims from West Germany to the “former German East.” A lifelong liberal, Dönhoff had been a member of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and in 1975 had joined the board of the Fondation pour une entraide. In this

⁹⁶³ Ibid., 8.

⁹⁶⁴ Kis, "Das Jalta-Dilemma in den achtziger Jahren," 162.

⁹⁶⁵ Karl Schlögel, interviewed by the author, 25 June 2009, Frankfurt (Oder), Germany.

function, in 1982, she had set up the German 'Verein' in support of the Poles after the declaration of martial law.

When the East European dissidents first started talking about Central Europe as a way to undermine the division of Europe and reclaim their historic place within the European family, it opened the way for new West German interest in the region that had little to do with nineteenth-century aspirations of colonizing the East, the ambitions to revise the Versailles Treaty, and Hitler's conquest of living space.⁹⁶⁶ In West Germany, "the German East" had predominantly featured in the resentful debates of expellees, therefore it had acquired negative connotations particularly among more progressive and leftist intellectuals. Schlögel explained:

It opened entirely new perspectives, which irritated the Left as well as the Right. I remember when my Central Europe book came out, there were reactions like 'that is a wonderful book', *but* one would have to be careful, because it might propose a third way, German neutrality, and a detachment from the Americans and NATO-integration. Meanwhile the Left said that it was reactionary, because it evoked the old Central Europe of Friedrich Naumann, and that is the idea of German hegemony, and that's irredentist.⁹⁶⁷

A restoration of Germany's pre-1918 borders was not even a matter of debate for the Hungarians. However, what they freely conceded was the possibility of uniting the two German states. Dissidents like Konrád and János Kis went further than any West German intellectual. They expressed few qualms about unification: "I do not believe that the majority of Germans would actually accept a finite division of the German nation," Kis declared.⁹⁶⁸

⁹⁶⁶ Gregor Thum, "Mythische Landschaften. Das Bild vom 'deutschen Osten' und die Zäsuren des 20. Jahrhunderts," in *Traumland Osten. Deutsche Bilder vom östlichen Europa im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Gregor Thum (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 182-93.

⁹⁶⁷ Karl Schögel, interviewed by the author, 25 June 2009, Frankfurt (Oder), Germany.

⁹⁶⁸ Kis, "Das Jalta-Dilemma in den achtziger Jahren," 156.

Nevertheless, this sober attitude towards the ‘German question’ and the revision of borders in Yalta Europe caused a dilemma. György Dalos explained the conclusion that *népi* writers drew from the debate: “If Yalta – as Konrád claimed – [was] no longer valid, then Trianon [was] no longer valid either! That caused a lot of indignation; many rejected *that* idea.”⁹⁶⁹ The Treaty of Trianon of 1920, which had shrunk Hungary’s post-World War I territory to a mere third of the size that it had been under the Habsburg dual monarchy. Significant territories had been assigned to the new states of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, the Austrian Republic, and the most contested region, Transylvania, to Romania. The populists thought it hypocritical that cosmopolitans questioned one peace settlement, but not the other. Conclusively, at the Monor meeting Sándor Csoóri had posed the ‘Trianon question.’ If Yalta contradicted the people’s right to self-determination, then the restoration of Hungary to its pre-1920 borders, before the Treaty of Trianon had stripped the country of two thirds of its territory, should be re-negotiated too. After all, a significant part of the population in southern Czechoslovakia and Transylvania were ethnic Hungarians, he argued.⁹⁷⁰

Whereas Schlögel, Enzensberger, Dönhoff, and others had long accepted the separation of the former Eastern territories as a result of Nazi aggression, the populists failed to acknowledge the irredentism of the interwar regime of Admiral Miklós Horthy, which had entered an alliance with Hitler to regain these territories ‘lost’ in 1920. For the *urbánus* thinkers, such debates about restoring ‘Greater Hungary’ were out of the question. With hindsight, Kis realized the Pandora box that their ideas had opened:

⁹⁶⁹ György Dalos, interviewed by the author, 9 June 2009, Berlin, Germany.

⁹⁷⁰ “With the Vienna Awards [of 1938 and 1940],” he argued, “Hitler did not split the truth, but in a new European situation, he divided the covenant [between Hungary and Romania] according to the interest of his will.” Csoóri, “Eltemetetlen Gondok a Dunatájon (1985).”

The gradual creation of the uncensored public sphere [...] had its effect on [...] the rules of the game [...]. Almost by the day in the mid-1980s, these taboos [like Greater Hungary] were the same issue as the [rehabilitation of the] 1956 counter-revolution. Part of the story was of course, that both sides [...] those with Jewish origins and those [without], began to rediscover the story of István Szabó, the co-existence of Jews and non-Jews in Hungary. Although there were signs of misperceptions [...], very interestingly there were serious attempts made [...] [for example by Sándor] Csoóri [but he] then moved to Csurka [and] became a bloody anti-Semite.⁹⁷¹

With the exception of Garton Ash's article, "The Hungarian Maze," and Enzensberger's "Hungarian Confusions," this controversy was not covered in the Western press, which applauded the cosmopolitan ideas about Central Europe. The *urbánus* writers did not attach any territorial gains in the name of the Magyar nation to their version of Central Europe. Whereas the border changes that a restoration of pre-Trianon Greater Hungary would require would be a violation of the Helsinki Final Act, the cosmopolitans acknowledged the facts that the post-1945 expulsions had created. In West Germany, the Hungarian Central Europe was a welcome comrade in the fight against the perceived threat of rising irredentist interpretations of history that allegedly implied a dissociation of Germany's historic responsibility for the second World War, the Holocaust, and the region it had devastated on path to conquer 'living space' in the East. For the New Yorkers, *Antipolitics* was similarly a weapon in the political battle at home. Konrád holds the Western superpower equally responsible for the militarization and threat to Central Europe. His rejection of American interventionism very clearly reflects the view of his American friends: references to the Vietnam War, Nicaragua, and Chile abound in this essay on Central Europe.

⁹⁷¹ Reference is to the last generation presented in István Szabó's movie *Sunshine* (1999). János Kis, interviewed by the author, 24 April 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

In January 1986, many of the participants of the counter-forum watched as the Holocaust survivor György Konrád received the Charles Villon European Essay Prize in Lausanne. His publisher, Siegfried Unseld, noted: “François Bondy gave a laudation, then H.M. Enzensberger, who gave again one of his brilliant speeches, even if not too profound nor rich. And finally György Konrád himself, who reiterated his extremely interesting theses about *Antipolitics*.”⁹⁷² Konrád’s vision of Central Europe thus galvanized those liberal Western intellectuals who were supporting the East European opposition movements and gave their advocacy historical and political legitimacy.

V.2. Old endings, new beginnings

V.2.1. 1986 – Change Is In the Air

The year 1986 offered plenty of occasions to test the strength and influence of the international network of Westerners and Hungarian dissidents.⁹⁷³ Radio Free Europe even went so far to claim: “For those whose memory extends to the revolution of 1956, the parallels between that summer and the present time are inescapable.”⁹⁷⁴ On the occasion of the national holiday, on March 15, 1986, János Kis and Gáspár Miklós Tamás found themselves giving speeches in front of an unusually large crowd, about 3,000 protesters, which was about ten times the number than the year before and surprisingly many were students, according to the BBC correspondent Nick Thorpe. After the speeches, the police – who had been lingering seemingly indifferent in the side streets –the crowd in

⁹⁷² “Aus Reisebericht Dr. Siegfried Unseld,” Munich – Zurich, 9/10 January 1986, DLA Marbach am Neckar, SVA Suhrkamp, Ordner Konrad 78-99. Other recipients include Manès Sperber (1979), Leszek Kołakowski (1980), Alain Finkielkraut (1984), Timothy Garton Ash (1989) and Karl Schlögel (1990).

⁹⁷³ See for instance the press release: “Crackdown on Independent Publishing in Hungary,” *News from Helsinki Watch*, New York, stamped: received 8 May 1986, HU OSA 301-0-3, Box 222, Folder: Hungary – Arts 1974-80, Press.

⁹⁷⁴ Ivan Völgyes, “The Current Mood in Hungary”, 3 July 1987, Radio Free Europe Background Report. HU OSA 300-8-3-3994

the direction of the Szechenyi (or Chain) Bridge and across to Buda where the police encircled them. The event, quickly labeled “the battle of the chain bridge,” was only one in a series of crackdowns on *samizdat* publishers and environmental groups.⁹⁷⁵ In response, Timothy Garton Ash, Susan Sontag, Per Wästberg and others published a letter of protest in the *New York Review of Books* listing fifteen violations of the Helsinki Agreement since their departure from Budapest in October.⁹⁷⁶ The International Helsinki Federation included all of these and many others in its preparatory report for the Review Conference in Vienna, which would begin in November.⁹⁷⁷

1986 was also the thirtieth anniversary of the Hungarian revolution. The dissidents planned to use the occasion to press for more reforms. In late August, the Democratic Opposition decided to issue an international appeal. Ferenc Kőszeg was to collect signatures in Czechoslovakia and Poland.⁹⁷⁸ Gáspár Miklós Tamás, who was in New York at the time, translated the Hungarian text into English. Jan Kavan handed it to Czech émigrés in the UK and György Dalos to friends in East Germany.

On the day of the anniversary, we appeal to our friends around the world to join us in commemorating the 1956 Revolution in Hungary. We declare our joint determination to struggle for political democracy in our countries, their independence, pluralism based on principles of self-government, peaceful reunification of divided Europe and its democratic integration, as well as for the rights of all minorities. We emphasise support for one another in our current attempts for a better, free and decent life in our country and the whole world.⁹⁷⁹

⁹⁷⁵ Thorpe, '89. *The Unfinished Revolution*, 35. “News from Hungary. News from Helsinki Watch,” (March 1986), HU OSA 318-0-3, Box 40, Folder: Hungary – Human Rights, General, 1986-94.

⁹⁷⁶ Susan Sontag et al., “Crackdown in Hungary,” *New York Review of Books* 33, no. 9 (1986).

⁹⁷⁷ “News from Helsinki Watch. News from Hungary,” (December 1986), HU OSA 318-0-3, Box 40, Folder: Hungary – Human rights – General 1986-1994. The Vienna Conference did not formally close until February 1989. Yet, it was considered more successful with regards to human rights. Fry, *The Helsinki Process*, 105-40.

⁹⁷⁸ Kőszeg, *K. történetei*, 230-31.

⁹⁷⁹ News from Helsinki Watch. News from Hungary,” (December 1986), HU OSA 318-0-3, Box 40, Folder: Hungary – Human rights – General 1986-1994.

The entire appeal and the list of signatories appeared in *Beszélő*, the East German *samizdat Ostkreuz* and *Der Spiegel*, and was read out on Radio Free Europe.⁹⁸⁰ In its background report, Radio Free Europe noted that the document exceeded previous appeals, since it expressed clear political goals.

In contrast to the ‘crackdown’ in the spring, the regime’s reaction – or rather lack thereof – was puzzling. A representative of the International Helsinki Federation visited Hungary in December and remarked:

No clear signs can be noted of any actions by the Government. However, there are rumours that the Party plans to move against the signers, by firing them (most of them, however, are already jobless). It has also been said that publishers have received a list of all the people who signed the petition, be it without any clear command attached. This was probably a quiet hint not to publish any work of the persons mentioned.⁹⁸¹

Within Hungary, because it undermined the counter-revolutionary foundation myth of the Kádár regime the rehabilitation of the 1956 revolution became the dissidents’ vehicle to call for reforms.⁹⁸² Ferenc Donáth, the initiator of the Monor meeting, had proposed organizing a conference for the anniversary, before he passed away in July.

Árpád Göncz remembered the conference:

Some contributions were revelations to me [...]. But I didn't feel that clear expression was given to what I see as the socialist character, morally as well, that [was] attached to '56, although the party-opposition, or to use today's expression, the reform-communist side of it was expressed very strongly. And it didn't emerge how all this changed into a public campaign. So I felt the picture

⁹⁸⁰ "Kampf für ein besseres, freieres Leben," *Der Spiegel*, no. 16 (1986). *Beszélő*; "Vladimir V. Kusin, "East European Dissidents' Appeal on Hungarian Revolution Anniversary," RAD Background Report/151, (28 October 1986). HU OSA 27-3-28.

⁹⁸¹ Hester Minnema's source was Ferenc Kőszeg. Memorandum From Hester Minnema To International Helsinki Federation, Re: Visit to Budapest, Date: December 24, 1986. HU OSA 318-0-3, Box 40, Folder: Hungary – Human rights – General 1986-1994.

⁹⁸² Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek*, 198.

was biased. This was underlined further by the absence of the [populists], who in this case treated [Imre] Pozsgay very tactfully [...].⁹⁸³

The populists did not attend the 1956 conference because they pursued a change in an alliance with the reform communists. Bence had already pointed out:

Sándor Csoóri enjoys great respect among literary people and the public not only in his capacity [sic] as a poet and essayist, but as an important political figure, the leader of the neopopulists. [...] For obvious reasons, radio and television are ignoring György Konrád who captured the Western market with his novels and essays. Hungarian media that are normally most eager to publicize the international achievements of Hungarian culture, are silent in his case.⁹⁸⁴

In November 1986, the Hungarian Writers' Association convened its general assembly. Unnoticed by the West, the congress was a "milestone" in the history of the "establishment opposition," those official literary figures who voiced criticism and pursued change through reform.⁹⁸⁵ The last assembly in 1981 had ended in a scandal, when several writers announced their support for the Polish Solidarity movement. The 1986 assembly also pushed the limits: it elected Sándor Csoóri and István Csurka as board members. Csurka, the recipient of the two József Attila Awards, had recently lost his status as tolerated writer because of his criticism of the regime's silence on the persecution of Hungarians in Romania.⁹⁸⁶ Authorities demanded nullification and tried to set up a new organization, but could not find members to register.⁹⁸⁷ The regime had courted the *népi* writers for too long; it was too late to sideline them particularly because

⁹⁸³ Árpád Göncz: "Ideas have a Longer Half-life," excerpts from the interview with András B. Hegedűs, (14 February 1988). Oral History Archive, 56-os Intézet. Until the spring of 2013, the English translation had been available at http://server2001.rev.hu/oha/index_eng.html.

⁹⁸⁴ György Bence, "Censored and Alternative Modes of Cultural Expression in Hungary," Budapest 1985, International Helsinki Federation, HU OSA 318-0-5 Box 2, Folder: Cultural Forum, Budapest: Reports, 1985.

⁹⁸⁵ Nick Thorpe, interviewed by the author, 11 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

⁹⁸⁶ See BBC Central Talks & Features, Report No. 67/86, Gabriel Partos: "Hungarian Writer and Journal Banned," (11 August 1986), HU OSA 301-0-3, Box 222, Folder: Hungary – Arts 1974-80, Press.

⁹⁸⁷ Árpád Göncz: "Ideas have a Longer Half-life," excerpts from the interview with András B. Hegedűs, (14 February 1988). Oral History Archive, 56-os Intézet. Nick Thorpe, interviewed by the author, 11 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

they had – as Göncz indicated – supporters among the reform-minded members of the party.

Since the first meeting in Geneva in November 1985, the relations between the two superpowers had eased rapidly. President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev were preparing arms reduction talks and met again in Reykjavík in October 1986. Meanwhile in the Soviet Union, Yuri Orlov was released from the gulag and Andrei Sakharov from house arrest in Gorky. In Hungary, after thirty years in power, the fight for János Kádár's succession had begun. One of the main contestants, the reform communist Imre Pozsgay, had the approval of several *népi* writers, who had just demonstrated their power at the Writers' Congress.

V.2.2. The Regime Retreats: The Last Battles

In Paris, in September 1985, a month before the Alternative Forum, Annette Laborey had confided in Ford's Program Director for 'Human Rights and Governance: "so far 1985 has not been a very successful year for the Fondation, even if one should never say such a thing, especially to Americans."⁹⁸⁸ Like the Communist leadership of the Eastern bloc, the Fondation's board was ageing. The founding member of the Fondation, Constantin Jelenski, born in 1922, and Marion Gräfin, born in 1909, were withdrawing.⁹⁸⁹ Annette Laborey, decades younger than the founding generation, had been suffering from ill health; fundraising continued to drain her energy. In April 1985, a new cohort of officers had visited her in Paris to assess whether it was worthwhile to

⁹⁸⁸ Letter by Annette Laborey to Stephen Marks, 23 September 1985, HU OSA FEIE 26'2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991, Box 5, Folder: Ford Foundation 1985.

⁹⁸⁹ Jelenski passed away in May 1987. See the "Hommage a Kot Jelenski," by François Bondy, in "Rapport d'activités 1987," HU OSA FEIE 27'2, Rapport d'Activités 1985-1991." Letter by Annette Laborey to Stephen Marks, 23 September 1985, HU OSA FEIE, 26'2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991, Box 5, Folder: Ford Foundation 1985.

continue supporting the Fondation. Although they left enthusiastic, Laborey was not optimistic about the future.⁹⁹⁰

The year 1986, however, restored her enthusiasm. Change was in the air. In December, Laborey and Adam Watson submitted a grant request for the years 1987 to 1990 that argued:

Our achievements over the last decade have shown that we should continue to concentrate our efforts on bringing out, for a brief 'breath of fresh air', East Europeans who play an active part in the cultural and intellectual life of their country, and who can and will go back to resume their activities there.⁹⁹¹

In August 1986, in Poland, a general amnesty had been declared. Outlining the Fondation's plans, she explained that given recent liberalizations in Poland and Hungary, they would want to shift their attention to facilitating contact between East Europeans and not simply bring them to the West to expose them to Western freedoms:

We want [...] to respond more to the growing desire of intellectuals in the different East European countries to come into contact with each other, and their growing frustration at the policy of the regimes to segregate them in separate pens. Our evidence shows that for different reasons certain categories of non-communist Polish and Hungarian intellectuals are finding it easier to visit Western universities and similar institutions for short periods and then return.⁹⁹²

Still in 1987, 44 out of the Fondation's 181 grantees came from Hungary.⁹⁹³ Only in 1988 did their number drop to "only" 32 out of 192.⁹⁹⁴

⁹⁹⁰ Stephen Marks wrote: "My dear Annette, We cannot thank you enough for the superb job you did in organizing the luncheon in Paris on April 24. Steven Lavine, Paul Balaran and I enjoyed every moment of it and learned immensely from you, Constantin Jelenski, Wojciech Karpinski, Barbara Torunczyk, Francois Fejtó, and Petr Kral. A more stimulating meeting with knowledgeable and committed people concerned with the issues of Central Europe would be hard to find. Steve, Paul and I are very grateful to you indeed." Letter by Stephen Marks to Laborey, 2 May 1985, HU OSA FEIE, 26'2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991, Box 5, Folder: Ford Foundation 1985.

⁹⁹¹ Grant request, Laborey to Enid Schoettle and Stephen Marks, 22 December 1986. HU OSA FEIE 26'2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991, Box 5, Folder: Ford Foundation 1986.

⁹⁹² Grant request, Laborey to Enid Schoettle and Stephen Marks, 22 December 1986. HU OSA FEIE 26'2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991, Box 5, Folder: Ford Foundation 1986.

⁹⁹³ Among the recipients were Ottilia Solt, Gáspár Miklós Tamás, Miklós Meszöly, Sándor Szilágyi, the art historian László Beke and Béla Nové. "Bourses 1987," HU OSA FEIE, Catégorie: Conseil de Fondation / secretariat, 27' 5 Listes des boursiers et documents divers [sd].

In addition to the easing travel restrictions, it was the success of the Soros-MTA Foundation that relieved the Fondation. In 1987/88, the Soros-MTA had a budget of \$3.82 million; in Hungary alone it spent over eight million forints.⁹⁹⁵ Five years into its existence, it facilitated exchanges with Leuven, Oxford, New York, Columbia, Rutgers, Bloomington, UCLA Berkeley, London and beyond. More and more money also went towards primary education, such as some \$50,000 for English-language competitions at public schools in 1987/88.⁹⁹⁶

Until 1989, the Soros-MTA succeeded in keeping populists and cosmopolitans in the same boat. In November 1988, the Foundation created a fund to support the language, culture, and preservation of cultural artifacts of minorities. “Within this framework, primarily Hungarians living outside of [Hungary’s] borders are supported.” The committee of this program consisted of Sándor Csoóri, Lajos Für, the former MTA historian Gyula Juhász, the legal scholar Tibor Király and Miklós Vásárhelyi.⁹⁹⁷

However, the inter-party struggles between reformers and orthodox in the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (MSZMP) affected the Soros-MTA. In 1987, the tensions almost resulted in Soros abandoning Hungary. The economic weekly of the Chamber of Commerce, the *HVG (Héti Világgazdaság, Weekly World Economy)* had been publishing the Foundation’s call for applications. One of the staff writers was a

⁹⁹⁴ Among those, for instance: Endre Bojtar, Mihály Csakó, Gábor Demsky, István Hegedűs, János Rainer. “Bourses 1988,” HU OSA FEIE, Catégorie: Conseil de Fondation / secretariat, 27’5 Listes des boursiers et documents divers [sd].

⁹⁹⁵ Research in sociology – ‘traditionally’ one of the most critical social sciences in the Hungarian academic establishment – received hundreds of thousands of forints: In 1988, the Academy’s Sociology Institute received over one million forints – up from 600,000 in 1986. The Karl Marx Economic University’s Sociology Department, too, received over one million.

⁹⁹⁶ Soros-MTA, “Évkönyv 1988,” Budapest, HU OSA 13-3-3.

⁹⁹⁷ In 1990, Lajos Für became Minister for Defense member of Antall’s MDF government. Gyula Juhász left the Historical Institute in 1986 to become the director of the National Library and join the editorial board of *Magyar Nemzet*. Tibor Király was the dean of the ELTE Law Faculty for, before in 1980 he became the head of the Academy’s Committee for Minorities and in 1988, the Academy’s Deputy General Secretary.

good friend of Miklós Vársárhelyi, Soros's personal representative. Mátyás Vince, the *HVG*'s editor-in-chief, remembers:

Once [...] [Vársárhelyi] came here, and said: 'At this Soros Foundation, we have scholarships.' They needed to advertise, and of course we should publish it! Somehow we ended up: 'This is a good idea, why not? We will see what happens.' Somehow we figured out that just to be [safe] it should be like an advertisement. We persuaded them to pay, if it is an advertisement so that if the party headquarters summons me, I can just say: 'I don't read the advertisement, it is not even my job to know what is going on in the advertisement. And somehow the third advertisement [also] went through. That is something that happened quite often. We did something on our own that was quite daring in that period. Everybody thought that we have a permit or that I have the permit [but we did not.]⁹⁹⁸

Founded in 1979 and modeled on *The Economist* and *Der Spiegel*, the *HVG* in and of itself played an exceptional role in the country's path to freedom of the press. Vince claims that he respected only four taboos: 1956, the presence of the Red Army in Hungary, details from preliminary negotiations with the IMF, and the nuclear meltdown in Chernobyl in April 1986. Richard Hirschler and Pál Réti, Vince's deputy and successors, emphasize that the *HVG*'s success originated in Vince's courage to push the limits of what was acceptable to the authorities.⁹⁹⁹

In 1987, however, the *HVG* went too far. It again printed the Soros-MTA's call for application, the list of the scholarship recipients and the amount of money that they received.¹⁰⁰⁰ Additionally, it featured a three-page interview with George Soros and a photo series showing an alternately cheerful, pensive and wildly gesturing George Soros.¹⁰⁰¹ Vince was summoned to the party headquarters, where two high-ranking

⁹⁹⁸ Mátyás Vince, interviewed by the author, 24 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

⁹⁹⁹ Nick Thorpe, interviewed by the author, 11 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary. Richárd Hirschler and Pál Réti, interviewed by the author, 31 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary. Mátyás Vince, interviewed by the author, 24 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

¹⁰⁰⁰ "Novemberi döntések," *HVG* (17 January 1987), 59. OSZK newspaper collection.

¹⁰⁰¹ György Kocsis, "A Magyar Nábob. Beszélgetés George Sorossal," *HVG*, 17 January 1987. OSZK newspaper collection.

Politburo members requested his removal from the post of editor-in-chief. He remained but thought it wiser not to print the next round of Soros-MTA ads. In June 1988, Vince resigned from *HVG* and left Hungary to work at the World Bank in New York for two years.¹⁰⁰²

When Soros learnt about the incident, he furiously contacted Aczél and threatened to close down his operations and withdraw all his money from Hungary if his foundation experienced any further obstruction. Soon thereafter, the *HVG* published the Soros-MTA's call for applications again and the foundation resumed its activities.¹⁰⁰³

V. Conclusion

By 1985, the international network of Western and Hungarian intellectuals had reached its mature stage. The successes that it registered in that year contrasted with the neo-conservative dominance of Western politics, which suggests that the dissident ideas of Central Europe, human rights, and an end to the arbitrary division of Europe resonated with those parts of a Western audience that felt irritated by the renewed Cold War and the dominant neo-conservatism of the decade. György Konrád's *Antipolitics*, which appeared first in West Germany, represented an alternative vision of a demilitarized, socially more just and integrated Europe whose population would have emancipated itself from the interests of the two super powers. It was liberation.

¹⁰⁰² At the World Bank, Vince came to edit the bulletin *Economies in Transition*. Vince's deputy, Richard Hirschler, took over his post at *HVG*. However, he, too, soon left for New York – with the help of U.S. Ambassador Mark Palmer. Mátyás Vince, interviewed by the author, 24 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary; Richárd Hirschler and Pál Réti, interviewed by the author, 31 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

¹⁰⁰³ See e.g. Napi Operatív információs jelentés, 245. Szám, Budapest, 1987. December 15. ÁBTL 2.7.1 III/III-4-7/6-88.01.12 (33). Nóvé, *Tény/Soros*, 144-45. István Teplán, interviewed by the author, 22 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

Among those Western intellectuals who had befriended the dissidents and travelled through Eastern Europe, the integration of Western Europe powered by the Franco-German engine was stirring some unease. Content with its prosperity and power, West Germany seemed to turn its back on Eastern Europe, neglecting the historic responsibility it had for a region that it had wrecked during World War II. The gap in prosperity had widened significantly since 1945.¹⁰⁰⁴ Those who upheld German responsibility for the war *and* for the premises on which Yalta Europe was created, it was morally reproachable to leave the Eastern half of Europe behind. Hans Magnus Enzensberger best reflected this type of reproach and resentment in the essays from the continent's periphery, later republished in *Europe, Europe*. Inspired by Konrád's programmatic essay, Karl Schlögel reminded his readers of the inextricable ties between German culture and the East, and portrayed a historically coherent culture stretching from the Baltic to the Adriatic Sea. He substantiated Konrád's contemporary warnings about the threatening standoff with a historical and cultural survey that resonated with readers who looked at the region with curious but not irredentist eyes.

The Alternative Forum in October 1985 highlights the success of the network of Hungarian dissidents and their Western supporters. It shows the significance that dissidents attributed to declaring their solidarity with the other East European opposition movements. The dissidents sought legitimacy in numbers; a common front was essential to their endeavor and self-understanding.

However, the common front at home was crumbling. The Monor meeting earlier in June 1985 revealed significant and growing differences between the *népi* and the

¹⁰⁰⁴ Gregor Thum, "„Europa“ im Ostblock. Weiße Flecken in der Geschichte der europäischen Integration," *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*, no. 3 (2004), <http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/3-2004/id=4732>.

urbánus factions in Hungary. Disagreements first emerged over political and historical priorities, before they aggravated into conflicting understandings of Hungary's past. The clash is reflected in the mutually exclusive regional concepts of Trianon Hungary and Central Europe. The latter was the counter-concept to the existing status quo and 'Yalta Europe.' Western readers would have hardly heard about the former, because the Western media almost exclusively portrayed the Holocaust survivor and dissident writer György Konrád as *the* voice from Budapest. Moreover, his antagonist at home, István Csurka, displayed anti-Western and anti-intellectual attitudes that hardly endeared him to a positive presentation abroad. His archaic vision for Hungary was no less apocalyptic than Konrád's *Antipolitics*, but his romanticization of the Magyar peasant and folkish traditions evoked the irredentism of the interwar regime, which had entered an alliance with Nazi Germany to restore Hungary to its pre-1920 borders. Such associations were a breach of Western norms, and cultural and political taboos, and were exclusively addressed to a home audience.

Western journalists fretted over the presence of the internationally known intellectuals Sontag, Enzensberger and others, whose public recognizability was boosting the dissidents' demands. However, the Westerners treated the *népi* writers often with scorn and derision; their ideological preferences appeared outdated and parochial to the international friends of the cosmopolitans. They thereby unintentionally deepened the divide between the two factions in Budapest. Events on the ground surpassed attempts to salvage the alliance, when the regime put on a last show of force during the national holiday of 15 March 1986. With hindsight, the 'Battle of the Chain Bridge' was but a bump on the road to democratization and reforms. The regime even retracted its half-

hearted attempt to moderate the influence and popularity of the Soros-MTA Foundation, when it forced the weekly *HVG* temporarily to pull its call for application. Hungary progressed to such an extent that the Foundation decided decrease its support, putting its money towards other countries.

The fragmentation is reflected in the absence of any *népi* representative at the anniversary conference for 1956 in October 1986. With only few reservations, the surviving Fifty-Sixers displayed their alliance with Democratic Opposition, which lend credibility and moral integrity to their demands. In these years, the rehabilitation of 1956 became a key to undermining the crumbling Kádár regime. The closing of ranks between the older generation who had participated in 1956 and the dissidents was crucial.

VI. Chapter. A New Hungary, 1987-1998

VI. Introduction

The transformation of Hungary began in earnest in 1987, when two alternative visions for Hungary's future emerged: On the one hand, János Kis published a political program with the title "The Social Contract" in *Beszélő* in June, tying inevitable economic to political reforms.¹⁰⁰⁵ On the other hand, with the blessing of the reform Communist and party maverick, Imre Pozsgay, the *népi* intellectuals founded the Hungarian Democratic Forum as a civic movement in September. To underscore their contemporary demands, the Hungarian Democratic Opposition advocated for a rehabilitation of 1956. The alliance with surviving Fifty-sixers was of symbolical significance, as it delegitimated Kádár's leadership and the one-party state.

However, in the late 1980s, the new leadership of the MSZMP seemed to voluntarily withdraw from power. The satellite of Hungary was spinning out of the Soviet orbit almost uncontrollably – at least not controlled by Moscow. In May 1988, the party cadre Károly Grósz replaced the ailing János Kádár as General Secretary; but after only six months, Miklós Németh replaced Grósz and became prime minister, for the first time asserting the government's competence over the party. His negotiations with the governments in Vienna and Bonn rather than Moscow reflected his determination to find pragmatic, not dogmatic solutions to Hungary's abounding problems.

Two issues that brought Hungarians out on the street became acute in 1988: first, the environmental movement clustered around the construction of a joint water dam project that endangered the country's natural heritage of the Danube basin; second, the

¹⁰⁰⁵ János Kis, "Társadalmi Szerződés," *Beszélő*, no. special issue (1987).

destruction of ethnically Hungarian villages in neighboring Romania. The wave of refugees to the capital inspired the largest civic protests, with the government's tacit approval, in the country's history. The *népi* faction, now consolidated in the Hungarian Democratic Forum, gathered momentum as protector of the integrity of the Magyar nation. But the battle over Hungary's future was far from decided in 1988, as the winds of change swept across the entire region. With the opening of the borders in the spring and summer of 1989, the MSZMP had initiated the change of regimes in Hungary, and the Democratic Opposition, since 1988 consolidated in the Liberal Democrats' Association (SZDSZ), took an active role in the shaping of the process. Within a few months, serious concerns about the direction that the country was taking overshadowed the euphoria, which had followed the reburial of Imre Nagy in June and the Roundtable Talks in the fall of 1989.

The following analysis explores some of the directions that were open to Hungary, after the first free and democratic elections, and which were ultimately taken. It highlights the success as well as the frustrations of the transformation of Eastern Europe. Nine years after the peaceful revolutions, the vast majority of Hungary's former Democratic Opposition had quit politics and retreated to its original professions. Although the international network managed to consolidate the Central European University in Budapest, which had been founded to guide the transformations and ward off the rise of nationalist resentments and parochialism, the balance sheet of East European dissent remains ambivalent.

VI.1. The End of Communism in Hungary

VI.1.1 Getting Political: Parties and Funerals

The marriage of convenience between the *népi* and the *urbánus* factions ended in 1987. In June, *Beszélő* published János Kis's "Social Contract," borrowing its title from the Enlightenment thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his paradigmatic essay from 1762. Kis's list of reform proposals was the most daring yet. Its opening paragraph demanded:

Kádár must go! From the breakdown of consensus to a social contract. Don't just grumble; demand that the program of economic reforms must be based on a program of policy changes; don't accept one-party rule as a given; raise anew the basic questions deferred since 1956.¹⁰⁰⁶

What followed was a step-by-step program of political and economic reforms calling for pluralism within a socialist system and workers' autonomy. Kis had been encouraged by a study with the telling title "Turnaround and reform – or how we may get out of the crisis," which paved the way for tying political to economic reforms.¹⁰⁰⁷ The authors were recognized economists at Hungary's leading research institutes. The secretary of the Patriotic People's Front, Imre Pozsgay, a contender for Kádár's throne, had sanctioned the controversial project.¹⁰⁰⁸ It contained a frank assessment of the Hungarian economy, and its position on the world market and in COMECON. It ended with unprecedented policy recommendations based on market economic principles and austerity measures.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Ibid. For more Bernard Ivan Tamas, *From Dissident to Party Politics. The Struggle for democracy in Post-Communist Hungary, 1989-1994* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 78.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Tamás Bauer et al., "Fordulat és Reform," *Közgazdasági Szemle*, no. 34 (1987). The study was a joint project of the Financial Research Institute, the Economic Institute of the Academy and the Ministry of Finance. Annotated excerpts in Tibor Kovácsy, "Fordulat és reform -- avagy: hogyan másszunk ki a válságból," *Magyar Füzetek* 18(1987).

¹⁰⁰⁸ Gough, *A Good Comrade*, 229.

The *népi* leaders and others, however, thought the “Social Contract” was too radical. Two months later, in September 1987, they gathered at one of their regular meetings in the backyard of the writer Sándor Lezsák’s home in Lakitelek.¹⁰⁰⁹ The host was one of the songwriters of the rock opera *István, a Király*, which had premiered in 1983. The opera glorifies the country’s turn from paganism to Christianity and remains Hungary’s most popular musical to this day. According to Bernard Ivan Tamas, the Lakitelek meeting was a direct response to not having been consulted in the drafting of the “Social Contract.”¹⁰¹⁰

Apart from László Lengyel, co-author of “Turnaround and Reform,” the only representative of the *urbánus* camp in Lakitelek was György Konrád. Sándor Csoóri, László Für, Gyula Fekete, and István Csurka consolidated their leadership of the populists. The debates addressed topics such as political reforms, the role of the National Assembly and the recent shift of competences away from the party’s Politburo to the government. Economic and spiritual recovery, cultural rebuilding, threats to Magyardom in and outside of Hungary were also on the agenda.¹⁰¹¹

Controversies arose around the presence of Imre Pozsgay, whom the *népi* writer Zoltán Bíró had invited. Pozsgay had been cultural minister from 1976 until 1980 and then minister of education until 1982, before Kádár and Aczél tried to sideline the upstart by making him the president of the Patriotic People’s Front.¹⁰¹² In his memoirs, Pozsgay claims if it had not been for Kis’s “Social Contract,” he would not have accepted the

¹⁰⁰⁹ Lezsák had organized such meetings since 1979. After the one in October, entitled ‘Anthology,’ he had been arrested. Edith Markos, “The Story of a Literary Evening,” Index 4/1986, Index on Censorship, HU OSA 301-0-3 Box 223.

¹⁰¹⁰ Tamas, *From Dissident to Party Politics*, 78-79.

¹⁰¹¹ Alfred Reisch, “Hungarian media fail to publish appeal for political reform,” Radio Free Europe, RAD background report/ 16, HU OSA 37-5-6.

¹⁰¹² András Bozoki, “Aczél és Pozsgay,” *Beszélő* 3, no. 12 (1998). Gough, *A Good Comrade*, 225.

offer to deliver the keynote speech. He supposedly worried that the radical claims of the Democratic Opposition would jeopardize his reform plans. The populists, on the other hand, offered an alliance with more moderate, reasonable forces.¹⁰¹³

The authorities seemed to cede their monopoly on power. In Lezsak's backyard in Lakitelek in September 1987, under the patronage of Imre Pozsgay, the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) was founded. The MDF was purposefully conceived as a movement, *not* a political party, to prevent the negative connotations of a party in a one-party-state and to bolster the reform communists from below. On 27 May 1988, a demonstration against the Danube dam project at Nagymaros-Gabčíkovo also ended without police intervention. The populists' commemoration of 16 June on Heroes' Square at the grave for the Unknown Soldier passed undisrupted, too.¹⁰¹⁴ A new era seemed to begin. In March, György Bence had explained the background of these events to his friends at the International Helsinki Federation:

The Western press praised the liberalism of Hungary's communist leaders. Western governments particularly interested in the state of Human Rights expressed their satisfaction through diplomatic channels. Hungarian citizens virtually mobbed the local police in their eagerness to obtain a 'world passport', as it was called in popular parlance.¹⁰¹⁵

Since 1 January 1988, all Hungarians were eligible for a passport and unrestricted travel. The new passport regime gave Hungarians and the reform government an enormous boost in confidence, Bence suggested. In April 1988, the old guard of the Fifty-Sixers founded the 'Committee for Historical Justice,' TIB, short for the Hungarian 'Történelmi Igazságtétel Bizottság.' Árpád Göncz remembered the founding meeting in

¹⁰¹³ Imre Pozsgay, *Koronatanú és Tetttestárs* (Budapest: Korona, 1998), 158.

¹⁰¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹⁵ Letter by György Bence to Jeri Laber, 28 March 1988. HU OSA 318 Box 40, Folder: Hungary – Emigration & Travel 1988.

András B. Hegedűs' apartment: "We felt a moral obligation to do it and we felt the time was ripe."¹⁰¹⁶ The goal was to achieve an official rehabilitation of those executed in 1956 and the right to bury them properly.¹⁰¹⁷ Additionally, in April and May of 1988, the Democratic Opposition created two organizations to protect their interests: the Independent Legal Watch Agency, the self-declared successor of SZETA and emulation of the Polish KOR, and the Network of Free Initiatives, an aspiring umbrella organization for various independent groups.¹⁰¹⁸

Then in May 1988, the seemingly impossible happened: First Secretary János Kádár was replaced by the party cadre Károly Grósz and given the newly created, albeit insignificant post of honorary party chairman. Eight of the thirteen members of the Politburo were removed. *Der Spiegel* drew the sober conclusion: "The party leadership seeks a consensus with the people; civic organizations, however, [...] have already found it."¹⁰¹⁹ Imre Pozsgay did not only become a member, but also the state minister. Grósz embodied a sort of middle ground between reformers, like Imre Pozsgay and Rezső Nyers, and hardliners, like the head of the police István Horváth, and Central Committee secretary János Berecz. Grósz seemed to gain Moscow's and Western approval. Whereas many considered him the best available candidate, others, especially the Democratic Opposition, saw him only as the lesser of two evils.¹⁰²⁰

¹⁰¹⁶ Hegedűs' son, István, who was to join FIDESZ about year later, still lives in the apartment. A commemorative plaque adorns the entrance to the house on Gerlóczy street.

¹⁰¹⁷ Under a pseudonym, János Rainer had published preliminary findings in *Beszélő* in 1987. János] Elek Fényes [Rainer, "Adatok az 1956-os Forradalmat Követő Megtorláshoz," *Beszélő* 8, no. 20 (1987).

¹⁰¹⁸ See the founding document of the Independent Legal Watch Agency, in Mink, *The Defendant: The State*, 78-81.

¹⁰¹⁹ "Geradezu versteinert," *Der Spiegel* 42, no. 22 (1988). For a summary of the run-up to and the congress itself, see Gough, *A Good Comrade*, 232-40.

¹⁰²⁰ Compare Paul Lendvai, *Hungary: The Art of Survival* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), 153-56. with István Deák, "Hungary: The New Twist," *New York Review of Books* 35, no. 13 (1988). Nick Thorpe, interviewed by the author, 11 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

Although disagreements arose among the Fifty-Sixers about how to honor the thirtieth anniversary of the revolutionaries' execution on 16 June 1988, a core group of survivors – Aliz Halda, Miklós Vásárhelyi, Judit Gyenes and others – flew to Paris, where they met up with their friends, the émigré Fifty-Sixers Péter Kende, Tibor Méray and François Fejtő.¹⁰²¹ Then mayor of Paris Jacques Chirac had donated a plot in the historic Père Lachaise Cemetery for a '56 monument. László Rajk designed the monument, which depicts a disassembled shipwreck topped by a Hungarian flag with the characteristic hole in the middle.¹⁰²² During the unveiling ceremony, Vásárhelyi declared rehabilitation “a moral duty,” Ferenc Fejtő called for the respect of human rights in memory of 1956, and Aliz Halda – in Paris with a grant from the Fondation – read out the committee's public appeal for rehabilitation of the executed.¹⁰²³ Radio Free Europe explained the wider implications:

The emotion packed dedication of the stone-and-steel sculpture was organized by the Hungarian League for Human Rights and sponsored by an international committee headed by Portuguese President Mario Soares, that included 25 Nobel Prize Winners and scores of politicians, writers and artists.¹⁰²⁴

The solemn ceremony in Paris differed starkly from the events in Budapest that day. At ten o'clock, the other members of TIB and the Democratic Opposition met at the entrance to Rákoskeresztúr Cemetery, where in the far end corner in the overgrown plot

¹⁰²¹ Some refused to participate in the TIB meetings or sign the 1988 appeal. See Gábor Murányi's interview with Miklós Vásárhelyi, 20 December 1994, Budapest, Hungary, pp. 16-21. Oral History Archive, 56-os Intézet.

¹⁰²² Rajk does not remember how this monument came about, but he assumes it had been Kende's initiative. László Rajk, interviewed by the author, 26 January 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

¹⁰²³ Shortly thereafter, István Hegedűs, András B. Hegedűs's son, the sociologist Mihály Csakó, and János M. Rainer received funding for a trip to France; the Baltics expert and Soros-MTA committee member Endre Bojtár and the SZETA co-founder András Nagy went to West Germany on Fondation money. “Bourses 1988.” HU OSA FEIE, 27'5 Listes des boursiers et documents divers [sd], Catégorie: Conseil de Fondation / secretariat.

¹⁰²⁴ Radio Free Europe, “Nagy ceremony in Paris,” FF138 B-Wire 16-Jun-89 16:53. HU OSA 300-40-2.

301 the remains of the '56 martyrs were interred.¹⁰²⁵ For the afternoon, they had planned a demonstration for the '56 martyrs at the Batthyány memorial light and a protest march through the city center.¹⁰²⁶

János Kis and Gáspár Miklós Tamás had begun their speeches on the footsteps of the Hungarian Television building on Szabadság Square, when the police moved into the square, batons raised, ignoring the presence of international media.¹⁰²⁷ Tamás remembers: "At the first major unauthorized demonstration [...] in June 1988 [...], I was beaten up by riot police and dragged away."¹⁰²⁸ Radio Free Europe reported that "the police were 'extremely and unprecedentedly brutal' and beat as many as 100 people, including women and children."¹⁰²⁹ Among those dragged to the police station were Róza Hodosán, Gábor Demszky and Gáspár Miklós Tamás who had tried to protect a young student activist by the name of Viktor Orbán from the brutality.¹⁰³⁰ However, surprisingly, once in custody the intimidation subsided and "we were freed within two hours," Tamás remembers. And Radio Free Europe's warning that 16 June represented "a serious blow to party and government leader Károly Grósz's relatively liberal image at home and abroad" passed without any notable changes in Western policies.¹⁰³¹

¹⁰²⁵ Sándor Racz, György Litván, and Imre Mécs represented TIB. Gábor Demszky, Róza Hodosán, Ferenc Kőszeg and Gáspár Miklós Tamás belonged to the main organizers. Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek*, 198-201. György Litván, "1956 Emlékének Szerepe a Rendszerváltásban," *Beszélő* 12, no. 1 (2007).

¹⁰²⁶ For more on the parallel events, see "1956 Emlékének Szerepe a Rendszerváltásban."

¹⁰²⁷ Quotes from Associate Press. Judith Pataki, "Demonstration for Nagy's Rehabilitation Brutally Halted in Budapest," 21 June 1988, Munich. HU OSA 300-40-2.

¹⁰²⁸ G.M. Tamás, "Words from Budapest (interview)," *New Left Review*, no. 80 (2013).

¹⁰²⁹ Quotes from Associate Press in Judith Pataki, "Demonstration for Nagy's Rehabilitation Brutally Halted in Budapest," 21 June 1988, Munich. HU OSA 300-40-2.

¹⁰³⁰ *Ibid.* Hodosán, *Szamizdat történetek*, 204-08.

¹⁰³¹ Pataki, "Demonstration for Nagy's Rehabilitation Brutally Halted," 21 June 1988. HU OSA 300-40-2.

International attention focused on the rapidly improving relations between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.¹⁰³² At the end of May 1988, Reagan and Gorbachev met in Moscow to sign an agreement on Intermediate Range Nuclear Missiles. A few days earlier, the Soviet Union had begun withdrawing troops from Afghanistan. The “Second Cold War” of the early 1980s was over. Gorbachev replaced the Brezhnev doctrine with the ‘Sinatra doctrine,’ which took its name from Frank Sinatra’s 1969 song “My Way” to describe the General Secretary’s new approach to Eastern Europe. Instead of control, Gorbachev encouraged the satellite regimes to find their own solutions for their country’s problems; he emphasized they could no longer rely on Moscow’s economic and political assistance.¹⁰³³ Even Jaruzelski’s Poland inched towards reforms. By July 1986, the Polish parliament had passed a third round of amnesty laws rehabilitating political prisoners, including many Solidarity members but not its leaders. In September 1988, a new wave of strikes hit the country. Ambivalent rumors reached Budapest about secret talks between Lech Wałęsa and the regime. The progress of reconciliation in Poland remained ambiguous until in February 1989 Roundtable Talks began about the democratization of the country.¹⁰³⁴

¹⁰³² Svetlana Savranskaya, Thomas Blanton, and Vladislav Zubok, eds., *The Peaceful End of the Cold War in Europe, 1989*, Masterpieces in History (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010).

¹⁰³³ Tony Judt discusses the Second Cold War in Judt, *Postwar*, 585-633. Jacques Lévesque, "The East European revolutions of 1989 " in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, ed. Odd Arne Westad and Melvyn P. Leffler (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹⁰³⁴ Adam Michnik, "Der Kalte Bürgerkrieg," *Der Spiegel*, no. 22 (1988). John Tagliabue, "Solidarity Blames New Premier for Delay in Talks," *New York Times*, 23 October 1988. Svetlana Savranskaya, "The Logic of 1989: The Soviet Peaceful Withdrawal from Eastern Europe," in *The Peaceful End of the Cold War in Europe, 1989*, ed. Svetlana Savranskaya, Thomas Blanton, and Vladislav Zubok, *Masterpieces in History* (Budapest: CEU Press). Csaba Békés, *Back to Europe. The International Background of the Political Transition in Hungary, 1988-1990* (Budapest: reproduced from CEU Press, 2002).

Feeling the wind of change throughout the region, Annette Laborey had submitted a first draft for a three-year-tie-off grant to the Ford Foundation in mid-1987. Reluctant to let go of her lifetime project, she reminisced about the Fondation's accomplishments:

[This] 'intellectual platform' [...] really enabled the Fondation to set up the right network of contacts in Eastern Europe. Opinion forming intellectuals like Kundera, Milosz, Kolakowski or Paul Goma, to mention those who are in the west now, are our friends and support the Fondation, though it is prudent not to have their names on our letterhead. They do so not only because we care about their colleagues in central Europe (with funds coming mainly from America), but because they know that people like Pierre Emmanuel, Kot Jelenski, Marion Dönhoff, Adam Watson and François Bondy who were behind the original idea of setting up this organisation, were both intellectually and from a humanitarian point of view permanently concerned about the changing situation in Eastern Europe. And this is even more true for our friends in Eastern Europe whose confidence is based not only on what we do but on the intellectual concept of how we do it, and the knowledge that each responsible director of this organisation represents an attentive listener and a competent interpreter of the intellectual and cultural scene in Eastern Europe.¹⁰³⁵

After years of deliberation, the Fondation had set up a tax-exempt branch in the U.S., the American Foundation for International Cooperation in Europe (AFICE). In 1987, Francis X. Sutton, the former Ford Foundation officer, had taken up the post of the AFICE president. Sutton, a well-connected fundraiser, was the Fondation's most important representative in the U.S. In April 1988, he briefed his former colleagues on a recent meeting and their plans:

In many ways the most important meeting [...] was our luncheon with George and Susan Soros. Others may be more expert in 'reading' Soros than I, but I came away much heartened at the evident trust he has in Annette's work. Aryeh Neier has been helpful with ideas and leads and we may have more to report before long.¹⁰³⁶

¹⁰³⁵ Draft of a grant request and personal letter by Laborey to Stephen Marks, 4 June 1987, Paris. HU OSA FEIE, 26'2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991 Box 5, Folder: Ford Foundation 1987.

¹⁰³⁶ See e.g. Sutton's letter to Enid Schoettle and Stephen Marks at the Ford Foundation about the latest AFICE meeting in April 1988, 12 April 1988, HU OSA FEIE, 26'2 Ford-Found. Corresp. B 1983-1991. In 1988, the board of AFICE consisted of Francis Sutton, the president, George Labalme, the treasurer, Svetlana Stone, Soros' confidante and member of the Academy in New York, Adam Watson, as president

In July 1988, George Soros and the Ford Foundation agreed to \$1 and \$1.5 million respectively for winding down the Fondation's activities.¹⁰³⁷ But despite the coming closure, the Fondation suddenly came into demand. In November 1988, Laborey wrote to the Ford officers in New York:

[The] Fondation is more and more consulted by [...] institutions about 'who is who' in Eastern Europe, and on the other hand, our former grantees there ask us regularly to write recommendation letters to Western institutions. This function of the Fondation, difficult to report on in figures, has always existed, but with increasing liberalization in Eastern Europe, our long-term experience with these countries seems now particularly useful.¹⁰³⁸

After years when only very few organizations bothered to engage with the Eastern bloc, once the socialist countries opened up the Fondation's expertise became a rare asset. It was enhanced by new additions to its board: in the spring of 1988, Timothy Garton Ash was elected a member; in December, so too was the French expert on Czechoslovakia Jacques Rupnik and the West German journalist Tilman Spengler, co-editor of the *Kursbuch* since 1980.¹⁰³⁹

The Hungarians were early beneficiaries of the changes in the region and the groundwork the Fondation had done in previous years. In the wake of the new passport regulations, even opposition members were allowed to travel abroad that summer, some for the first time in years. János Kis received a visiting professorship at the New School for Social Research in New York, where the older generation of the Lukács School,

of the Fondation. See for instance the board meeting of AFICE on April 8, 1988, in New York. Resolves in HU OSA FEIE 26'4, Corresp. U.S.A. 1987-1989, Divider: S (1).

¹⁰³⁷ "Notes on meeting with Steve Marks," by Annette Laborey, 12 July 1988. HU OSA FEIE 26'2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991. Box 5, Folder Ford Foundation 1988.

¹⁰³⁸ Letter by Laborey to Margot Picken, Program Officer, Human Rights & Governance, 25 November 1988. HU OSA FEIE 26'2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991. Box 5, Folder: Ford 1988.

¹⁰³⁹ Board members then were: François Bondy, Switzerland (President), Christopher Schönberger, West-Germany (Treasurer), Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, West-Germany, Timothy Garton Ash, U.K., François-Regis Hutin, France, Jacques Rupnik, France, Tilman Spengler, West-Germany, Liliane Thorn-Petit, Luxembourg, Adam Watson, U.K. Letter by Annette Laborey to Stephen Marks, 26 October 1988, Paris and letter by Laborey to Margot Picken, 8 December 1988. HU OSA FEIE 26'2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991. Box 5, Folder Ford 1988.

Ágnes Heller and Ferenc Fehér, was already teaching. Miklós Haraszti followed an invitation by Leon Botstein, a friend of Soros's, to Bard College. With Haraszti's help, Botstein, the president of Bard, hoped to establish an International Academy, for which he was seeking money from the Ford Foundation. He also invited Annette Laborey to join the Advisory Board.¹⁰⁴⁰ Even Gábor Demszky and Róza Hodosán, who had endured the brunt of police harassment, were allowed to travel. With FF 5,000 from the Fondation, Demszky went on a trip to Paris in early 1988, and then the couple received a Soros scholarship for the fall semester in New York.¹⁰⁴¹

With leading members abroad, it seemed the Democratic Opposition was ceding the floor to the populists. In March 1988, the Hungarian Democratic Forum issued a declaration championing the defense of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, whose homes were threatened by the Romanian dictator's urbanization plans:

According to the peace treaty following the First World War, a significant number of Hungarians found themselves cut off from their mother country. This [...] has had traumatic effects for both [the Hungarian and Romanian] nations. [...] The Hungarian minority has no political institutions whatsoever [...] to defend minority rights. [...] The fate of ethnic Hungarians outside Hungary is strongly connected with the quality of national identity consciousness, the healthy or sick state of public life and opinion [...]. The new party and state position with regard to these issues is promising.¹⁰⁴²

Taking up the cause of the Hungarians in Romania, the MDF initiated the largest, independently organized demonstration on Budapest's Heroes Square on 27 June 1988, only days after the brutal halting of the 1956 ceremony on 16 June. The MDF took the

¹⁰⁴⁰ Letter by Leon Botstein to Annette Laborey, 5 September 1988, and Laborey's positive response on 22 September. HU OSA FEIE, 26'4, Corresp. U.S.A. 1987-1989, Divider: B.

¹⁰⁴¹ "Bourses 1988." HU OSA FEIE, 27'5 Listes des boursiers et documents divers [sd], Catégorie: Conseil de Fondation / secretariat. In the fall, they were housed in the Edgewater apartment in the East Side, which Soros had acquired specifically for East European visitors. See letters by Béla Király to Susan Weber Soros, 5 November 1987 and to George Soros, 22 December 1987. HU OSA 336-0-5 Box 2.

¹⁰⁴² Hungarian Democratic Forum, "Declaration and Resolution," 6 March 1988. HU OSA 318-0-3 Box 40, International Helsinki Federation, Hungary: Elections: 1990, 1989-1990 to NGOs: MDF 1987-1989.

lead in a demonstration in which a number of new, independent organizations, such as the Independent Hungarian Defense Committee for Transylvania, the Friends of Bajcsy-Zsilinszki Circle, the Dezső Szabó Memorial Association participated. The Network for Free Initiatives and the István Bibó College were also present. Barely four decades since “the last atrocious war” the MDF interpreted the razing of villages as “a new assassination attempt against humanity,” and called on the participants to “bring torches and candles.”¹⁰⁴³ 80,000 gathered behind posters with the names of Transylvanian villages.¹⁰⁴⁴

In September 1988, the next largest demonstration took place on Vörösmarty Square against the Nagymaros-Gabčíkovo dam project.¹⁰⁴⁵ Nick Thorpe remembers those protests:

These very heartfelt issues: [...] the environment and refugees from Transylvania. The Formula One Race, the first took place here in 86, and busloads and busloads of Hungarians [from Romania] came to the race, and the busses went back empty because they stayed here. Probably we’re talking about 50,000-60,000 refugees. The state was so embarrassed. [...] They should have returned those people. But Kádár didn’t want to [...], so [the state] ignored them.¹⁰⁴⁶

If the Democratic Opposition wanted to halt the Hungarian Democratic Forum’s surge in popularity, it had to act. On 13 November 1988, over a year after the MDF, the *urbánus* dissidents founded the Alliance for Free Democrats (SZDSZ). Gáspár Miklós Tamás explained the differences:

We, the Democratic Opposition and [then SZDSZ], had two reservations against those people: a) they were too close to the party and b) they were nationalists. [...] They were declaring that [they] were [...] neither in the government nor in

¹⁰⁴³ “Felhívás,” HU OSA 318-0-3 Box 40, Folder: Hungary, NGOs. MDF 1987-1989.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Marianna Kiscsatári, “Annus Mirabilis. The Year 1989 in Photos. Part I: As 1988 turned into 1989,” *The Hungarian Quarterly*, no. 193 (2009): 44.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Nick Thorpe, interviewed by the author, 11 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary. The first Formula One Race in Budapest on the ‘Hungaroring’ took place in June 1986. Bernie Ecclestone, the CEO, was applauded for this stroke of genius: it was the first and only competition on the other side of the Iron Curtain.

the opposition [...]. It meant two things: that they did not want to be confused with the Democratic Opposition, which they considered a) too dangerous and b) too Jewish. And second, [...] they were showing to their intellectual audience a) they are not as dangerous and of course b) [...] that [they were] more national, more patriotic, more whatever.¹⁰⁴⁷

The increasing tensions between the two camps were contained by the spectacular surge in civic organizations and the seeming indifference of the authorities. In October 1988, François Bondy argued that history was on the side of the opposition:

Our network of East Europeans, and we in this Fondation, regard the present tentative thaw in the cultural repressiveness of the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe as the opportunity we have been hoping for. The Ford-Foundation will remember that the conceptual origin of our Fondation goes back to the cultural thaw after the death of Stalin. [...] Our East European contacts consider that the new 'liberalization' and 'democratization' policies introduced by Gorbachev are already making the position easier for independent-minded intellectuals in Hungary and Poland [...].¹⁰⁴⁸

The liberalization encouraged the Fondation to change its objective. Annette Laborey followed up on Bondy's letter:

We believe that our 'raison d'être' is now limited in [Hungary] where everybody has a right now to have a passport (and no visa obligation for Austria), and where the Soros Foundation has very efficiently taken over large parts of our activities. [...] My personal desire is to stimulate our Hungarian friends to reinforce our contacts in the more difficult neighbour countries like the German Democratic Republic and Rumania.¹⁰⁴⁹

Meanwhile, the intraparty struggle in the MSZMP intensified. On November 24, 1988, the aspiring, Harvard-educated Miklós Németh, previously the Central Committee's Economics Secretary, was appointed prime minister. He later claimed:

[The] country was [...] close to an abyss, close to a total crisis situation. Economically we accumulated by that time a huge debt. The debt service was

¹⁰⁴⁷ Gáspár Miklós Tamás, interviewed by the author, 12 December 2011, Budapest, Hungary.

¹⁰⁴⁸ To support the application, the Fondation attached letters of support from Adam Michnik, Czesław Miłosz, Leszek Kołakowski, and Milan Kundera. Grant Application, signed by François Bondy to Stephen Marks, Ford Foundation: Human Rights & Governance, 10 October 1988, Paris. HU OSA FEIE 26'2 Ford-Found. Corresp. B 1983-1991.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Letter by Laborey to Margo Picken, Program Officer, Human Rights & Governance, 25 November 1988. HU OSA FEIE 26'2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991. Box 5, Folder: Ford 1988.

really a number one issue for me [...]. Politically the country, all, all the key players [...] realized that there is no way to get a better life by reforming the socialist model. It was not publicly said, but informally [...].¹⁰⁵⁰

Grósz retained the position of general secretary, but he was out of touch with the base. At the MSZMP party congress in November 1988, in front of ten thousand members, he evoked the image of “white terror” to silence calls for reforms and the demand to reassess the party’s history – a public reprimand to Imre Pozsgay and Miklós Németh, who were both reaching for his crown. All he achieved, however, was further alienation.¹⁰⁵¹

Grósz’s attempt to regain authority was feeble and misplaced. On 23 June 1988, the Central Committee had created a Historical Subcommittee, headed by one of its CC members, the historian Iván T. Berend, to re-evaluate the “tragic events of 1956.” Since 1985, Berend had been the president of the Academy of Sciences and in this function the deputy president of the Soros-MTA Board.¹⁰⁵² In January 1989, the committee submitted a 102-page-report. After careful deliberations, it concluded that 1956 had not been a counter-revolution as propagated since 1957 but a popular uprising.

Imre Pozsgay, without consulting the Politburo, announced the findings in one of Hungary’s most popular radio programs, *168 óra*. The “Pozsgay Affair” necessitated an extraordinary meeting of the party’s Political Committee, where Pozsgay was asked to

¹⁰⁵⁰ National Security Archive, "Interview with Miklos Nemeth (October 1997)," <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/interviews/episode-23/nemeth1.html>.

¹⁰⁵¹ For excerpts from the speech, see "Tegnap Újság. 1988: Grósz fehérterrorral fenyeget," *Index*(2008), http://index.hu/belfold/tegnapiujsg/2008/11/29/1988_grosz_feherterrorral_fenyeget/.

¹⁰⁵² When Ránki died unexpectedly in February 1988, the Soros-MTA created a Historical Studies Prize in his memory in addition to a Jenő Szűcs Prize – the latter had passed away in November 1988. *Soros Tájékoztató Füzet 1989/90-re*, p. 22. HU OSA 13-3-3 Box 4. For his autobiography: Berend, *History In My Life*.

explain his premature announcement.¹⁰⁵³ He defended his move as an attempt to encourage “social reconciliation and a national consensus on certain bitter and still all-too-distressing issues.”¹⁰⁵⁴ Rezső Nyers agreed but expressed reservations: “the declaration of Pozsgay and the exposé of the committee show a unanimous approach. They are in accord – which does not justify publicizing the declaration this way.”¹⁰⁵⁵

Pozsgay’s announcement threatened to further destabilize an already tenuous situation. The Hungarian government was not only confronted with a deepening economic, but also a refugee crisis from Transylvania, and a crisis of confidence. It had introduced a value added tax, taxes on personal income, a bankruptcy law and initial legislation to privatize state companies.¹⁰⁵⁶ In January 1989, preparing for a multi-party system, the MSZMP passed legislation on the right to free association. That month, quite symbolically, a blanket of smog from car emissions and heating fuels settled in the Danube basin suffocating Budapest.

Additionally, the MSZMP had to address the unpleasant issue of Hungary’s border with Austria. The fortification system, in place since 1957, had become dysfunctional. Ignoring the problem as well as upgrading the system would both have been costly solutions. Moreover, with the new passport law and the liberalization of travelling a fortified border had become obsolete. Prime Minister Miklós Németh considered dismantling it without losing face. In February 1989, his first state visit took him to Austria, and not to Moscow as customary. He visited Gorbachev next in

¹⁰⁵³ Joshua Foa Dienstag, "The Pozsgay Affair': Historical Memory and Political Legitimacy," *History and Memory* 8, no. 1 (1996).

¹⁰⁵⁴ Doc 119: Extraordinary Meeting of the HSWP Political Committee discussing Imre Pozsgay’s declaration on 1956, January 31, 1989 (excerpt), in Békés, Byrne, and Rainer, *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution. A History in Documents*, 553-54.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Doc 119: Extraordinary Meeting of the HSWP Political Committee discussing Imre Pozsgay’s declaration on 1956, January 31, 1989 (excerpt), in *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁶ Kontler, *Millenium in Central Europe*. Kiscsatári, "Annus Mirabilis. Part I," 47 .

March.¹⁰⁵⁷ According to László Bohri, the Austrian chancellor as well as Gorbachev had their reservations and urged caution with regards to Hungary's wide-ranging reforms. But Németh saw no other way but to take down the fortifications.¹⁰⁵⁸

Change came more rapidly than most experts – even the Fondation – had imagined.¹⁰⁵⁹ While events in the East called for quick action, Laborey's efforts were strained by the fact that the Fondation almost lost its office in Paris for the simple reason that they could not pay for an extension of the lease agreement.¹⁰⁶⁰ To encourage the prompt transfer of promised funds, Watson communicated the excitement of those months:

Gorbachev's new line in the Soviet Union is having a beneficial effect in most East European countries; but the degree of permissiveness which the local régimes allow varies very greatly. Annette finds that the changes are most significant, or at least penetrate the deepest, in Poland, where the negotiations between Solidarity and the government are not about the future of Solidarity so much as about the survival of the régime and its office-holding hangers on. The government and the Party are transforming themselves most radically in Hungary. The situation in both these countries is causing real concern to the Party bosses in East Germany and Czechoslovakia [...].¹⁰⁶¹

The more authoritarian regimes in East Berlin and Prague had every reason to worry about Hungary. In preceding months, most of the 'historic parties', parties like the Independent Smallholders which had existed in the interwar period, had been reconstituted. In March 1989, the Hungarian Democratic Forum with over 13,000

¹⁰⁵⁷ See chapters 3, "Erste Entscheidungen," and 4, "Eure Verantwortung," sagt Gorbatschow," in Andreas Oplatka, *Der erste Riss in der Mauer. September 1989 - Ungarn öffnet die Grenze* (Vienna: Zsolnay, 2009), 34-69.

¹⁰⁵⁸ László Borhi, "A Reluctant and Fearful West -- 1989 and Its International Context," *Hungarian Quarterly*, no. 193 (2009): 66-67.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Letter by Shepard Forman to Adam Watson, 10 November 1988, New York. HU OSA FEIE 26'2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991. Box 5, Folder: Ford Foundation 1988.

¹⁰⁶⁰ The lease would terminate on January 31, 1989. Temporarily, it had looked like Soros would pay for "mortars and brick." Letter By George Soros to Laborey, 12 December 1988, and by Susan Weber Soros, 13 December 1988. Also see letter by Annette Laborey to Margo Picken, 10 May 1989, Paris. HU OSA FEIE 26'2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991. Box 5, Folder: Ford Foundation 1989.

¹⁰⁶¹ Letter by Adam Watson to Francis X. Sutton, 14 February 1989. HU OSA FEIE 26'4, Corresp. U.S.A. 1987-1989, Divider: S.

registered members convened its first national congress in the Karl Marx University in Budapest.¹⁰⁶² On this occasion, soon-to-be prime minister József Antall made his first public appearance. On the national holiday of 15 March 1989, several hundred thousands Hungarians rallied in the streets waving signs of the newly constituted parties and civic initiatives. The leaders of the student organization the “Association of Young Democrats,” in short FIDESZ, Gábor Fódor, Viktor Orbán and Tamás Deutsch, gave speeches at the statue of Petőfi, the poet who had hailed the revolutionary youth in 1848. U.S. Ambassador Mark Palmer marched in a protest side by side with members of the Alliance of Free Democrats. Between January and March 1989, some 40,000 members left the MSZMP. Under pressure, the government stopped the construction of the Nagymaros-Gabčíkovo dam project in May.¹⁰⁶³

VI.1.2. The Coming of a New Age, 1989-1993

Alarmed by the surge in nationalism throughout the region, Hungary’s liberal intellectual elite, mostly the Democratic Opposition and establishment critics, considered measures to preempt the rise of resentments and chauvinism. In response, the Soros-MTA organized a series of workshops dealing with the transformations of the region at the IUC in Dubrovnik in April 1989.¹⁰⁶⁴ The IUC had become a mainstay in the Budapest office’s budget. In 1988, it had sent some 69 Hungarians, 22 Poles and other East Europeans to Dubrovnik.¹⁰⁶⁵ Altogether, the Soros-MTA spent \$13,700 on the IUC programs that year

¹⁰⁶² See Judith Pataki, “Situation Report Hungary,” 12 January 1989, Radio Free Europe. HU OSA 300-40-8.

¹⁰⁶³ Kiscsatári, “Annus Mirabilis. Part I.” See Piroška Nagy’s photo of Miklós Haraszti and Mark Palmer on Szabadság tér, 15 March 1989, http://server2001.rev.hu/oha/oha_picture_id.asp?pid=14705&lang=.

¹⁰⁶⁴ *Soros évkönyv 1988*, (spring 1989), p. 6. HU OSA 13-3-3 Box 4.

¹⁰⁶⁵ “OSF/ IUC Grants for Younger Scholars,” item in Report to Council Meeting, August 1988, p. 14, signed KVV [Kathy Vaughan Wilkes], appendix to the Minutes of the 39th Executive Meeting, 22-23

– with a net budget of \$3,784,228 an almost negligible sum for the Soros-MTA. However, for the IUC, which operated on annual budget of \$32,000, of which another \$9,000 came from Soros directly, this support was crucial to achieving an unprecedented offering of 58 courses with 1370 participants in 1987/88 alone.¹⁰⁶⁶

George Soros had spent much of 1988 in the Soviet Union, where he befriended leading reform intellectuals such as Gavriil Popov and Yuri Afanasyev, both to be elected to the Supreme Soviet in March 1989. When Soros had returned to Hungary in the fall, he was taken aback by the omnipresence of civic groups. Inspired by the dawn of an open society, Miklós Vásárhelyi and Soros envisioned a meeting of scholars and students from the region debating the ongoing crisis, potential reforms and their historical and cultural trajectories.¹⁰⁶⁷ By November 1988, Soros was back in Moscow in the company of Vassily Leontieff and Márton Tárdos leaving the preparations for the Dubrovnik workshops to the Soros-MTA office in Budapest.¹⁰⁶⁸

When Kathy Wilkes first presented the idea of an additional *series* of workshops in the spring, the busiest time of the year, the IUC Executive Committee hesitated. But Soros had further indicated he would hold such workshops on an annual basis and he would cover *all* the costs for participants from the Eastern bloc. Any overhead expenses

August 1988, in Novi Sad. IUC Archive, Box: IUC documents 1986-87, Book XIV, 1987-1988, Book XV, 1988-1990, Book XVI.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Item in budget, p. 7, the list of students, p. 55, total expenditures p. 65. *Soros évkönyv 1988*, (spring 1989), Soros-MTA: Budapest. HU OSA 13-3-3 Box 4. See “Financial Situation of the IUC,” 9th Meeting of the IUC Council, Dubrovnik, August 1988. See F. Laubert, “Progress Report to the Members of the Executive Committee,” 22 August 1988. Box: IUC documents 1986-87, Book XIV, 1987-1988, Book XV, 1988-1990, Book XVI.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Soros, *Underwriting Democracy*, 22-26.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Edward Hewett from the Brookings Institute joined Soros, too. *Ibid.*, 29-30.

the IUC incurred the Budapest office would pay, too.¹⁰⁶⁹ It was a proposal the IUC could hardly refuse.

The announcement of four ‘Soros workshops’ taking place in Dubrovnik between 3 and 28 April 1989 read as follows: “Topics concentrate on economic, sociological, historical and comparative literary aspects relating to integrative and reformatory endeavors and progress in Central and Eastern Europe.”¹⁰⁷⁰ Among the list of conveners were names of Hungarians who were long engaged in the East-West dialogue as well as Vienna’s Deputy Mayor Erhard Busek.¹⁰⁷¹ With the exception of a few notable Americans and British, the participants came primarily from Austria, Croatia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, West Germany, Serbia and Russia.

During a break, Miklós Vásárhelyi, always a vocal advocate for youth programs, brought up the prospects of founding a new university. István Teplán, a promising young scholar at the time who would become the Chair of the IUC Council in 1997, remembers: “It was in the spring of 89, so before everything. But you know, you [already] felt the wind [and] suddenly there was this talk how to prepare the new elite.”¹⁰⁷² Dubrovnik served as the perfect model for students and professors from the region studying and working together except that its seminars lasted at most two weeks. István Rév, one of Soros’s confidantes, explains how their motivation originated in “the urgent need to

¹⁰⁶⁹ By 1988, Judit Geszti from the office of the Soros-MTA was an observer to the IUC Executive Committee’s meetings. Minutes of the 39th meeting of the Executive Committee, held at the University of Novi Sad from 22-23 April 1988, p. 11. Box: IUC documents 1986-87, Book XIV, 1987-1988, Book XV, 1988-1990, Book XVI.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Posters: “The Culture of Central and Eastern Europe, 3-28 April 1989.” Box: IUC documents 1986-87, Book XIV, 1987-1988, Book XV, 1988-1990, Book XVI.

¹⁰⁷¹ For instance, the Baltics expert Endre Bojtár, the Soros-MTA committee member, György Litván, János Mátyás Kovács, Tamás Bauer, and Márton Tárdos. The historian Péter Hanák and Busek co-chaired the workshop “Co-existence and Conflict in Central Europe since 1848.” Contact person was a young scholar by the name of László Kontler, who is as of 2015 the CEU’s Pro-Rector for Hungarian Affairs. Box: IUC documents 1986-87, Book XIV, 1987-1988, Book XV, 1988-1990, Book XVI.

¹⁰⁷² István Teplán, interviewed by the author, 22 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

prepare for the coming transformation” to “start train[ing] privatizers and democratizers, people who could go immediately into work, put knowledge into practical action.”¹⁰⁷³

According to legend, the only one who had to be convinced was George Soros. He held on to his belief that sooner or later any institution petrifies, loses momentum and becomes inefficient. But his Hungarian friends insisted: in the end, Soros consented.

In the meantime, the Fondation was also grappling with the changing situation in the East. The new council members Timothy Garton Ash, Tilman Spengler, and Jacques Rupnik, all respected experts on the region, tried to reconcile their scholarly interest with the rapidly changing situation and the need of the Fondation.¹⁰⁷⁴ In December 1988, the council had met “to discuss a general strategy [...] with regard to the political evolution in Eastern Europe.”¹⁰⁷⁵ While Eastern Europe was forging ahead, fundraising in the West remained inconclusive. Ford was indecisive about a grant beyond the tie-off. Frustrated, Laborey had begun packing up the Paris office, when suddenly at the end of February, Ford granted \$270,000 for the upcoming two years, and in May 1989, unexpectedly, Laborey’s “very old friend Patrick Süskind, the German writer” bought the apartment with the office so that the Fondation could continue working there.¹⁰⁷⁶ “I think this is one of the nicest and most precious contributions to the Fondation’s work we have ever found in Europe,” uttered Laborey admiringly.¹⁰⁷⁷ Reassured that the Fondation’s existence was

¹⁰⁷³ William Newton-Smith, interviewed by Béla Nové, “The History of the CEU” 1999, Tape 40. HU OSA 203-13-1. Event Recording, “István Rév - The History of the CEU,” 16 February 1999, Budapest, Hungary. HU OSA 203-13-1, Tape 45.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Letter by Adam Watson to Francis X. Sutton, 14 February 1989. HU OSA FEIE 26’4, Corresp. U.S.A. 1987-1989, Divider: S.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Letter by Laborey to Marks, 28 October 1988. HU OSA FEIE 26’2 Ford-Found. Corresp. B 1983-1991.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Grant admission by Diane Galloway to François Bondy, 28 February 1989, New York. HU OSA FEIE 26’2 Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991, Folder: Ford 1989.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Letter by Annette Laborey to Margo Picken, 10 May 1989, Paris. HU OSA FEIE 26’2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991. Box 5, Folder: Ford Foundation 1989. Patrick Süskind, *Das Parfum. Die Geschichte eines Mörders* (Zürich: Diogenes, 1985).

secured, Laborey scheduled the next council meeting for 17 June 1989 in the office on the Boulevard Beaumarchais.¹⁰⁷⁸

In Hungary, the time for the one-party state was running out. On 22 March 1989, oppositional groups such as the MDF, SZDSZ, FIDESZ, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Association, the Christian Democratic People's Party, the Hungarian People's Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Trade Union League, and the Independent Smallholders' Party had gathered at a roundtable to prepare for the negotiations with the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. The presence of the Independent Lawyer's association guaranteed the negotiation of a legal transfer of power.¹⁰⁷⁹ A week later, the televised exhumation of the 1956 leaders on Rákoskeresztúr Cemetery caused outrage: the bodies in plot 301 faced down and were tangled up with wire and bones from animals from the neighboring zoo, whose cadavers had been dumped in this abandoned part of the cemetery.¹⁰⁸⁰

At the end of May, Prime Minister Miklós Németh and the Committee for Historical Justice jointly decided to organize a ceremony for the reburial on Heroes' Square on the day of the execution, 16 June.¹⁰⁸¹ The roundtable talks for a peaceful regime change were scheduled to begin a month later.¹⁰⁸² TIB member Árpád Göncz recalled: "I count among the hardest months of my life the period we spent preparing for

¹⁰⁷⁸ François Bondy, Christopher Schönberger, Jacques Rupnik, Tilman Spengler, Antoine de Tarle (representing council member François Régis Hutin, CEO of *Ouest France*), and Adam Watson attended.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe. Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings*, 146-50. Nine groups were party to the Oppositional Roundtable: Tamas, *From Dissident to Party Politics*, 88-94.

¹⁰⁸⁰ László Kéri, *A Rendszerváltás Krónikája, 1988-2009* (Budapest: Kossuth, 2010), 15.

¹⁰⁸¹ Rainer, "Regime Change and the Tradition of 1956 ". "Nagy Imre és mártírtársainak újratemetése," *Múltkor* (2012).

¹⁰⁸² András Bozóki, "The Hungarian Roundtable Talks of 1989," in *The Ideas of the Hungarian Revolution, suppressed and victorious 1956-1999* ed. Lee W. Congdon and Béla K. Király (Budapest: CEU Press, 2002). Bálint Magyar and Iván Pető, "Profi amatőrök – amatőr profik. Szociológiai csapdák és az SZDSZ -- 1. rész: a kezdetektől 1990-ig," *Népszabadság*, 27 January 2012. Zoltán Ripp, *Szabad Demokraták. Történeti vázlat a Szabad Demokraták Szövetségének politikájáról (1988-1994)*, ed. Éva Moharos (Budapest Napvilág, 1995), 22-36.

the funeral.”¹⁰⁸³ Lingering anxieties about a military intervention accompanied the preparation for the reburial. All sides urged each other to remain peaceful, 1956 was not to be repeated.¹⁰⁸⁴ News of the crushing of the peaceful protests on Tiananmen Square in Beijing on June 4 reminded everyone to avoid provocation and stifled the euphoria about the semi-free elections in Poland on the same day.¹⁰⁸⁵

The participation of party and government members caused controversies among organizers, *népi* and *urbánus* dissidents. In the end, Miklós Németh, Imre Pozsgay and Mátyás Szűrös laid wreaths as private citizens, and not as political functionaries. “I thought reconciliation and the relief of tension were rightful demands,” Göncz explained his approval of the party members’ participation.¹⁰⁸⁶ László Rajk designed the catafalque and museum façade for the occasion. Even the émigrés General Béla Király and Tibor Meray were allowed to participate. Adam Michnik attended as honorary guest. The international media, for instance Peter Jennings from ABC News swarmed to Budapest.¹⁰⁸⁷ With one notable exception, Viktor Orbán, only 1956 veterans – Miklós Vásárhelyi, Béla Király, Tibor Zimányi, Imre Mécs, Sándor Rác – delivered speeches on the steps of the Múcsarnok.¹⁰⁸⁸

Timothy Garton Ash, who had rushed from Poland to Hungary, captured the Polish elections of 4 June and the reburial of the 1956 martyrs, and symbolically the old

¹⁰⁸³ Árpád Göncz: "Ideas have a Longer Half-life," (14 February 1988). Oral History Archive, 56-os Intézet.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Mark Palmer, interview by András Schweitzer, 15 December, 2009. István Rév, "Counterrevolution," in *Between Past and Future: The Revolutions of 1989 and Their Aftermath*, ed. Sorin Antohi, Vladimir Tismaneanu, and et al. (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000).

¹⁰⁸⁵ Alfred Reisch, "Hungarian Party and Government Condemn Use of Military Force in China," RFE RAD Background Report/ 119, 30 June 1989, HU OSA 300-8-3:37-6-74. "Counterrevolution."

¹⁰⁸⁶ Árpád Göncz: "Ideas have a Longer Half-life," (14 February 1988). Oral History Archive, 56-os Intézet. Timothy Garton Ash also expressed his discontent at the reform communists’ presence, including Iván T. Berend’s. Ash, *The Magic Lantern*, 54-56.

¹⁰⁸⁷ István Teplán, interviewed by the author, 22 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Transcripts and summary, "Imre Nagy’s Re-burial. MTI reports Funeral Speeches," Radio Free Europe, 16 June 1989, HU OSA 300-8-3.

regime, in several articles that have appeared collectively in *The Magic Lantern*.¹⁰⁸⁹ He noted: “The most optimistic assessment came from the controversial Young Democrat, Viktor Orbán.”¹⁰⁹⁰ The leader of FIDESZ stood in front of the crowd of 200,000 to 250,000 mourners on Heroes Square, and declared:

Until now, 1956 was the nation’s last opportunity to embark on the road of Western-style development and to create economic wellbeing. The burden of bankruptcy, which we have to shoulder, has its origins in the defeated revolution of 1956 and in the fact that we were forced back into the *Asian* blind alley out of which we are trying to find the way now.¹⁰⁹¹

Orbán condemned the “deceitful” behavior of party members, who tried to appropriate the reform legacy of 1956. To conclude, he declared:

If we believe in our own strength, we will be able to force the party leadership to submit itself to free elections, and then we can choose a government which will immediately start negotiations about the full withdrawal of Soviet troops.¹⁰⁹²

With the backdrop of the Chinese events and the resemblance with 1956, Orbán’s radical claims, particularly the request for a withdrawal of Soviet troops, caused unease among some listeners. Although the former Budapest workers’ council leader Sándor Rácz made the same request, the speech has been embellished as Orbán’s moment of triumph and integrity.¹⁰⁹³ He evoked the image of an adventurous daredevil or – depending on the perspective – youthful revolutionary.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Ash, *The Magic Lantern*, 47-60.

¹⁰⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁰⁹¹ [emphasis mine] Judith Pataki, “Fidesz delegate’s speech at Nagy reburial ceremony in Heroes’ Square,” Radio Free Europe, RAD Background Report, 16 June 1989, Munich, HU OSA 3000-8-3.

¹⁰⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹³ Heino Nyysönen, “Time, Political Analogies, and the 1956 Revolution,” *KronoSpace* 6, no. 1 (2006): 58. Quoted in “Imre Nagy’s Re-burial. MTI reports Funeral Speeches,” Radio Free Europe, 16 June 1989, HU OSA 300-8-3.

The significance of the reburial was beyond doubt.¹⁰⁹⁴ “By the end of the week, Hungary will be a different country,” the German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* announced.¹⁰⁹⁵ The country headed for a new, albeit uncertain future. No foreign heads of state had participated in the event on Heroes Square. Radio Free Europe summarized,

The Soviet response seemed moderate, the Polish sympathetic, the Bulgarian evasive, and the East German dismissive, while Prague and Bucharest erupted with anger and condemnation. It soon became clear, however, that the event had catalyzed attitudes to the rapid pace of Hungarian political change [...].¹⁰⁹⁶

Given the quick collapse of the regimes in Hungary and Poland, Laborey and Tilmann Spengler announced at the council meeting on June 17 that they were making arrangements to go to Bulgaria and Romania in 1990 to focus on countries that were still ‘closed.’ Jacques Rupnik suggested re-convening the council in the fall of 1989 to reconsider the “raison d’être of the Fondation during this period of political and economic change in East Central Europe.” To better assess the situation, the council unanimously decided in his absence to have Timothy Garton Ash, who was in Budapest, deliver a 15-minute-presentation about the changes in Eastern Europe at the next meeting.¹⁰⁹⁷

On 4 July 1989, the Hungarian Supreme Court overturned the 1958 verdicts against Imre Nagy, Pál Maléter, Géza Losonczy, Miklós Gimes and József Szilágyi. Kálmán Kulcsár, who had served on the Soros-MTA board, was by then Minister of Justice and had initiated the legal reassessment. That same day, János Kádár passed

¹⁰⁹⁴ János Rainer claims that the entire history of the Hungarian regime change can be traced through the history of the rehabilitation of 1956. Rainer, "Regime Change and the Tradition of 1956".

¹⁰⁹⁵ Georg Paul Hefty, "Rechtsstaatlichkeit und Versöhnung," 14 June 1989, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Clipping in HU OSA 300-8-3.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Vladimir Kusin, "Hard-Line Response to Imre Nagy Reburial and Intensification of Hungarian Reforms," Radio Free Europe RAD Background Report/115, 29 June 1989, HU OSA 300-8-3:37-6-62.

¹⁰⁹⁷ "Réunion du conseil de la Fondation," 17 June 1989, HU OSA FEIE 27'4 Réunions du Conseil de Fondation, 1975-1991.

away. Regardless of the accusatory posters at demonstrations declaring Kádár a henchman, 60,000 paid their respects at the party headquarters, where his coffin had been laid out and thousands lined the streets to Kerepesi cemetery, where he was buried on 14 July.¹⁰⁹⁸

László Bohri points out that most Western governments were anxious about the developments in Hungary because they might destabilize the region.¹⁰⁹⁹ Western leaders had counted on the reform Communists in Hungary and worried about the collapse of the status quo. The pace of reforms particularly irritated the Austrians, who in recent months had seen Hungarians flooding across the border.¹¹⁰⁰ Only in July did U.S. President George H. Bush visit Budapest, the first U.S. president to do so.¹¹⁰¹ Ambassador Mark Palmer, known for his unusual engagement and close ties to the dissidents, arranged for a meeting with young Hungarians, primarily FIDESZ members.¹¹⁰² Overall, however, “the US played a remarkably small part in the dramas of 1989, at least until after the fact,” argues Tony Judt.¹¹⁰³ Likewise, Róza Hodosán shrugged her shoulders at the question of U.S. support for the SZDSZ in those months.¹¹⁰⁴

Whereas the reburial on 16 June 1989 had remained an exclusively Hungarian affair, Hungary’s main contribution to the collapse of state socialism in Eastern Europe

¹⁰⁹⁸ "Egy korszak vége: Kádár János temetése," *Múltkor* (2012). Kéri, *A Rendszerváltás Krónikája, 1988-2009*, 16-17.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Bohri, "A Reluctant and Fearful West -- 1989 and Its International Context."

¹¹⁰⁰ 14 million border crossing to Austria and Yugoslavia were registered between September 1988 and April 1989. Kiscsatári, "Annus Mirabilis. Part I," 58. György Dalos, "Magyaren in der Mariahilfer Straße (1989)," in *Vom Roten Stern zur Stephanskronen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997).

¹¹⁰¹ Judt, *Postwar*, 631. Hodosán mentioned the awe-inspiring visit of the Dalai Lama in May 1989 in their improvised office. Róza Hodosán, interviewed by the author 11 April 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

¹¹⁰² István Hegedűs, interviewed by the author, 17 May 2012, Budapest/ Hungary.

¹¹⁰³ Judt, *Postwar*, 631.

¹¹⁰⁴ Savranskaya, "The Logic of 1989: The Soviet Peaceful Withdrawal from Eastern Europe."

was the border opening.¹¹⁰⁵ Since Németh was re-negotiating its border statutes, border guards had stopped detaining East German citizens trying to get to Austria. Word spread and thousands of GDR citizens came to swamp the West German Embassies in Budapest and in Prague. The Németh government was negotiating a solution with the Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Foreign Minister Dietrich Genscher in Bonn, but not with Erich Honnecker in East Berlin. Mikhail Gorbachev in Moscow did not object.¹¹⁰⁶ A year later, on 4 October 1990, Helmut Kohl acknowledged the Hungarian contribution to the end of the Cold War when he declared Hungary “the first brick in the wall.”¹¹⁰⁷

Briefly, it looked as if Imre Pozsgay, who considered running for president in upcoming elections, could capitalize on the situation.¹¹⁰⁸ The MDF was organizing a pan-European picnic for August 1989 to publicly stage a border opening regardless of the fact that the actual removal of the fortification had already begun months earlier. Initially, Pozsgay and the Austrian heir apparent Otto von Habsburg were scheduled to lead the ceremony. However, the symbolic significance of the event rendered their participation unacceptable. Instead, on 20 August 1989, Austria’s Chancellor Alois Mock and Hungary’s Foreign Minister Gyula Horn cut open a piece of the border fence near Sopron. Ironically, two politicians, who had in fact contributed little to the preceding negotiations, presided over their symbolic conclusion. After weeks of intense

¹¹⁰⁵ Marianna Kiscsatári, "Annus Mirabilis .The Year 1989 in Photos. Part 2: Two Funerals," *Hungarian Quarterly*, no. 194 (2009): 16-18. “Der zweite Tod des János Kádár (1991),” in György Dalos, *Ungarn. Vom Roten Stern zur Stephanskronen*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 143-49.

¹¹⁰⁶ Oplatka, *Der erste Riss in der Mauer*, 98-99. "Explodiert die DDR? Massenflucht aus Honeckers Sozialismus," *Der Spiegel* 43, no. 33 (1989).

¹¹⁰⁷ Walter Mayr, "Der erste Stein," *ibid.*, no. 22 (2009).

¹¹⁰⁸ Klaus Reinhardt and Peter Schille, "Wir wollen die Rückkehr nach Europa," *ibid.* 43, no. 27 (1989).

negotiations, the East Germans were granted safe passage to West Germany on 11 September 1989.¹¹⁰⁹

On October 6, the MSZMP dissolved and reconstituted itself as MSZP – dropping the “worker” from its name. *Der Spiegel* celebrated this event as “so far the most spectacular success of the reformers around state secretary Imre Pozsgay. [...] For the first time in history has a ruling Communist party voluntarily resigned from power.”¹¹¹⁰ On 23 October 1989, the anniversary of the revolution, from the balcony of parliament, Mátyás Szűros declared Hungary a republic.¹¹¹¹ The Roundtable had concluded that free and democratic elections would take place the following spring.

The most controversial issue during the immediate transition period was the election of the president. The Free Democrats and FIDESZ, the two liberal parties, worried about MDF’s close ties to Imre Pozsgay, who enjoyed great popularity at home and abroad. To prevent a deal like the Polish compromise of “Your president, our prime minister,” the SZDSZ and FIDESZ pushed for a referendum, the so-called ‘Four-Yes-Referendum’ in November 1989, which MDF boycotted.¹¹¹² László Rajk explains:

Concerning the ‘four yes,’ a directly elected president is not possible in [a constitution modeled on Germany]. Of course it was a political move. [It] was a kind of tool for the MSZP, the old party, to reach over the [break of 1989] and get into parliament, stay close to power and keep part of the power. That was the compromise of MDF [...] – of course we were afraid that it would result in an overlap of governmental power and the old.¹¹¹³

¹¹⁰⁹ Oplatka, *Der erste Riss in der Mauer*, 155-62.

¹¹¹⁰ “Reformgegner sammeln sich,” *Der Spiegel* 43, no. 45 (1989). Several leading members, e.g. Károly Grósz and János Berecz, did not want to affiliate with the new-old party. A month later, 1,000 members decided to continue the MSZMP – a party that a year earlier still had a membership of around 800,000.

¹¹¹¹ Kéri, *A Rendszerváltás Krónikája, 1988-2009*, 18-19.

¹¹¹² (MTI), “Húsz éve volt a négyigenes népszavazás,” *Múltkor* (2009). Tamas, *From Dissident to Party Politics*, 90-91.

¹¹¹³ László Rajk, interviewed by the author, 26 January 2012, Budapest, Hungary. Also Mink, *The Defendant: The State*, 102-03.

The referendum tied together four issues: the election of the president, the dissolution of the workers' militia, disclosure of MSZMP's assets, and the removal of party organizations from the work place. Formulated in such a way, the referendum ended in the opposition's favor and presidential elections were delayed until after the parliamentary elections of March 1990.¹¹¹⁴ Soon after the referendum, it turned out the Free Democrats' concerns had been justified: In late December, 'Fekete Doboz' – Hungarian for black box – an independent organization documenting the transition, secretly filmed documents in the Ministry of the Interior's State Security offices proving that the authorities had wiretapped the SZDSZ' and FIDESZ' offices. Moreover, Fekete Doboz showed shredders destroying vast amounts of files. The opposition parties announced the findings on 5 January 1990. The scandal became known as Duna-gate.¹¹¹⁵

On 9 December 1989, the Council of the Fondation pour une entraide intellectuelle européenne convened its bi-annual meeting in Budapest.¹¹¹⁶ Annette Laborey had explored ways to continue if they reoriented their work towards Romania, Bulgaria, and East Germany. Jacques Rupnik urged the Fondation to aid in the reforms of higher education in Czechoslovakia, and Garton Ash suggested the Fondation might help

¹¹¹⁴ According to MTI, 58% of eligible voters participated (i.e. approx. 4,5 million). However, whereas the latter three questions were clearly decided by 95%, the one on the presidential elections was divided almost 50-50. (MTI), "Húsz éve volt a négyigemes népszavazás."

¹¹¹⁵ Renata Uitz, "Communist Secret Services on the Screen: The Adventures of the Duna-gate Scandal in and Beyond Hungarian Media," in *Past for the Eyes: Museums and Cinema in Reshaping the Communist Era*, ed. Oksana Sarkisova and Péter Ápor (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008). György Dalos, "Ungarische Rhapsodie auf einen Geheimdienst. Die Budapester Schnüffellaffäre 1990," in *Ungarn. Vom Roten Stern zur Stephanskronen*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997).

¹¹¹⁶ Present for the meeting in Budapest on December 9, 1989: François Bondy, Christopher Schönberger, Annette Laborey, Liliane Thorn-Petit, Adam Watson, Timothy Garton Ash, Tilman Spengler, Jacques Rupnik, Antoine de Tarlé (représentant François-Régis Hutin), Francis X. Sutton (ex officio). "Réunion du Conseil de la Fondation, le 9 décembre 1989 à Budapest," HU OSA FEIE 27'4 Réunions du Conseil de Fondation, 1975-1991.

countries further east by bringing in ‘successful’ dissidents from Hungary and Poland. Although full of ideas, the Council finalized its plans to dissolve by the end of 1991.¹¹¹⁷

When the Fondation submitted its annual report for 1989 in early 1990, it pleaded discretion: “On the request of our advisors and friends, we would prefer, regardless of the liberalization in East Europe, not to disclose the identity of our grantees, at least with regard to the elections that will take place this year.”¹¹¹⁸ It was the time of elections in Poland and Hungary, and the former dissident newspapers *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Beszélő* had received support, which Laborey worried might be used against them.¹¹¹⁹

The Alliance of Free Democrats presented itself as a determined, ‘Western’, liberal party.¹¹²⁰ Not only did the SZDSZ need to distinguish itself clearly from the MDF and the MSZP, but also avoid association with some of its members’ Marxist past.¹¹²¹ In light of more recent developments, Gáspár Miklós Tamás admits:

The MDF was not that bad. [...] [In the eighties,] We considered them our allies [although] we were conscious of all the gossip, we were exceedingly polite to these people because we knew they were going to play an important role because traditionally they have the ear of the middle classes and take into account to possibly have them as allies rather than enemies.¹¹²²

¹¹¹⁷ János Kis for instance would travel to Bulgaria in April 1990. See letter by Annette Laborey to Francis X. Sutton about her trip in the spring of 1989, 5 October 1989, HU OSA 26’4, Corresp. U.S.A. 1987-1989, Divider: S.

Nevertheless, the liquidation was decided for the end of 1991. “Réunion du Conseil de la Fondation, le 9 décembre 1989 à Budapest,” HU OSA FEIE 27’4 Réunions du Conseil de Fondation, 1975-1991.

¹¹¹⁸ “Rapport d’activité 1989,” p. 2. HU OSA FEIE 27’2 Rapports d’activité 1985-1991.

¹¹¹⁹ “Bourses 1990,” HU OSA FEIE 27’5 Listes des boursiers et documents divers [sd].

¹¹²⁰ The campaign slogan “We know, we dare, we do” [“Tudjuk, merjük, tesszük!”] poignantly echoed the SZDSZ’s self-understanding. Even *Der Spiegel* called their program a “brutal liberalism.” Mareike Spiess-Hohnholz, “Wir wagen es, wir tun es,” *Der Spiegel* 44, no. 12 (1990). Bálint Magyar and Iván Pető, “Profi amatőrök – amatőr profik 2. Szociológiai csapdák és az SZDSZ - 1990.,” *Népszabadság*, 10 February 2012.

¹¹²¹ Ripp, *Szabad Demokraták*, 38-39.

¹¹²² Gáspár Miklós Tamás, interviewed by the author, 12 December 2011, Budapest, Hungary.

The MDF's campaign emphasized family values, private property, and the country's Christian tradition.¹¹²³ Its future coalition partner, the Independent Smallholders Party, succinctly declared its priorities: God, Family, Homeland.¹¹²⁴ József Antall steered the MDF towards a Christian conservatism similar to the West German CDU or the Austrian ÖVP. Both Western parties supported the MDF. Erhard Busek for instance remembers: "I was at the second meeting of the Magyar Demokráták Forum in Esztergom. At the time, Csurka was just emerging. The future Prime Minister Antall shrewdly pushed him aside. Antall was the cleverest of them all."¹¹²⁵ However, as Jan-Werner Müller notes "[despite] many hopeful predictions by West European conservatives, Christian democracy did not flower in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989."¹¹²⁶

However, the MDF was a catchall party accommodating conservatives and right-wing nationalists alike. During the campaign, some MDF members circulated an anti-Semitic pamphlet titled *Fathers and Sons*, which doubted the SZDSZ's dissident past and their national loyalty. The authors claimed that the Free Democrats had only been a crypto-opposition, protected by their parents, some of who had been MSZMP members.¹¹²⁷ It implied a Jewish conspiracy spanning from the Stalinist terror in the 1950s to the Democratic Opposition of the 1980s and the Free Democrats in the 1990s. Two years later, in *A Few Thoughts and Social Ideas*, István Csurka, who had been elected to the MDF board with 40% of the votes, spun this anti-Semitic argument further

¹¹²³ The most emblematic poster in 1990 showed the tricolor coat of arms with the apostolic cross and the crown of Saint Stephen bursting through the emblem of the People's Republic.

¹¹²⁴ Ildikó Vásáry, "Comrades, it's over! The Election Campaign in Hungary in 1990," *Anthropology Today* 7, no. 4 (1991).

¹¹²⁵ Erhard Busek, interviewed by the author, 7 February 2012, Vienna, Austria.

¹¹²⁶ Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Thought in Twentieth-Century Europe*, 238.

¹¹²⁷ Ferenc Grezsa, *Apák és Fiúk*. Budapest: Forum, March 1990. Mink, *The Defendant: The State*, 110. Magyar and Pető, "Profí amatőrök – amatőr profik 2.."

suggesting the Magyars' perennial fight against Jewish infiltration and suppression, ranging from the avant-garde artists of the early twentieth century to the IMF.¹¹²⁸

Such polemics confirmed the concerns that had encouraged the workshop series at the IUC in Dubrovnik in April 1989. In the spring of 1990, the Soros Foundation sponsored another, far bigger series.¹¹²⁹ By then, most of the former dissidents had taken an active role in the negotiated revolutions of 1989, and Eastern Europe had seen its first democratic elections. The IUC workshops reflected these tremendous changes in content and personnel, when Péter Hanák and Carl Schorske, Sándor Radnoti, György Litván, and Gábor Gyáni, and Jacques Rupnik, and a dozen others met to discuss the political, economic, and historical implications of "Central Europe in Transformation."¹¹³⁰

Most of the workshops dealt with economics. Márton Tárdos discussed "The Message of the Lost Future: Knowledge, Morals and Politics in Economics" with János Mátyás Kovács from the IWM, István Rév, János Kis, Václav Klaus from Prague, and others. The controversial, young star economist Jeffrey Sachs took a break from counseling the new Polish government to follow Soros's invitations and attend the workshop "Transition from Dictatorship to Freedom: Systemic Reforms and Economic Processes."¹¹³¹

¹¹²⁸ István Csurka, *Nehány Gondolat és Nyolc Társgondolat* (Budapest: Magyar Forum, 1992).

¹¹²⁹ The steering committee had changed: Jan Havranek, Prague, Bill Newton-Smith, Oxford, Boris Raushenbakh, Moscow, Włodzimierz Siwinski, Warsaw, Ante Stamać, Zagreb, Tibor Vámos, Budapest, Kathy Wilkes, Oxford. Posters in folder "IUC Posters 1974-1991, Public Lectures."

¹¹³⁰ Among others, the Hungarian-born Victor Karady from Paris, the Hungarian émigré Miklós Molnár from Geneva, the art historian Otto Urban from Prague, Endre Bojtár with a seminar on "Totalitarianism and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe and Historical Fiction since the 1930s."

¹¹³¹ Also Evgeny Gajdar from Moscow, and Albert O. Hirschman from Princeton. Posters in folder "IUC Posters 1974-1991, Public Lectures." Soros, *Underwriting Democracy*, 30-31. Sachs recommended 'shock therapy' to Finance Minister Leszek Balcerowicz. In a 2002 documentary, Sachs exhilarated recalls his work in Poland. A decade later, a decade of severe criticism of 'shock therapy' he justified his actions in a quite different tone. Joseph Stanislaw Daniel Yergin, "Commanding Heights. The Battle for the World Economy," (PBS, 2002). Jeffrey Sachs, "What I did in Russia," (2012), <http://jeffsachs.org/2012/03/what-i-did-in-russia/>.

Meanwhile in Budapest, despite their dissident credentials and extensive campaigning, the SZDSZ only came in second in the parliamentary elections of May 1990.¹¹³² László Rajk, Miklós Haraszti, Magyar Bálint, Iván Pető and the Fifty-Sixers Miklós Vásárhelyi and Imre Mécs as well as Béla Király, who had re-located to Hungary, became MPs. Róza Hodosán was among the 28 women delegates who entered the 386-member-house.¹¹³³ The lawyer Alajos Dornbach was soon elected the Assembly's speaker; during the municipal elections, Gábor Demszky became mayor of Budapest, a post he retained despite corruption scandals until 2010.

In the session of the first democratically elected parliament, on the first motions was a bill by the center-right governing coalition introducing a ban on abortion. As dissidents, the members of the SZDSZ had already protested a similar plan in 1973; they successfully defeated it again, this time in parliament, in 1993.¹¹³⁴ Hungary's demographics had shown worrisome developments for decades.¹¹³⁵ Some MDF deputies adhered to a "male chauvinistic agenda" that blamed women – or rather feminism – for the disintegration of the traditional family, the country's demographic decline and the high rate of alcoholism among Hungarian men.¹¹³⁶

Fierce debates ensued over the choice of national symbols. Already in 1989, the reform communists had declared October 23rd, the day of the student strikes at the

¹¹³² Magyar and Pető, "Profí amatőrök – amatőr profik 2.."

¹¹³³ In 2005, three of the female MPs of the early 1990s gave a critical interview with the telling title: "It's enough if you smile." Borbála Kriza and Szilvia Szilágyi, "'Elég ha mosolyogsz'" (Hodosán Róza, Pelle Andrea és Szelényi Zsuzsanna), *Magyar Narancs*, no. 21 (2005), http://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/eleg_ha_mosolyogsz_hodosan_roza_pelle_andrea_es_szelenyi_zsuzsanna-64069. Yudit Kiss, "The Second 'No': Women in Hungary," *Feminist Review*, no. 39 (1991): 53.

¹¹³⁴ See the protest letter of 1973: Dalos, *Archipel Gulasch*, 94-97.

¹¹³⁵ See e.g. Radio Free Europe, Background Report 122, "Hungary's Disquieting Demographic Trends", 3 July 1984. HU OSA 300-8-3-3975.

¹¹³⁶ Kiss, "The Second 'No': Women in Hungary." László Kürti, "The Wingless Eros of Socialism: Nationalism and Sexuality in Hungary," *Anthropological Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (1991).

beginning of the Hungarian revolution of 1956, and March 15th, the beginning of the war of independence against the Habsburg rulers in 1848, national holidays. They remained in place uncontested. The newly elected government added August 20th, the day of Saint Stephen, to the calendar. The crown of Saint Stephen, the mythic king who had Christianized the Magyars, featured prominently in the MDF's symbolic landscape. The crown was a contested issue because opponents argued sovereignty did not derive from Saint Stephen but from the people.¹¹³⁷ Instead of dealing with the faltering economy, historical symbolism seemed to dominate the parliamentary agenda, while inflation skyrocketed and a boycott by cab drivers shut down the capital in October 1990.¹¹³⁸

In August 1990, parliament convened to elect Hungary's president. Árpád Göncz, member of SZDSZ, was widely respected and had been a fellow party member of József Antall Sr., the prime minister's father, in the Independent Smallholder's Party before 1948.¹¹³⁹ Göncz had been a member of the TIB and the Hungarian Writers' Association and – similar to the late Ferenc Donáth – a mediator between the Democratic Opposition and the moderate *népi* writers. He was the calm force that could listen and forge compromise – qualifications for the highest office. "Göncz is the best Hungarian who ever existed," István Deák exclaimed.¹¹⁴⁰ "In 1990, Göncz built the bridge between the

¹¹³⁷ The small coat of arms has seven red-and-white strips on the dexter, representing the seven tribes that supposedly settled in the Carpathian basin in 896, with the four red ones symbolizing the rivers Danube, Tisza, Drava, and Szava. On the sinister, it carries an apostolic cross on three hills representing the three mountain ranges of historic Hungary, Tatra, Fatra, and Matra.

¹¹³⁸ George P. Fletcher, "The Day Budapest Shut Down," *New York Review of Books* 37, no. 19 (1990).

¹¹³⁹ Árpád Göncz: "Ideas have a Longer Half-life," excerpts from the interview with András B. Hegedűs, (14 February 1988). Oral History Archive, 56-os Intézet. János Rainer, "Submerging or Clinging on Again? József Antall, Father and Son, in Hungary after 1956," *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 1 (2005).

¹¹⁴⁰ István Deák, interviewed by the author, 20 February 2012, New York, USA.

different groups among the elite that [had] changed the regime,” said Sándor Révész. In office until 2000, he has remained one of Hungary’s most popular politicians.¹¹⁴¹

In the meantime, Prime Minister Antall was losing control over his own party. Not only Csurka, but also Sándor Csoóri had joined the ranks of anti-Semites. He wrote:

The possibility for a spiritual-psychological welding [of the Jews and non-Jews] came to an end with the Soviet Republic, the Horthy era, and especially the Holocaust. Naturally there always were and will be [Jews like] Antal Szerb, [Miklós] Radnóti, [...], Ottó Orbán, György Konrád, [...] but one feels ever more resolutely nowadays that reverse assimilationist tendencies are surfacing in the country: liberal Hungarian Jewry wishes to ‘assimilate ‘ the Magyars in style and thought.¹¹⁴²

This “reverse assimilation” of Magyars corresponded to the Jewish conspiracy Csurka had been propagating. It would not be a stretch to argue that the dismissive portrayal of the populists in the Western press in the 1980s contributed to this skewed worldview. For a populist like Csurka who resented the West, the international support network, including George Soros’ prominent role and friendship with so many of the cosmopolitan, Jewish-born dissidents, confirmed his belief in a Jewish conspiracy just as much as he preferred to point out the party memberships of some of the leading dissidents’ parents. Throughout the twentieth century, Hungarian anti-Semites had made the claim that the Jews spelt Hungary’s doom.¹¹⁴³ They had been accused of damaging the integrity of the Magyar nation as well as the Hungarian territory, which in the 1920s and in the 1980s had figured in the irredentism surrounding Treaty of Trianon. Sándor

¹¹⁴¹ Sándor Révész, "5 + 5", *Beszélő* 7, no. 25 (1995), <http://beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek/5-5>. Göncz’s approval rating have been consistently between 70 to 80%. Áron Kovács, "90 éves az első szabadon választott köztársasági elnök," *Origo*(2012), <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20120210-90-eves-goncz-arpad-korabbi-koztarsasagi-elnok.html>; Kéri, *A Rendszerváltás Krónikája, 1988-2009*.

¹¹⁴² Sándor Csoóri, *Nappali Hold*. Budapest: Püski, 1991. Excerpt quoted in Randolph Braham, "Hungary," in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. David S. Wyman and Charles H. Rosenzweig (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 215.

¹¹⁴³ Hanebrink, "Transnational Culture War: Christianity, Nation, and the Judeo-Bolshevik Myth in Hungary, 1890–1920," 55.

Révész explained: “The Jews are considered the propagators of alien values and principles that appear in Hungarian guise, and they are also described as the champions of continuity of otherwise conflicting (Bolshevik and liberal) systems.”¹¹⁴⁴

VI.2. Back to Europe: The Transformation Gone Wrong?

VI.2.1. Hungary’s Renegotiated Past

József Antall, who passed away in office, has left a mixed legacy about his ideological convictions: on the one hand, as a devout pro-European, he had initiated Hungary’s rapprochement with its northwestern neighbors in pursuit of joining the dual Western alliance systems of NATO and the European Union. On the other hand, his rhetorical blunders and unwillingness to confront the anti-Semites and xenophobes in his own party raised doubts about his strategic competence and political sincerity.¹¹⁴⁵ Within weeks of having been elected, Antall had pulled Hungary out of the Warsaw Pact; in November 1990, he visited the NATO headquarters in Brussels.¹¹⁴⁶ In June 1991, the last Soviet troops left the country. In December 1992, Antall argued: “This is not no-man’s land for European security [...] is inconceivable if the Central European region is not secured.”¹¹⁴⁷

In December 1991, he invited Václav Havel, by then president of Czechoslovakia, and Poland’s President Lech Wałęsa to the medieval castle above the Danube River in

¹¹⁴⁴ Sándor Révész, “Csurka in Hungarian Politics,” 19 April 1993, manuscript in HU OSA 336-0-4 Box 8.

¹¹⁴⁵ László Deme, “Perceptions and Problems of Hungarian Nationality and National Identity in the early 1990s,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 12, no. 2 (1998). Agnes Batory, *The Politics of EU Accession. Ideology, party strategy and the European question in Hungary* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 58.

¹¹⁴⁶ László Valki, “Hungary’s Road to NATO,” *Hungarian Quarterly* XL, no. 154 (1999). Kéri, A *Rendszerváltás Krónikája, 1988-2009*, 30.

¹¹⁴⁷ Premier Antall interviewed on the party, the media, national security, economy, Hungarian TV, Budapest, 1735 GMT, 12 Dec 1992. RFE Weekly Report, 16 December 1992, HU OSA 301-0-3 Box 223.

Visegrád, where they founded the 'Visegrád Group' aimed at coordinating the member states' transformation and their "return to Europe."¹¹⁴⁸ Intellectually, Visegrád had been prepared by the dissidents' talk of Central Europe in the eighties; practically, it never developed beyond a consultative body for the countries' negotiations for membership in NATO and the European Union, which was founded barely two months after the initial meeting, in February 1992.

Ironically, the political integration of Central Europe happened without the input from the former dissidents who had made the concept popular in the 1980s. In late 1991, the German Association of Book Sellers' awarded György Konrád its prestigious Peace Prize. He succeeded Václav Havel, who had received it in the previous year. Now that they had found themselves on 'the right side of history,' such established bodies enjoyed adorning themselves with the former dissidents' prestige. Additionally, these dissidents had paved the way for a sober discussion, free from resentments and revisionism, about German culture in the East. They had opened up the possibility of German unification without evoking the daunting spectre of an imperialist German hegemon and German colonization of the East.¹¹⁴⁹ Moreover, the former dissidents had shown moral grandeur in explicitly rejecting revenge against their former tormentors and advocated for a negotiated change for regime. In October 1991, Konrád earned the following appraisal:

[We] honor with this award Konrád's concept of Central Europe, this autonomous space with century-old political and cultural traditions that is an integral part of Europe. Konrád's thinking and writing aspires to overcome the division of Europe resulting from the Second World War. At the same time, he opposes omnipotence of the state and defends the ethos of a civil society, which concentrates on the individual, freedom and social responsibilities. In emphasizing Europe's autonomy and independence from military super powers,

¹¹⁴⁸ Visegrád was chosen for their meeting to unite the three Central European countries in the spirit of the union between the Polish, Bohemian and Hungarian kings conceived there in 1335.

¹¹⁴⁹ Thum, "Mythische Landschaften."

Konrád has masterminded and formulated the way to a peaceful transformation of Central and Eastern Europe.¹¹⁵⁰

At the same time, as politicians appropriated the concept of Central Europe, Konrád – representative of a dissident minority – was credited with ‘masterminding’ the revolutions of 1989. Unlike in Poland and Czechoslovakia, however, apart from the four-yes-referendum in November 1989, the former Hungarian Democratic Opposition, held little sway in the political decisions about the transformation of the region. The rapprochement with NATO and the EU were undeniable successes of the Antall administration, but his policies preferences did not root in the Third Way inherent in Konrád’s *Antipolitics*. Instead, Antall was a classic pro-Western Christian conservative. The dissidents’ ideas about Central Europe diminished to a prelude to Western integration, stripped off their implications of reforming the political systems and social conditions in both halves of Europe.

Conceptually, evoking a common Central European legacy in the 1980s had moved the region further to the West of the geocultural map. However, this hierarchization implied a new problematic, arbitrary division of the continent, which the Balkan historian Maria Todorova has aptly and widely criticized.¹¹⁵¹ The post-1989 embodiment of Central Europe, the Visegrád Group, relegated Romania, Bulgaria and the other former socialist states to third rate ‘Eastern’ and thus backward countries.

Domestic opposition to Antall’s administration concentrated on two intertwined issues: the Democratic Charta of 1991 and the reburial of Miklós Horthy in 1993. In

¹¹⁵⁰ Reprint in "Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels 1991. György Konrád," ed. Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels(Frankfurt am Main1991).

¹¹⁵¹ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, updated ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Timothy Garton Ash, Michael Mertes, and Dominique Moisi, "Let the East Europeans in!," *New York Review of Books* 38, no. 17 (1991).

August 1991, an MDF delegate published a controversial report on the role of the state media.¹¹⁵² For over a decade, the Democratic Opposition had battled against for an independent press. In the new Hungary, it seemed to come under attack again. To preempt the government presumably seizing control of the public TV and radio, János Kis proposed an open charter to mobilize democratically minded citizens.¹¹⁵³ The Free Democrats convinced György Konrád to be the face of the Democratic Charter.¹¹⁵⁴

Konrád, since 1990 also the president of the International PEN, was widely recognized as *the* Hungarian advocate for peace and cooperation.¹¹⁵⁵ International exposure seemed to be guaranteed. A few days before Konrád received the Peace Prize in Frankfurt on 23 September, the Democratic Charta appeared in several Hungarian dailies. The fear of state control was used as a vehicle to warn of a possible counter-revolution to the accomplishments of 1991.¹¹⁵⁶ All of the Charter's seventeen points started with "Democracy will only be achieved if...".¹¹⁵⁷ Although it was intended as a non-partisan movement, the Charta's spokespersons were mostly associated with the SZDSZ. When they held the first press conference in the Hunia Movie Theatre in October, already over 1,500 had signed the Charter.¹¹⁵⁸

¹¹⁵² Imre Konya, the former leader of the Independent Lawyers' Forum and now member of parliament for the MDF, authored the report. See newspaper clipping of Konya's study in *Magyar Hírlap*, "Konya Imre tanulmányának teljes szövege," n.n., HU OSA354-1-1 Box 1, Folder 2.

¹¹⁵³ The SZDSZ president János Kis had refused to run during the elections and thus has never been a member of parliament. On 23 November 1991, Kis resigned from his post as SZDSZ president; he remained in the Alliance, but did not assume a political office. He left the SZDSZ in 2009.

¹¹⁵⁴ Kéri, *A Rendszerváltás Krónikája, 1988-2009*, 31.

¹¹⁵⁵ Letter by Burghel Zeeh, October 1991, DLA Marbach Suhrkamp, Leitz File: Autor. György Konrád. Von 1977 bis...

¹¹⁵⁶ Bálint Magyar and Iván Pető, "Profí amatőrök – amatőr profik 4. Szociológiai csapdák és az SZDSZ – 1992-1993," *Népszabadság* (2012).

¹¹⁵⁷ Fletcher, "The Day Budapest Shut Down." Dalos, "Die Budapester Schnüffelaffäre 1990."

¹¹⁵⁸ Sándor Radnóti, Iván Vitányi, the FIDESZ founder Gábor Fodor, András Gerő, András Bozóki, Iván Pető, writers Mihály Korniss and Miklós Meszöly, Mátyás Vince, and Tamás Bauer. HU OSA 354-1-1, Box 1.

Similar worries dominated the discussions at the final conference of the Fondation in September 1991. The preparations had consumed months. In early 1989, Ford Foundation extended a tie-off grant of \$270,000 for the last two years of its existence.¹¹⁵⁹ Several reasons had pointed to Cracow as the perfect venue: first of all, it was one of the center's of the European Renaissance, and former home to great European thinkers. Second, unlike Warsaw it was not inundated by "transition to democracy" events. Third, it had always been dear to Konstantin Jelenski, the Fondation's co-founder who had passed away in 1987. And "[aside] from its beauties, Krakow [sic] is particularly appealing to us because one of the oldest friends and advisors of the Fondation, Prof. Jacek Wozniakowski, is now the mayor of Krakow," Laborey explained.¹¹⁶⁰

Adam Michnik had proposed the title for the conference: "Post-totalitarian mentalities and culture."¹¹⁶¹ Laborey embraced the theme, because it also reflected the Fondation's *raison-d'être*:

The totalitarian world of central Europe is now over. It can now be studied with the distance of an observer using the experience of a participant. In totalitarian societies, contact with the cultural and political world of western civilisation were crucial to the formation of the independent elites, which are now becoming the political and intellectual establishment. [...] Western civilisation is [...] becoming a primordial point of reference and controversy.¹¹⁶²

Some of the Fondation's friends could not attend because of the new responsibilities they had taken on. For instance, János Kis was unavailable as it coincided with a SZDSZ faction meeting. He wrote to Laborey in French:

¹¹⁵⁹ Grant Number 840-0228B, Diane Galloway to François Bondy, 28 February 1989, HU OSA FEIE 26'2 Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991, Folder: Ford 1989.

¹¹⁶⁰ Letter by Laborey to Margo Picken, 24 October 1990. HU OSA FEIE 26'2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991. Box 5, Folder Ford Foundation 1990.

¹¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶² Revised and final proposal attached to fax from Laborey to Michalski, 30 November 1990. Dossier: "Marek Beylin (l'histoire de la Fondation) 1990/ 1991," HU OSA FEIE 26'2 Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991 Box 5.

I am truly sorry I cannot be there for the big ‘jamborée’ [boyscout meeting] in Cracow. You see, this is the fate of ‘intellos’ who pass from underground to great politics. You should know [...], however, that the help which the Fondation and you yourself have given me through these difficult years remains invaluable and unforgotten.¹¹⁶³

Miklós Haraszti excused himself for the same reason. György Konrád was caught up in Geneva, and heading to Frankfurt for the Peace Prize ceremony. Presidential obligations kept Václav Havel in Prague, but his personal advisor Pavel Tigrid and deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Martin Palouš attended.

The three-day conference in Krakow in September 1991 did not fall short of celebrities, and Laborey did not shortchange the participants. After all, the Ford Foundation had agreed to allocate \$80,000 to the final conference alone.¹¹⁶⁴ Among the eighty participants were all of the former and current members of the Fondation’s board.¹¹⁶⁵ The Fondation took care of accommodation, transportation and catering. Every available hotel was booked out when the Fondation’s illustrious friends descended upon Cracow.¹¹⁶⁶

The émigré scholars Leszek Kołakowski and Alexander Smolar and the Hungarians clique, the editors of the *Magyar Füzetek*, flew in from Paris.¹¹⁶⁷ The fellows of the IWM in Vienna also participated.¹¹⁶⁸ Andrej Plešu, former grantee and by then Romanian Minister of Culture, attended. Despite the political brawl at home, many

¹¹⁶³ Karadi informed Laborey in a fax on September 9, 1991. Fax from János Kis to Laborey, 18 September 1991. HU OSA FEIE 19’1 colloque final Cracovie 1991.

¹¹⁶⁴ Grant No. 840-0228-3, revised approved budget, Diane Galloway to François Bondy, 8 October 1991. HU OSA FEIE 26’2, Ford Foundation corresp. 1983-1991.

¹¹⁶⁵ Jacques Rupnik, Timothy Garton Ash, Christopher Schönberger, Tilman Spengler, Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, François Bondy, Liliane Thorn-Petit, Adam Watson.

¹¹⁶⁶ See last minute arrangements, exchange between Monika Janowska and Annette Laborey, throughout September 1991. HU OSA FEIE, 19’1 Colloque de Cracovie, Septembre 1991, Box 1.

¹¹⁶⁷ Pierre Kende, István Kemény, Ferenc Fejtő.

¹¹⁶⁸ Krzysztof Michalski, Klaus Nellen and the IWM’s most recent fellow, Ivan Krastev.

former leading dissidents came over from Hungary.¹¹⁶⁹ The Polish locals, former leaders of the opposition, made their way to Cracow, too.¹¹⁷⁰ Robert Silvers from the *New York Review of Books* was invited, but did not join the Ford Foundation officer Margo Picken and AFICE president Francis X. Sutton on their way to Europe.¹¹⁷¹ Laborey's family – her husband, her father and her sister, who had all made generous donations to the Fondation for years – also attended.

Laborey, “an altogether unique, because experienced and motivated human being” in the words of Marion Dönhoff, had planned plenty of leisure activities and made sure the \$80,000 would be well spent.¹¹⁷² With a smirk, Klaus Nellen remembered Laborey's penchant for the exquisite:

It was a very intellectual event, very interesting, all the dissident stars showed up. [...] there was also this phenomenal reception in the old market hall, which stretched for over a kilometer. Unbelievable! [...] and of course she wanted to serve only the best, especially French cheese, which she imported specifically for the occasion. [...] But then it was confiscated at the border and the Polish border guards disposed off it ‘for sanitary reasons’ because it was ‘rotten.’ The delicious Roquefort! [laughs]¹¹⁷³

Undisclosed photos of the conference attest Nellen's positive memories of the days in Cracow. On 26 September 1991, István Eörsi delivered the opening address:

¹¹⁶⁹ Éva Karadi, László Rajk, his partner Judit Kerek, György Bence and Mária Kovács, János Kenedi, István Eörsi as well as MTV president Elemér Hankiss. Laborey coordinated with the Hungarians through Éva Karadi and the office of SZDSZ. See the exchanges on e.g. 2 April, 14 May, 12 June, 1 July 1991. HU OSA FEIE 19'1, colloque final Cracovie 1991 Box A.

¹¹⁷⁰ Adam Michnik, Bronisław Geremek, Barbara Torunczyk, Jan Litynski, Josef Tischner and Marcin Krol.

¹¹⁷¹ List of participants, “Post-totalitarian mentalities and culture,” as of 28 April 1991, with additional hand-written remarks, compared with the letter by Annette Laborey to Monika Janowski with a list of hotel room reservations, 18 September 1991, and individual correspondences. HU OSA FEIE 19'1, colloque final Cracovie 1991 Box A.

¹¹⁷² The participants partook in an exclusive tour through the Jan van Vermeer van Delft exhibition in the Gothic Wawel Castle, a banquet in the hall of the Sukiennice, the renaissance-style Cloth Hall, and a picnic at the foot of the Pieskowa Skala, a limestone cliff topped with a renaissance castle overlooking the Prądnik river. The conferences ended with a dinner party in the Collegium Maius, the university's 14th-century building complex.

¹¹⁷³ Klaus Nellen, interviewed by the author, 3 June 2013, Vienna, Austria.

The outbreak of freedom [...] took Hungarians by surprise. We could not pretend, like the Poles, that what happened was the fruit of our own opposition. The communist party state had grown so weak that it could no longer bear its own weight. The initial euphoria lasted a little while but it soon became evident that a leap from a servile subject / Untertan/ to a citizen exercising his rights / citoyen/ was not easy. Hungary had ever been painfully short of citizens.¹¹⁷⁴

Eörsi's assessment reflects what Timothy Garton Ash thereafter labelled a 'refolution' in Hungary and Poland, a combination of reform and revolution, which he described as "a strong and essential element of change 'from above', led by an enlightened minority in the still ruling communist parties."¹¹⁷⁵ The Hungarian playwright remarked upon the dilemma of 1989: "The hope spread that we eastern Europeans would soon catch up with the West – that we all could join Europe. This was generally taken to mean that standards of freedom achieved in the West would soon entail Western standards of living as well."¹¹⁷⁶ In late 1991, that hope had been shattered, the East was not catching up.

Eörsi's analysis became the lead essay in a 1993 Suhrkamp collection about the dramatic developments in Hungary, which bore his words "The Shock of Freedom" in its title.¹¹⁷⁷ In Cracow, Pierre Kende shared Eörsi's disheartened view and resorted to the Enlightenment ideals of democracy as cure for the surging nationalism in Eastern Europe:

One has to relativize the so-called national traditions which originate more in rhetoric and pious wishes than the real state of collective conscience. Nothing is more uncertain, fleeting and ill than this conscience. One has to invest, now that the moment of healing has come, not in the exploration of the past, [...] but in the reconstitution of the national collective on the basis of civic virtues inherent

¹¹⁷⁴ Eörsi, "The Shock of Freedom," HU OSA FEIE 19'2 Colloque de Cracovie, Septembre 1991, Folder: Texte du Colloque Cracovie 1991. József Bayer and Rainer Deppe, eds., *Der Schock der Freiheit. Ungarn auf dem Weg in die Demokratie* (Frankfurt am Main: suhrkamp, 1993).

¹¹⁷⁵ Ash, *The Magic Lantern*, 14.

¹¹⁷⁶ Eörsi, "The Shock of Freedom," HU OSA FEIE 19'2 Colloque de Cracovie, Septembre 1991, Folder: Texte du Colloque Cracovie 1991.

¹¹⁷⁷ Bayer and Deppe, *Der Schock der Freiheit. Ungarn auf dem Weg in die Demokratie*.

to a democracy: the defense of rights, the toleration of difference and active solidarity (*liberté – égalité – fraternité*).¹¹⁷⁸

Decades in France had left a mark on Kende's political views. His recommendation for a healthy nation-state reflected what Jürgen Habermas had advanced in the 1980s in West Germany as 'Verfassungspatriotismus', constitutional patriotism. Like many other intellectuals, such as George Soros, Sir Ralf Dahrendorf and Karl von Schwarzenberg who had engaged with Eastern Europeans before 1989, Habermas had hoped for economic aid from the West to stabilize the region's fledgling democracies and ease over the hardships of transformation.¹¹⁷⁹

Marion Gräfin Dönhoff who delivered the final keynote speech was likewise torn between optimism and concern. Like Kende, she worried over the civic basis of the new post-Cold War order:

[...] what may determine the last decade of our century after lots of turmoil will, I think, not be military issues but economic aspects since the transformation in the East [...] poses innumerable difficulties. Incidentally, I assume Poland, CSFR and Hungary will now profit from the West's (mainly the USA's) deplorable lack of quick reaction vis-à-vis Gorbachev's situation before the coup. I think, more assistance for those countries will now be provided. But [...] whether a more humanistic spirit and more interest in culture will prevail, leaves, I believe, room for considerable doubt.¹¹⁸⁰

The influential *Die Zeit* editor refined her views in the only newspaper article that commemorated the Fondation's final conference:

¹¹⁷⁸ Pierre Kende, "Retour à la tradition... quelle tradition?" HU OSA FEIE 19' 2 Colloque de Cracovie, Septembre 1991, Folder: Texte du Colloque Cracovie 1991.

¹¹⁷⁹ Jürgen Habermas, "Der DM-Nationalismus," *Die Zeit*(1990), <http://www.zeit.de/1990/14/der-dm-nationalismus>. "Nach dem "Sozialismus" : Wie geht es weiter mit den neuen Demokratien in Europa? 93. Bergedorfer Gesprächskreis am 13. und 14. Juli 1991 im Schloß Bellevue, Berlin," in *Bergedorfer Gesprächskreis*(Körber Stiftung). Soros, *Underwriting Democracy*, 27.

¹¹⁸⁰ Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, "Towards one Europe of Culture," script written in Hamburg, 26 August 1991. HU OSA FEIE 19' 2 Colloque de Cracovie, Septembre 1991, Folder: Texte du Colloque Cracovie 1991. See Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, "Unter dem Schock der Freiheit," *Die Zeit*, 11 October 1991. It was only in December 1991 that Dönhoff's oeuvre was reviewed for the first time in the *New York Review of Books*. Gordon A. Craig, "Witness," review of Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, *New York Review of Books* 37, no. 19 (1991).

There in Cracow, I realized that nationalism, which we Westerners regard with a lot of skepticism, had been indispensable for the survival of the East Europeans. That was the only way they had been able to fight for their identity and finally achieve freedom. Now [...] everything depends on them returning to a form of normal liberalism.¹¹⁸¹

Despite the somber outlook that most presenters laid out, the mood was generally festive. After all, two of the most important goals had been achieved as Dönhoff emphasized: “Yalta has been overcome. The Cold war has ended and with it the absurd arms race.”¹¹⁸² The participants parted ways, nostalgic and full of memories, motivated to maintain the network and secure the accomplishments of 1989. As Dönhoff reminded her readers: “Although the countries of Eastern Europe are free today, they will need assistance – not only monetary – for a long time to come.”¹¹⁸³

Although the Foundation had come to an end, Laborey smoothly transitioned into a new, very similar assignment: In December 1991, she flew to New York for a meeting with George Soros.¹¹⁸⁴ For 1990, Soros had donated \$80,000 to the Foundation, his last grant to the organization. Laborey remarked: “for the most part [...] our past funders [are] turning to newer interests. [...] George Soros [...] is now investing exclusively in the foundations he has set up in Eastern Europe.”¹¹⁸⁵ That year, the Soros Foundation granted Ft 1 million to *Beszélő* (about US \$ 13,600) and Ft 2 million (about US \$ 27,200) for the popular Jewish magazine *Múlt és Jövő*.¹¹⁸⁶ But the synergy between Soros and Laborey,

¹¹⁸¹ Dönhoff, "Unter dem Schock der Freiheit."

¹¹⁸² Ibid.

¹¹⁸³ Dönhoff, "Unter dem Schock der Freiheit."

¹¹⁸⁴ Fax by Annette Laborey to Margo Picken, 6 December 1991. HU OSA FEIE 26'2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991. Box 5, Folder Ford 1991. See letters by Laborey to Soros, e.g. dated 31 March, 18 June, 15 September 1989, 18 December 1989. HU OSA FEIE 26'4, corresp. U.S.A. 1987-1989, Folder S. Aryeh Neier claims that in the summer of 1990, Laborey stayed at Soros's Long Island home, where she proposed opening up her own bar in Paris.

¹¹⁸⁵ Letter by Annette Laborey to Margo Picken, 24 October 1990. HU OSA FEIE 26'2, Ford-Foundation corresp. 1983-1991. Box 5, Folder Ford Foundation 1990.

¹¹⁸⁶ "Hungary. 1991 Report of Activities," Soros Foundation, Budapest. HU OSA 13-3-3 Box 4

who had provided many initial contacts for Soros's network, did not come to an end with the Foundation. In New York, Soros made her a splendid offer, which she happily accepted: She was to head the Paris office of Soros's newly constituted Open Society Institute.¹¹⁸⁷ Aryeh Neier remarked later:

Among the Westerners I know, I believe Annette did more than anyone else to bring about the transformation in Eastern Europe. George Soros was, of course, another of those in the West who had a part in the fall of communism. I place his support for Annette's efforts high on the list of his contributions.¹¹⁸⁸

But the team Laborey-Soros would not be complete without Neier himself. In 1992, Soros asked Aryeh Neier to head the Open Society Institute, the new umbrella organization for all of his projects. The timing had been perfect: Neier had tired of his work at Human Rights Watch was looking for a new challenge. Soros had been inspired to choose Neier, whom he had come to appreciate as able, clear-headed organizer and like-minded thinker in previous years. Once Neier had assisted the transformation of *Tygodnik Mazowse*, the KOR and Solidarność underground paper into the *Gazeta Wyborcza* with Adam Michnik as editor-in-chief, Soros recruited him for the top job at the OSI.¹¹⁸⁹

VI.2.2 Saving Hungarian Democracy, Saving a Legacy

George Soros and a core of friends from the Dubrovnik seminars were negotiating in Warsaw, Bratislava, Prague, and Vienna about the possibility of establishing campuses in all of the region's capitals for their planned 'Central European University.' The first classes started in Prague in 1991. A new institution of higher learning was to replace the

¹¹⁸⁷ Neier, *Taking Liberties*, 291. The OSI Paris was closed in 2007. As of 2014, Laborey was still the treasurer of the IWM in Vienna.

¹¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 254. *ibid.*, 300-02.

pettiness of nationalism and regional divisions. It was supposed to train new elites for the coming challenges of the transformations and to follow a ‘Western’ model of teaching and research to develop new exemplary curricula for the universities in Eastern Europe as they were expected to reform. But the CEU was not intended as a foreign imposition, explained István Rév. The CEU sought to follow the region’s

tradition of modernism, which is a strange mixture of optimism and deep pessimism that comes from this part of the world, from Vienna, Warsaw, Prague and Budapest that can be characterized by people like Freud and Franz Kafka, Bartok, and Musil and Mahler, the avantgarde in fine arts.¹¹⁹⁰

This tradition represented the antidote to the anti-intellectualism, anti-Westernism, and anti-modernism that nationalists across the region historically and recently had embraced. In April 1991, George Soros and the Czechoslovak Education Minister signed the founding charter for the ‘Prague Central European University Foundation.’ The government agreed to provide for office space, student accommodation and local staff salaries.¹¹⁹¹

The charter for the Central European University Budapest was signed in July 1991. The initial board consisted of – unsurprisingly – Miklós Vásárhelyi, Alajos Dornbach, who had just become the speaker of the Hungarian Parliament, György Enyédi from the MTA, the deputy rector of Eötvös Loránd University Lajos Vékás, the education expert Ladislav Cerych from Paris, Jiří Musil from the Academy of Sciences in Prague, and Soros’s confidantes Bill Newton-Smith and István Rév.¹¹⁹²

¹¹⁹⁰ István Rév, “The History of the CEU,” event recording, 16 February 1999, HU OSA 203-13-1. Tape 45. Péter Hanák, engine behind the CEU’s focus on modernity, was the reason why the History Department was established in Budapest, whereas Prague got the Economics Department.

¹¹⁹¹ Foundation Document of the Prague Central European University Foundation, 19 April 1991, signed by Petr Vopenka and George Soros. HU OSA 203-20-8 Box 1.

¹¹⁹² “Foundation Document,” Central European University Foundation, Budapest, [blank copy], July 1991, HU OSA 203-20-8 Box 1. Initially, Soros had put \$25 million towards the first five years – a negligible

Originally, the Central European University was conceptualized as a multi-campus institution with departments in Prague, Warsaw, Vienna, and Bratislava. After some hesitation, the plan also included Budapest. During the first months of the CEU's existence, from the end of August until October 1991, 80 international scholars offered summer seminars to some 300 participants in Prague.¹¹⁹³ In the fall of 1992, the board decided that the Sociology Department should pitch its tent in Warsaw in "due course".¹¹⁹⁴ In the Polish capital, the CEU initiative counted on Bronisław Geremek, the medievalist and former Solidarność advisor who had become Poland's foreign minister, and Soros's newly founded Stefan Batory Foundation, the Polish branch of the Open Society Fund.

The idea of a multi-campus university reflecting the idea of Central Europe seemed great. However, it soon encountered resistance. Establishing a campus in Vienna, the purported capital of Central Europe, was impossible. Erhard Busek, who had participated in the discussions in Dubrovnik, explains:

According to the Austrian law at the time, such a [private university] was not possible so that the then Mayor of Vienna and myself had to say: that's not going to work. Then [Soros] wanted to go to Bratislava. There he was most unfortunate, because he ran right into anti-Hungarian and anti-Semitic attitudes. Then he decided to go to Prague and in Prague he more or less collided with Václav Klaus, who made sure to prevent [the CEU], so that eventually, [Soros] ended up in Budapest.¹¹⁹⁵

Although the CEU began in Prague, Soros met his shrewdest opponent there. István Teplán, the CEU's first Budget and Planning Director, recalls:

sum that was corrected up within a year. "Hungary. 1991 Report of Activities," Soros Foundation, Budapest. HU OSA 13-3-3 Box 4.

¹¹⁹³ "Hungary. 1991 Report of Activities," Soros Foundation, Budapest. HU OSA 13-3-3 Box 4.

¹¹⁹⁴ The Sociology Department was to be established in Warsaw.

¹¹⁹⁵ Erhard Busek, interviewed by the author, 7 February 2012, Vienna, Austria.

[Václav Klaus] wanted to show a bit of muscle to Soros, [...] he didn't like the name. [Imitates Klaus:] 'We are more Western than Austria, so it shouldn't be Central, if the students are Belgian that's fine, but if they are Albanians, I don't want them.' You know, 'I don't want Prague to be so... [eastern].' He wanted to break away from the Eastern bloc, the Soviets... [...]. But the main problem was there was not enough support in Prague.¹¹⁹⁶

The Charta 77 and Václav Havel, by then president of Czechoslovakia, had been long-time beneficiaries of the Soros's Open Society Fund. Regardless of Teplán's dismissive comment, Havel had been a CEU supporter from the first hour. But Havel's Civic Forum, the 'dissident' party that grew out of the Velvet Revolution, was divided and eventually split into two parties: the Civic Democratic Party under then Prime Minister Václav Klaus, and the Civic Movement under Foreign Minister Jiří Dienstbier. Last but not least, in November of 1992, under the pressure of divergent nationalist aspirations, the Czechoslovak Parliament dissolved and the federation split into the independent, sovereign Czech and the Slovak Republic.¹¹⁹⁷ Karl von Schwarzenberg, who had resigned from the International Helsinki Federation's presidency to serve as chancellor to Havel's office, and Havel were devastated.¹¹⁹⁸ The founding of the CEU in Prague coincided with the domestic turmoil. Klaus, re-elected as prime minister of the Czech Republic, did not feel that he had to honor the agreement made by the government of a state that no longer existed. He cut the funding and in response Soros withdrew.¹¹⁹⁹

In Warsaw, similar political brawls terminated the idea of a campus there. Already in July 1990, a year after the historic election deal, Michnik had warned: "The greatest threat to democracy today is no longer communism [...]. The threat grows

¹¹⁹⁶ István Teplán, interviewed by the author, 22 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

¹¹⁹⁷ Paul Wilson, "The End of the Velvet Revolution," *New York Review of Books* 39, no. 14 (1992); "Czechoslovakia: The Pain of Divorce," *New York Review of Books* 39, no. 21 (1992); Václav Havel, "A Dream for Czechoslovakia," *ibid.*, no. 12.

¹¹⁹⁸ Tóth, *Karl von Schwarzenberg*, 170.

¹¹⁹⁹ George Soros and Michal Illner, "Remembering Jiří Musil (1928-2012)," *Sociologický časopis/ Czech Sociological Review* 48, no. 6 (2012).

instead from a combination of chauvinism, xenophobia, populism, and authoritarianism, all of them connected with the sense of frustration typical of great social upheavals.”¹²⁰⁰ Michnik’s concern was driven by the same worries underlying the founding of the CEU, an idea he endorsed. However, *Solidarność*, the triumphant alliance of bygone days, had fallen apart as the social and political frictions that a common opposition to the regime had once mitigated flared up. Michnik admitted: “The divorce within Solidarity was an ugly event. [...] Instead of an open discussion of ideas, we got opaque insinuations and arguments about symbols.”¹²⁰¹ His newspaper, the former *Solidarność*’s paper *Gazeta Wyborcza*, refused to pay unquestioned loyalty to Lech Wałęsa in his bid for the presidency, for which it earned blatant threats from the presidential hopeful and former ally.¹²⁰² In the midst of the Polish reaction, the Warsaw campus, closely linked to Michnik and his Western friends, never took hold.

The situation in Hungary was likewise disadvantageous. In November of 1991, József Antall had dismissed the head of the National Bank, who had signed the Democratic Charter. The decision maintained the enthusiasm for a movement that had been criticized for its controversial endorsement by the MSZP, the successor party of the MSZMP. For the Hungarian national holiday of March 15 in 1992, the organizers called for a peaceful demonstration to “celebrate the free citizen.” Before a march along the Danube to the parliament, Konrád was to give a speech at the Petőfi statue.¹²⁰³ However,

¹²⁰⁰ Adam Michnik, "The Two Faces of Europe," *New York Review of Books* 37, no. 12 (1990).

¹²⁰¹ "My Vote against Walesa," *New York Review of Books* 37, no. 20 (1990).

¹²⁰² Also see a discussion between Jürgen Habermas and Adam Michnik, friends since 1979, about 1989 and post-communism: "‘More Humility, Fewer Illusions’ - A Talk between Adam Michnik and Jürgen Habermas," *ibid.* 41, no. 6 (1994). More recently, *In Search of Lost Meaning: The New Eastern Europe*, ed. Irena Grudzinska Gross (University of California Press, 2011), 6.

¹²⁰³ "Felhívás," A Demokratikus Charta Szóvivője, HU OSA 354-1-1, Box 1. András Bozóki, "Intellectuals in a New Democracy: the Democratic Charter in Hungary," *East European Politics and Society* 10(1996): 184.

Frank Schirrmacher from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* called the Suhrkamp editors to inform them of the dramatic events that ensued in Budapest. Borchers noted:

the FAZ is going to run a report tomorrow about the fact that on the Hungarian national holiday [...] György Konrád, when he gave his speech in front of 500 to 600 people was shouted down “Jew, Jew!”. Skinheads attacked one correspondent, others wanted to beat Konrád to death.¹²⁰⁴

When the editor could not get a hold of Konrád, she called Hans-Henning Paetzke who was clueless, too. “Mister Schirrmacher also mentioned that one can safely assume that the authorities will tolerate these attacks,” Borchers told Unseld.¹²⁰⁵ Diagnosed with cancer two years into his premiership, chances for Antall to silence the extremist and preserve the MDF’s image as a Christian-conservative party vanished. The prime minister rejected claims that Csurka would undermine his position. In a TV interview in December of 1992, he dismissed such accusation “in foreign press and elsewhere” as mere “stupidity.”¹²⁰⁶

In 1992, the government commissioned the state broadcaster Magyar Televízió with a questionable three-part documentary *The Lawless Socialism – the ÁVÓs*.¹²⁰⁷ The film concentrated on the years 1950-53 and the ruthlessness of the Ávósok, while implicating the entire Kádár period. It was broadcast just before the elections in the spring of 1994, at a time when opinion polls showed the MSZP in the lead. Many interpreted the implied association of the successor party with Stalinism as a feeble political move and partisan abuse of public television.

¹²⁰⁴ Note to Dr. Unseld, Z.E., 20 March 1992, DLA Marbach Suhrkamp, Ordner Konrad 78-99.

¹²⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁰⁶ Radio Free Europe Weekly Report, “Premier Antall interviewed on the party, the media, national security, economy,” 16 December 1992, HU OSA 301-0-3 Box 223.

¹²⁰⁷ Ferenc Kubinyi, “Törvénytelen szocializmus - Ávósok I-III,” (Budapest: MTV, 1994).

By 1994, the movement had lost its drive. The last big event of the Democratic Charter was a protest against a live broadcast of Miklós Horthy's reburial on MTV. On 4 September 1993, several thousand Hungarians pilgrimaged to the small town of Kenderes in the south of Hungary, the hometown of the interwar Regent Admiral Miklós Horthy, who had died in exile in 1957. Four leading MDF members attended the funeral – as private citizens, as they emphasized. István Csurka, Lajos Für, Imre Konya and Péter Boross sat in the front row during the mass in honor of the Admiral.¹²⁰⁸ The crux of the matter was not just their disingenuous behavior. The true problem lay in the uncritical rehabilitation of the interwar regent.

József Antall, who could not attend the reburial himself, told newspapers that he considered Horthy a “Hungarian patriot,” a savior of Europe, who “should be placed into the community of the nation and the awareness of the people.”¹²⁰⁹ Pre-empting criticism, the prime minister insisted that if it was not for Horthy's protection of Budapest's Jewry, more Hungarian Jews would have been killed during the Holocaust.¹²¹⁰ Such a portrayal, however, neglects the fact that the Regent had sided with Adolf Hitler in order to regain the territories “lost” in the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, the settlement after World War I, in which the Hungarian part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire had to abandon two thirds of its territory.

Opponents claimed that the MDF was constructing a dubious historical narrative. As it tried to appropriate Christian nationalism reminiscent of the Horthy era, it dismissed

¹²⁰⁸ The footage of cameraman Robert Parizon from the ceremony, which was used in the 1993 documentary “Beerdigung oder Wahlkampf?” for the German public TV stations ARD/ WDR. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-Oh-X-j3Q&NR=1>

¹²⁰⁹ Jane Perlez, “Reburial Is Both a Ceremony and a Test for Today's Hungary,” *New York Times*, 5 September 1993.

¹²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

the suffering that Hungary's irredentism had inflicted upon neighboring countries during both World Wars. Árpád von Klimó warns of the inherent dangers of a historical legacy based on the undemocratic, authoritarian Horthy regime.¹²¹¹ Moreover, historian István Rév points out that as part of the Axis powers in World War II, Hungary declared war on the USSR, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the U.S. – which conservatives failed to acknowledge.¹²¹² In aligning itself with the interwar period and glorifying Horthy, the MDF did not only celebrate the country's restoration of its 'proper' past, it also eclipsed the period from 1944 to 1989 from Hungarian history.

Despite such reactionary politics, readers of the *New York Review of Books* hardly learned anything about the events in Hungary. The denouement of the Velvet divorce of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and the breakup of the Solidarność movement in post-1989 Poland took center page. The *Review* published almost two dozen articles and speeches by Havel and his stage. Paul Wilson between 1990 and 1995. Among the former East European dissidents, only Adam Michnik was given similar exposure. In 1990, the *New York Review of Books* published a small selection of essays *Writings on the East*, showcasing the expertise that it had treated its readers with and preparing for the coming transformations. Among the contributors were of course Václav Havel, Adam Michnik, Timothy Garton Ash, as well as Sakharov's wife Elena Bonner, Gordon A. Craig on Germany, Fritz Stern with "The Common House of Europe" and Philip Roth with "A

¹²¹¹ Árpád von Klimó, "Trianon und „1956“ – Öffentliche Erinnerung in Ungarn," *Ost-West. Europäische Perspektiven* 8, no. 2 (2007). The parallels between the post-1989 period and the interwar era are discussed in Hanebrink, "Transnational Culture War: Christianity, Nation, and the Judeo-Bolshevik Myth in Hungary, 1890–1920." Also see Paul Lendvai, *Mein verspieltes Land. Ungarn im Umbruch* (Salzburg: Ecowin, 2010), 63-75.

¹²¹² István Rév, "The Terror of the House," in *(Re-) Visualizing national history. Museums and national identities in Europe in the new millennium*, ed. Robin Ostrow (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2008), 68.

Conversation in Prague,” which reiterated his visit to Czechoslovakia in February 1990 to talk to members of the former Charter 77.¹²¹³

The surprising winner in the struggle for a proper campus for the CEU was Budapest, home to what Soros considered his “most successful” foundation at the time.¹²¹⁴ The Antall government faced the dilemma of having to procure matching funds, a condition of the 1984 contract between Soros and the Academy of Sciences. The cooperation had once constituted the legality of the Soros Foundation in Communist Hungary. Now, the Antall government, pressed to make budget cuts, sought ways to suspend the deal, which required paying matching funds to the operation of the foundation. István Teplán explains:

The government [...] owed Soros the matching funds that they had accumulated over the years. By that time it came to \$2 million. [...] There was no clause to stop this agreement [...]. They were not able to pay, [and] we needed a building. At that time, all the buildings were privatized [...]. It was very shady this whole privatization in Hungary I should say. But this case was very clear. There was this building, the price was \$4 million. And the deal was that there is this debt of \$2 million, so not only do you get that, but you also stop the contract.¹²¹⁵

Bill Newton-Smith had favored the government’s offer of a former campsite of the Communist boy scouts in the Buda hills, because he found the idea of a green campus quite appealing.¹²¹⁶ But the Hungarians on the CEU’s board preferred a building complex in the heart of Budapest between the Saint Stephen Basilica and the Danube River. In return for the space on Nádor and Zrinyi street, the government’s debt was relieved, the Soros-MTA contract terminated and the dual structure abandoned.¹²¹⁷ At the same time,

¹²¹³ *Writings On The East. Selected Writings on Eastern Europe from The New York Review of Books.* (New York: Rea S. Hederman, 1990).

¹²¹⁴ Soros, *Underwriting Democracy*, 135.

¹²¹⁵ István Teplán, interviewed by the author, 22 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

¹²¹⁶ William Newton-Smith, interviewed by the author, 4 November 2011, Budapest, Hungary.

¹²¹⁷ Vászárhelyi remained co-chair, and Alajos Dornbach took over Iván Berend’s position as co-chairman. In New York, the Board of Directors consisted of: Soros, Leontieff, the former Ambassador to Hungary

the move to Budapest was the beginning of the end of the founding idea of a the multi-campus university across Central Europe.

During the opening ceremony of the academic year 1993/94, Soros pledged he would boost the budget with \$200 million plus \$50 million for the (re-) construction of the university premises. The success and public attention were guaranteed by the international heavyweight intellectuals who came to offer courses in Budapest.¹²¹⁸ By 1994, 450 students from over 20 countries were enrolled; its foundation and development made headlines across Europe. Just before the graduation ceremony in June 1994, the Regents of the State of New York accredited nine of the CEU's master programs.¹²¹⁹ At the same time, with help from his Oxford connections, Soros created the CEU Press.¹²²⁰

The opening ceremony in the fall of 1994 took place in Budapest's City Hall, which mayor Gábor Demszky had offered for the occasion. George Soros and Jiří Musil, the sociologist and former director of the CEU in Prague, delivered the keynote speeches.¹²²¹ Karl Popper was supposed to attend the ceremony to see his theory on 'open societies' play out and to receive an honorary award. But Soros's mentor had passed away on 17 September 1994, just a few days earlier. In 1995, the reconstruction of the

Philip Kaiser, and the New York Attorney William D. Zabel. "Soros Foundaiton Hungary 1991 Report of Activities," HU OS 13-3-3 Box 4.

¹²¹⁸ Peter Allen, Endre Bojtár, Ladislav Cerych, Roman Frydman, Ernest Gellner, Péter Hanák, Wolf Lepenies, Steven Lukes, Krzysztof Michalski, Jiří Musil, Bill Newton-Smith, István Rév, and Jacques Rupnik. For early newspaper reports on the CEU, see e.g. John O'Leary, "Lessons in Freedom," *The Times*, 24 February 1992. John Torode, "The Missionary in Mr. Money," *The Independent*, 25 June 1993. Philip Ther, "Im Schlaraffenland des Spekulanten " *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 4 July 1994. clippings in HU OSA 203-20-8 Box 1.

¹²¹⁹ MA degrees in Economics, Political Science, Medieval Studies, History of Central Europe, and the LL.M degrees in Comparative Constitutional Law and International Business Law. For the first two years who had passed through three programs, the MAs were awarded retroactively. Press Release, "CEU Foundation Celebrates Accreditation, 18 June 1994," HU OSA 203-20-8 Box 1.

¹²²⁰ Francis Pinter – The History of the CEU, Interviewer: Béla Nové, Tape 43, HU OSA 203-13-1. Béla Nové, *Central European University 1989-1999. Ten Years in Images and Documents* (Budapest: Közép-Európai Egyetem Alapítvány, 1999), 37.

¹²²¹ George Soros - Official Opening of the 1994-1995 Academic Year at CEU (event recording), 30 September 1994, HU OSA 203-13-1.

university building in the heart of Budapest was completed. Bronisław Geremek, Mayor Gábor Demszky, and the new Minister of Education Gábor Fodor delivered speeches on the occasion.¹²²² Affiliated with the CEU was the Open Society Archive, housed in the same complex, which had inherited one of *the* Cold War legacies: the files of Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty.¹²²³

VI.2.3 Europe in Crisis: The Yugoslav Successor Wars

In 1991, the Soros Foundation Budapest still allocated \$27,911 to the Inter University Center in Dubrovnik. With a pinch of remorse, Berta Dragičević remarked:

The IUC [was a] kind of inspiration for the foundation of the Central European University. [...] We had the expectation that [Soros] would try it in Dubrovnik, but of course being Hungarian and having all the influential Hungarian friends there, it was obvious that Budapest was selected as the venue for the CEU.¹²²⁴

The third round of “Central and Eastern Europe in Transformation” workshops was scheduled for 20 March to 26 April 1991.¹²²⁵ However, the elections in the constituent republics of Slovenia and Croatia in the spring of 1990 had increased nationalist tensions between in Yugoslavia. Fighting broke out in Dalmatia in April 1991. The workshops were relocated to Prague. Within months, as an unmistakably intimidating demonstration of force, the Yugoslav navy had begun maneuvers in the Adriatic Sea, isolating the enclave of Dubrovnik.

¹²²² “Tentative Action Plan For The Grand Opening of The CEU Budapest Buildings, (as of 6 October),” CEU Budapest, HU OSA 203-20-8 Box 1.

¹²²³ The Open Society Archive used to occupy a part of the CEU library’s basement. In 2006, with a significantly enlarged archive, the OSA moved to 32 János Arany street. For a history of the new premises, see http://osaarchivum.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=71&Itemid=134&lang=en.

¹²²⁴ Berta Dragičević, interviewed by the author, 12 May 2012, Zagreb, Croatia.

¹²²⁵ “Soros Foundation Hungary 1991 Report of Activities,” HU OSA 13-3-3 Box 4, p. 2 & 4. Steering committee: Pavel Cmorej, Bratislava, Ladislav Hajdáněk, Prague, Imre Hronszky, Budapest, Carl E. Levitin, Moscow, Tibor Vámos, Bill Newton-Smith and Kathy Wilkes – among others. Academic Program 1990/91, in folder “IUC Posters 1974-1991, Public Lectures.”

In September 1991, Dubrovnik's mayor used the IUC's channels to appeal to the "true friend[s] of the Croatian city of Dubrovnik." The UNESCO heritage site was endangered, he warned, Yugoslav military forces were striving to restore Greater Serbia. "We are desperate: dear friends, we need you!"¹²²⁶ Executive Secretary Berta Dragičević distributed the appeal, oftentimes adding a personal note: "We want peace for us, here, now, and a future! Please help us disseminate this information."¹²²⁷

Instead of returning to Oxford after her usual summer stay in Dubrovnik, Kathy Wilkes remained in the besieged city. On 22 September 1991, she wrote to Václav Havel: "Dear President, May I appeal to our meetings in the former bad times (when I came so often to Prague as a founder-member of the Jan Hus Educational Foundation) to ask your help? I write from Dubrovnik, Croatia." The city's irreplaceable cultural heritage was on the verge of destruction. She enclosed the mayor's appeal with an invitation to Dubrovnik's annual literary summer festival, since "it is difficult to think of anyone who would be more welcome than yourself here!"¹²²⁸ A week later, she addressed the editors of *The Times* and the *New York Times* in a letter condemning Western lethargy and indifference towards the events in the former Yugoslavia. She also sent faxes to the Serbian scholars who used to attend the IUC seminars asking them to do everything in their power to stop the military actions – or, she deplored, "must I sign myself as 'your former friend'?"¹²²⁹

¹²²⁶ Appeal by Mayor Pero Poljanić, 17 September 1991, in folder: "Press releases, articles, etc. 1991-1992."

¹²²⁷ Berta Dragičević to Nigel Young at European University Center for Peace Studies, 17 September 1991, in folder: "Press releases, articles, etc. 1991-1992."

¹²²⁸ Letter by Kathleen Wilkes to President Václav Havel, 22 September 1991, and letter by Kathleen Wilkes to 'Mihailo,' 10 October 1991, in folder: "Press releases, articles, etc. 1991-1992."

¹²²⁹ Copies in folder: "Press releases, articles, etc. 1991-1992."

No responses have survived in the IUC archive, but Wilkes' follow-up letter from 21 November 1991 noted:

Dear Václav, Please continue to do what you can to help us here. We have a fragile cease-fire holding [...] Ah... so many bombs, so many blasts, so many deaths. [...] I find it difficult to understand how politicians get excited about the devastation of historic monuments, and not about the tragedy that is overwhelming the people here. [...] We have at present no water, electricity, food, fuel. [...] We have at present only this one satellite phone/ fax. With thanks for all your concern, (Kathy Wilkes).¹²³⁰

On 6 December 1991, artillery hit the IUC building, setting it ablaze. The entire library and most of the archive were lost. It would take almost two years to reconstruct the renaissance palace. Wilkes remained in Dubrovnik for the remainder of siege, which ended only in May 1992.¹²³¹ In return for her efforts, Wilkes was made an honorary citizen, and in 2005, a plaque with her name was installed in the Old Town. The consequences of the war for the IUC – not even to speak of the entire region – were disastrous. In 1992/93, course offers were down to 24.¹²³² Not one scholar from Russia or Serbia and only a few from Hungary and Austria returned to Dubrovnik; a few Germans, British and Scandinavian remained loyal to the IUC in the wake of the siege. Berta Dragičević and the Director General Øryar Øyen tried to keep their optimism: “Together, all friends of the IUC will make sure the institution is kept alive through these most trying times. We are confident there’s a rich future ahead!”¹²³³ Kathy Wilkes and

¹²³⁰ Wilkes mentions in the letter that it was the 52nd day of the siege, which started officially on October 1. Letter by Kathleen Wilkes to President Václav Havel, (undated, most likely 21 November 1991), in folder: “Press releases, articles, etc. 1991-1992.”

¹²³¹ Wilkes contributed to a daily leaflet, *Glas Iz Dubrovnika – The Voice of Dubrovnik*, which citizens produced in the locked down city in lieu of a newspaper. Some excerpts have been published online: <http://www.croatianhistory.net/etf/wilkes.html>.

¹²³² The ground floor was reconstructed by the summer of 1993. The City and the University of Zagreb covered most of the reconstruction expenses. Academic Program 1992/ 1993, in folder “IUC Posters 1974-1991, Public Lectures.” For the considerable damage done to the Old Town. See Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of the Republik of Croatia, Report, *Dubrovnik 1991-1992*, UNESCO, 1993.

¹²³³ Academic Program 1992/93, Posters, in box “IUC Posters 1974-1991, Public Lectures.”

Bill Newton-Smith, who simultaneously took part in the founding of the CEU, have remained loyal to the IUC until today.¹²³⁴

But the successor wars in the former Yugoslavia raged on. After months of controversy, the International PEN under its president György Konrád convened its annual literary congress in Dubrovnik in memory of the anti-fascist PEN meeting held there in 1933. The controversy derived from different understandings of Croatian culpability in the escalation of war. In February 1993, Timothy Garton Ash, Pierre Bourdieu, Bronisław Geremek, Anthony Giddens, János Kis, Péter Esterhazy, Jonathan Fanton, Adam Michnik, Heiner Müller, Arthur Miller, Ivo Banac and others had signed an appeal published in the *New York Review of Books*, which revealed their bias:

We condemn the rulers of Serbia (and of other successor states of former Yugoslavia to the extent that they condone such policies) for the destruction of countless communities, for ordering mass executions, for running detention camps where people are tortured and wantonly killed, for resorting to rape and unspeakable violence in pursuit of territorial gains.¹²³⁵

Konrád's position in 1993 resembled the one of the signatories. But whereas he probably had Dubrovnik's multi-cultural heritage and the IUC in mind in an attempt to draw international attention to the war in the former Yugoslavia, his friend Walter Jens, president of the German PEN chapter, withdrew: "It was embarrassing," Jens told *Der Spiegel*. "You don't sip on champagne and delight in gourmet buffets, when next door the children are dying. You also should not arrive like a bunch of tourist on a crusade boat from Venice."¹²³⁶ Five feminist writers from Yugoslavia, including Slavenka Drakulić,

¹²³⁴ "Philosophy & Sciences XIX." Academic Program 1994/95, in folder "IUC Posters 1974-1991, Public Lectures."

¹²³⁵ Ivo Banac Timothy Garton Ash, Pierre Bourdieu, et al., "An Appeal (To our Governments and to the Secretary-General of the United Nations)," *New York Review of Books* 40, no. 4 (1993).

¹²³⁶ "'Besser den Mund halten,' SPIEGEL-Interview mit dem Schriftsteller Walter Jens über den internationalen PEN-Kongreß in Dubrovnik," *Der Spiegel* 47, no. 18 (1993).

had opposed the meeting, too. Croatia's nationalist press reacted to their public stand with a 'witch hunt'.¹²³⁷

Strongly opposed to the war and the regime of President Franjo Tuđman, the IUC staff insisted once Dubrovnik's recovery had begun: "We are convinced that the IUC will contribute toward the creation and maintenance of a culture of peace. Could there be a more important agenda?"¹²³⁸ Adam Michnik agreed and, in August of 1994, he and Kathy Wilkes organized the class "What does it mean to be European?".¹²³⁹ However, with the end of the siege, the IUC in Dubrovnik came under attack from the Tuđman government, which disapproved of its international profile, focus on dialogue and association with George Soros, particularly once the Open Society branch in Zagreb had begun monitoring Croatian human rights violations. Berta Dragičević recalls:

Tuđman did not think that people around the OSI were good Croats. I remember Soros came to visit Croatia [...]. He couldn't understand that [Tuđman] practically did not know how much – at that time it was several thousands, several million dollars – how much money was spend in several different groups. [...] Soros said that he had the impression [Tuđman] could not care less. All [Tuđman] said was that [...] it would be better to give him the money and he could establish an office to distribute it. It was not an easy time, [but] we managed to get through the most difficult years.¹²⁴⁰

It would take the IUC until its 25th anniversary in 1997 to return to levels from before the destruction, when in the wake of the Dayton Agreements of December 1995

¹²³⁷ The controversy over holding a meeting in Dubrovnik had begun a year earlier in Rio de Janeiro. For an analysis of the affair, see Zsófia Lóránd, "Feminism as Counterdiscourse in Yugoslavia in Two Different Contexts" (Master thesis, Central European University 2007), 60-72.

¹²³⁸ Message by Secretary Berta Dragičević and Director General Øryar Øyen. Academic Program 1994/95, in folder "IUC Posters 1974-1991, Public Lectures." Two courses were to take place in Budapest and Malta.

¹²³⁹ Academic Programs 1994/95 and 1997/98, in folder "IUC Posters 1974-1991, Public Lectures."

¹²⁴⁰ Berta Dragičević, interviewed by the author, 12 May 2012, Zagreb, Croatia.

and the cessation of military actions, the number of participants skyrocketed again to over 1,800 students and scholars.¹²⁴¹

In 1993, Soros spent \$300 million on his philanthropy. He had in vain advocated for a new Marshall plan to stabilize Eastern Europe and particularly the collapsing Soviet Union.¹²⁴² Soros and Aryeh Neier were deeply troubled by the events in Bosnia: “[Nothing] had affected me more than the reemergence of Nazi-like crimes in Europe,” Neier noted.¹²⁴³ The Open Society Institute put \$50 million in assistance towards the war-ravaged country, and Soros himself flew to Sarajevo to witness a water-purification installation, hidden from the sight of snipers that he had paid for in use.¹²⁴⁴ Soros and Neier were only two of several New Yorkers who watched the war in Bosnia with horror. Susan Sontag was likewise concerned, as Neier recalls:

What happened with Susan was she wanted to go to Sarajevo but the United Nations High Commissions controlled access to Bosnia. [...] [They] had the only flights and the only way you could get into Sarajevo [...] was on a [UNHCR] flight. [...] They would allow journalists to go in, or they would allow people conducting humanitarian projects. [...] We were financing humanitarian projects in Bosnia. So I could go in. And at a certain point I asked the UN High Commission for the Refugees if Susan could go in. [...] [They] gave me difficulty on that. She wasn't a humanitarian... then I contacted a friend at the Geneva headquarters of the [UNHCR] and got permission for her to accompany me on a flight into Sarajevo.¹²⁴⁵

In July 1993, Sontag flew to the besieged Bosnian capital to stage Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. In the *New York Review of Books*, she explained herself:

What my production of *Godot* signifies to [the people in Sarajevo], apart from the fact that an eccentric American writer and part-time director volunteered to

¹²⁴¹ See the table in the booklet “35th Anniversary of the IUC& International Conference,” 27-29 September 2007, IUC Archive.

¹²⁴² George Soros, “A Global New Deal,” *New York Review of Books* 34, no. 14 (1987). “The Gorbachev Prospect,” *New York Review of Books* 36, no. 9 (1989).

¹²⁴³ Neier, *Taking Liberties*, 294-95.

¹²⁴⁴ Kaufman, *Soros. The Life and Times*, 278-80. William Shawcross, “Turning Dollars into Change. Saint George and his unlikely Crusades,” *Time Magazine* 150, no. 9 (1997).

¹²⁴⁵ Aryeh Neier, interviewed by author, 27 February 2012, New York, NY, USA.

work in the theater as an expression of solidarity with the city (a fact inflated by the local press and radio as evidence that the rest of the world "does care"—when I knew, to my indignation and shame, that I represented nobody but myself), is that this is a great European play and that they are members of European culture. For all their attachment to American popular culture, which is as intense here as anywhere else, it is the high culture of Europe that represents for them their ideal, their passport to a European identity.¹²⁴⁶

As before, Sontag depicted herself as a lone warrior in the defense of European high culture – this time she went as far as risking her own life. The references that she, Soros, Neier and the feminist writer Slavenka Drakulić, used regarding Bosnia were the Second World War and the Holocaust.¹²⁴⁷ The latter two could look back on their own experiences in Europe in the 1930s and 40s. The war in Bosnia represented a crime of the same scale, and a sign that Europe had not yet learnt the lessons from the Holocaust, namely that genocide and fascism could only be stopped with force and determination. Again, Bob Silvers published Soros's view on the war in the *New York Review of Books*: for them, the international community's reluctant feeble actions, the weak mandate for UN troops and the boycott, represented a sellout on the scale of Munich 1938, when Western heads of state appeased Hitler's demand to the Sudetenland.¹²⁴⁸ It was, as Jan-Werner Müller puts it, "the *ultimate* act in the century-long European drama – or, rather tragedy – of exterminations, expulsions, and exchanges (of populations)."¹²⁴⁹

With the collapse of state socialism, the struggle for Eastern Europe was over. The war represented for many New Yorkers the next attack on their ideals and an even bigger challenge. The *New York Review of Books* frequently ran full-length feature essays on the war in Bosnia (and less so in the other regions of the former Yugoslavia). Most

¹²⁴⁶ Susan Sontag, "Godot Comes to Sarajevo," *New York Review of Books* 40, no. 17 (1993).

¹²⁴⁷ Slavenka Drakulic, "Nazis Among Us," *ibid.*, no. 10.

¹²⁴⁸ George Soros, "Bosnia and Beyond," *ibid.*, no. 17.

¹²⁴⁹ Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Thought in Twentieth-Century Europe*, 237.

prominently were the articles by Misha Glenny, but also Jeri Laber sent in her reports from the region.¹²⁵⁰ Bob Silvers dedicated four issues to an exchange initiated on reforms to the UN mandate in the region, and invited George F. Kennan as well as former U.S. Ambassador Warren Zimmerman to share their views on the war.¹²⁵¹

When U.S. President Bill Clinton appointed Richard Holbrooke as the U.S. Special Envoy to the Balkans to prepare the negotiation for a peace settlement, Holbrooke frequently passed through Budapest, for the simple fact that the U.S. Air Force used the Hungarian base at Taszár for its maneuvers.¹²⁵² Throughout the 1990s, Holbrooke stopped regularly at the Central European University. In 1995, Holbrooke and the journalist Kati Marton, born in Budapest in 1949, had married in the U.S. Embassy in Budapest.¹²⁵³ In 1999, he participated in the anniversary conference “Past and Present” which re-assessed the accomplishments and consequences of 1989. Among the participants were Adam Michnik, Jacques Rupnik, Timothy Garton Ash, Bill Newton-Smith, Gáspár Miklós Tamás, Ágnes Heller, István Rév, and Martin Palouš, all of whom had been members of the network in the 1980s and who subscribed to its mission.¹²⁵⁴

¹²⁵⁰ Jeri Laber, "Bosnia: Questions of Rape," *New York Review of Books* 40, no. 6 (1993). Misha Glenny, "The Massacre of Yugoslavia," *ibid.* 39, no. 3 (1992). "Bosnia: The Last Chance?," *ibid.* 40 (1993). Michael Ignatieff, "Homage to Bosnia," *ibid.* 41, no. 8 (1994). "The Missed Chance in Bosnia," *New York Review of Books* 43, no. 4 (1996).

¹²⁵¹ Brian Urquhart, "For a UN Volunteer Military Force," *ibid.* 40, no. 11 (1993). Lee H. Hamilton, Gareth Evans, and et al, "A UN Volunteer Military Force: Four Views. Reply by Brian Urquhart," *ibid.*, no. 12. McGeorge Bundy, Robert Oakley, and Anthony Parsons, "A UN Volunteer Force: The Prospects," *ibid.*, no. 13. Warren Zimmerman, "Last Chance for Bosnia?," review of *Unfinished Peace: Report of the International Commission on the Balkans*, *ibid.* 43, no. 20 (1996). George F. Kennan, "The Balkan Crisis: 1913 and 1993," *ibid.* 40, no. 13 (1993).

¹²⁵² Richard Holbrooke, *To End A War* (New York: Random House, 1998). Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers 1804-1999* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 642-59. For a contemporary analysis of the Dayton Peace Settlement, see Jessica Kuntz, "The Dayton Accords, 20 years on," *Triblive* (2014).

¹²⁵³ Kati Marton, *Paris: A Love Story* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012). Vera and Donald Blinken, *Vera and the Amassador: Escape and Return* (New York: SUNY Press, 2009), 125-27.

¹²⁵⁴ Conference, "Past & Present," 26-28 March 1999, event recording, HU OSA 203-13-1 DVD 135.

VI.2.4. Brave New World: The Dissidents' Retreat, 1994-1998

The transformation of Eastern Europe after the collapse of state socialism was fraught with problems. Like the CEU, the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna was taking on the new challenges. Klaus Nellen recalled the deliberations of the early 1990s:

One has one's narratives, [...], as justification, for fundraising. The [IWM's] first narrative [...] was "drilling holes" into the Iron Curtain. [...] We would never have thought it would disappear so suddenly. One could have said then: the rationale of the Institute is lost, it's obsolete. Because when the Curtain is gone, one can no longer drill any holes into it [chuckles].¹²⁵⁵

After 1990, the IWM shifted attention to the economic, political and social transformation of the region. While the CEU sought to educate the younger generation of the region, the IWM sought to bring experts from East and West together with the new leaders. In 1990, the IWM started publishing *Transit*, a quarterly that published reports and critical studies on the transformation of Eastern Europe.¹²⁵⁶ Thus, its founding mission of facilitating a European dialogue lived on, as Nellen explained:

It actually evolved quite naturally. [...] We simply had managed to establish quite a lot of good contacts in Eastern Europe before 1989, contacts to – I think one may say – the elite, the intellectual elite who abruptly came into leading position but then faced the enormous task to tackle the transition to a market economy and democracy. So we considered it our responsibility – always to a modest degree within our means, just like the tiny holes – to assist in the process of creating a civil society. [...] We were convinced that democracy cannot function without civil society.¹²⁵⁷

After 1990, the IWM's old ties persevered as the institute tried to assist the dissidents-turned-politicians. George Soros joined the Board of the IWM, and in the spring of 1995, he delivered the prestigious annual Jan Patočka lecture. Established in

¹²⁵⁵ Klaus Nellen, interviewed by the author, 3 June 2013, Vienna, Austria.

¹²⁵⁶ Members of the first advisory board: Sir Ralf Dahrendorf, François Furet, Bronisław Geremek, Elemér Hankiss, and Petr Pithart. Today, it consists of Peter Demetz, Timothy Garton Ash, Elemér Hankiss, Claus Leggewie, Petr Pithart, Jacques Rupnik, Aleksander Smolar, and Fritz Stern.

¹²⁵⁷ Ibid.

1987, speakers before him had been Hans-Georg Gadamer, Leszek Kołakowski, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Paul Ricœur, Jacques Derrida, Charles Taylor, and François Furet – all members of the network before 1989.¹²⁵⁸ The next year, in 1996, Soros spend \$360 million all over the world, foremost in Russia, and in Hungary where he spent more in aid than the U.S. government, Ukraine and Yugoslavia. By 1997, with the war in Bosnia over, Soros turned his gaze back to his home country, the U.S., by supporting organizations and developing programs to achieve racial equality, improve education, and assist immigrants.¹²⁵⁹

In 1994, the Oxford historian Tony Judt became a fellow at the IWM. His temporary book smuggling for the Jan Hus Fund had turned him into an expert on Central European history.¹²⁶⁰ While in Vienna, he led a colloquium “Rethinking Post-War European History,” which laid the foundations to his influential study, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*.¹²⁶¹ This – in Judt’s own words – “avowedly personal interpretation of the recent European past” demonstrates the impact his engagement with the East European dissidents had had on his worldview and approach to history.¹²⁶² Among those he acknowledged for their support were many members of the international dissident support network such as Jan Gross, Jacques Rupnik, Timothy Garton Ash, István Rév, Krzysztof Michalski and István Deák.

¹²⁵⁸ *IWM Newsletter* May 1995, p. 2. Clipping in HU OSA 203-20-8 Box 1 CEU, Folder: George Soros, Press Clipping[s] 1993-1995.

¹²⁵⁹ Shawcross, "Turning Dollars into Change. Saint George and his unlikely Crusades," 51-52.

¹²⁶⁰ For example: Tony Judt, "The Rediscovery of Central Europe," *Daedalus* 119, no. 1 (1990). "The Past Is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe," *Daedalus* 121, no. 4 (1992). "Nineteen Eighty-Nine: The End of Which European Era?," *Daedalus* 123, no. 3 (1994). For the impact his travels to eastern Europe in the eighties had on his intellectual formation, see "Saved by the Czechs."

¹²⁶¹ *Postwar*, acknowledgements. *Thinking the Twentieth Century*, 252-53. Klaus Nellen, interviewed by the author, 3 June 2013, Vienna, Austria.

¹²⁶² *Postwar*, xiii.

In 1996, Judt moved to the U.S. to become the director of the Institute for the Humanities at NYU and more importantly, he took over the Erich Maria Remarque Institute.¹²⁶³ It was in those years that Judt became one of the main contributors to the *New York Review of Books*. In *Postwar*, which appeared in 2005, he admitted: "By far my greatest professional debt is to Robert Silvers." His latest book before his premature death in 2010, *Ill Fares the Land*, he wrote at Silvers' encouragement.¹²⁶⁴

In 1994, in the *New York Review of Books*, Timothy Garton Ash remarked about a talk Bronisław Geremek had given at the IWM:

Bronislaw Geremek, the Polish medievalist turned Solidarity adviser turned parliamentarian, lectures on *The Collapse of Communism and European Security*. He makes a politician's speech, mustering every argument for Poland to be admitted to NATO. Eloquent, as always, but some in the audience are disconcerted. Somehow they had expected him to speak as an intellectual to intellectuals. But times and roles have changed, and Geremek, unlike many from the anti-Communist oppositions of the 1970s and 1980s, has made a clear choice: while he is a politician he will be a politician.¹²⁶⁵

In Hungary, the transition from dissident intellectual to politician did not go as smoothly as Garton Ash claimed in the case of Geremek. Although the reputation of the dissident party stuck, the former members of the Democratic Opposition were no longer in charge of the SZDSZ. Already by the end of 1991, when party obligations had kept Kis and Haraszi away from Cracow, they had faced a strong counter-current within their own party from a cohort that had not shared their experiences during Kádárism.¹²⁶⁶ János Kis vacated his post as SZDSZ president in November 1991, although he remained an

¹²⁶³ The NYUIH was losing its reputation of intellectual grandeur, when Judt arrived. He came to establish the Erich Maria Remarque Institute at NYU, a task that clashed with his role as director of the Institute for the Humanities. Judt Janny Scott, "Hostess of Intellectuals' Lunches Dismissed Over Invitation to Mrs. Clinton," *New York Times*, 10 May 1996. "Dispute at Club Tied to N.Y.U. Exposes Leadership Rift," *New York Times*, 21 May 1996. Judt, *Thinking the Twentieth Century*, 255-57.

¹²⁶⁴ *Postwar*, xv. *Ill Fares the Land* (New York: Penguin, 2010).

¹²⁶⁵ Timothy Garton Ash, "Journey to the Post-Communist East," *New York Review of Books* (1994).

¹²⁶⁶ Bálint Magyar and Iván, "Profí amatőrök – amatőr profik 3.," *Népszabadság* (2012).

important party member for years to come.¹²⁶⁷ Since 1992, he has been a philosophy professor at the Central European University.

New parliamentary elections were held in the spring of 1994. For a moment, the circle of the former dissident intellectuals had won the upper hand again in the inner party brawls when their preferred candidate entered the campaign as the hopeful for the prime minister's office. Moreover, irritated by the rise of István Csurka's MIÉP and the recurrent labeling of SZDSZ as the "Jewish Party," they commissioned a survey that, to their relief, found the majority of eligible voters would not consider Jewish roots as an obstacle to the premiership.¹²⁶⁸ But doubts persisted.

During the campaign, the Alliance of Free Democrats had rejected a possible coalition with the MSZP. However, the MSZP had soared in popularity and won the elections with 33%; the SZDSZ arrived at 20%. Only nine years after the Alternative Forum of 1985, SZDSZ entered a governing coalition with the MSZP that made Gyula Horn, the former deputy of the Interior Ministry who had announced the ban on the 1985 event, prime minister. Many, particularly the revamped FIDESZ, accused the Free Democrats of betrayal and now interpreted the Democratic Charter as a manipulative step to familiarize the electorate with the idea of a SZDSZ-MSZP cooperation.¹²⁶⁹ In the eyes of Orbán's FIDESZ, the former dissidents had entered a marriage of convenience with the former Communists. Balázs Trencsényi notes that this "new anticommunism was also markedly anti-liberal and came to serve as an ideological framework questioning the

¹²⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁶⁸ Bálint Magyar and Iván Pető, "Profi amatőrök – amatőr profik 5.," *ibid.*

¹²⁶⁹ "Profi amatőrök – amatőr profik 6. Szociológiai csapdák és az SZDSZ," *Népszabadság* (2012). "Profi amatőrök – amatőr profik 6. Szociológiai csapdák és az SZDSZ – 6. rész: 1994.," *Népszabadság* (2012). István Hegedűs, interviewed by the author, 17 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

legitimacy of the whole transition process.”¹²⁷⁰ Ferenc Kőszeg, who had become the founding director of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee in late 1989, justified his party’s decision as follows:

Many people, especially the Jewish intelligentsia, felt that only a coalition with the former Communist could stop the rise of the extreme right. [...] It is a matter of debate, whether the SZDZ’s slump in popularity coincided directly with the coalition or only later. Those who are not so critical of [it], say that its popularity actually increased because of the coalition.¹²⁷¹

Others have been more explicit about their own failure as politicians. László Rajk has concluded about his own stint in parliament:

I’m an unsuccessful politician. I do not have the fire in the belly to be a politician. [...] There’s a word in Hungarian: you cannot ride two horses at the same time; be a practical politician, when you are thinking cynically or objectively. You stop thinking theoretically, criticizing critically, ideologically blablaba [sic]. Sometimes one cannot do that. [...] That was the case of Jánosi [János Kis]. [...] You cannot be a prophet and a politician at the same time. You have to choose: which is your real fate, your real destiny? [It] happened everywhere. It happened in then Czechoslovakia, [...] [and] in Poland.¹²⁷²

Rajk resigned from his seat in parliament in 1996 halfway through his term. Gáspár Miklós Tamás had seemed stunned by the fortunate change in his life, well aware of the historic moment and quite enthusiastic in 1990, year one of Hungarian democracy:

[...] a few months ago, I was still an unemployed dissident. Today I am a Member of the Hungarian Parliament and (once again) a Reader in Philosophy at the University of Budapest. It was difficult to concentrate [...] while contesting first a by-election, then a general election, helping to organize a political party, manifestos and pamphlets, open letters and posters, teaching the first official course on political philosophy since before the First World War, arranging police protection because of Nazi death threats, etc. Basically and banally, a great deal has changed.¹²⁷³

¹²⁷⁰ Trencsényi, "The Kulturkampf of the Early 2000s," 137-38.

¹²⁷¹ Ferenc Kőszeg, interviewed by the author, 19 April, 2012, Budapest, Hungary. Kőszeg suggested that "The real turning point was the Tocsik affair," a corruption scandal implicating members of SZDSZ and MSZP. For more, see Lendvai, *Mein verspieltes Land*, 85-86, 95-97.

¹²⁷² László Rajk, interviewed by the author, 26 January 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

¹²⁷³ Gáspár Miklós Tamás, "Not just Not Russia," *Times Literary Supplement* (1990): 843.

In 1994, however, Tamás, who did not return to parliament in 1994, articulated an even more self-deprecating view than Rajk in “The Legacy of Dissent”:

politics was not the only thing being rejected [by dissidents]. Civic community, the state, and the law were suspect for most dissidents. These smacked of regimentation, indoctrination, and domination. Freedom seemed to reside in individual moral action. [...] The cohesive elements of Western civilization – the classical republican heritage, civic patriotism, Biblical religion, and an institutionalized political tradition – were necessarily ignored.¹²⁷⁴

Their own school of thought, their skepticism towards intellectuals and politics, Tamás came to realize, had actually suggested that the former Democratic Opposition had no ideological foundation to go into politics. Just five years after 1989, he noted:

The dissidence of the 1970s and 1980s is rather unpopular in the Eastern Europe of today. [...] [Former] dissidents play but a token role in real politics, and their proudest symbols, like Walesa, Havel or Konrád, are decried as ‘communists,’ ‘traitors,’ ‘agents.’¹²⁷⁵

The former dissidents were an uncomfortable reminder that the majority of Hungarians had lived quite well under the Kádár regime, which they had only come to decry as dictatorship once it failed to provide for them, Tamás proposed. The mere reputation of dissident-turned-politician suggested a higher moral ground that implicated a general acquiescence with state socialism.¹²⁷⁶ Particularly, the former dissidents with Jewish roots disproved claims that Hungarians were martyrs for Europe as the cult around Admiral Miklós Horthy alleged. István Deák summarized the dilemma in more drastic terms:

János Kis and others had their reservations about Hungarian society. They knew what was coming. I have to say it again: all these people we’re talking about are Jewish. Their families have been exterminated. They have been persecuted. [...] [They] have to live in a country, [...] among people who personally or [their]

¹²⁷⁴ "The Legacy of Dissent," in *The Revolutions of 1989*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu (London: Routledge, 1999 (1994)).

¹²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 182.

parents would have liked to kill [them] or were quite pleased that [their] family had been killed or were quite pleased to steal [their] property if nothing else. 1945 was an enormous transfer of wealth from the hands of the Jewish bourgeoisie into the hands of the Christian middle class and lower classes. There are probably thousands and thousands of Hungarian families who are using somebody else's table silver.¹²⁷⁷

László Kontler strikes a more nuanced, less antagonistic tone when he explains the SZDSZ's failure at the ballot:

It took some time before many in the new political class, a disproportionately broad segment of which was initially recruited from the intellectuals of the social sciences and the humanities, realized that their fascination with ideology was not universally shared, and once they had demonstrated their commitment to freedom and patriotism [...], people were more interested in their solutions for aspects of their lives which were tolerably well served under the old regime.¹²⁷⁸

Elemér Hankiss, frustrated by the controversy over his role and competences, resigned from the presidency of MTV in 1993 and returned to his profession of a political scientist and sociologist. Reflecting on his and his disciplines' trajectory, he remarked about the 1980s:

The main issue was whether to reform or not to reform the system – or, whether that was actually possible. The West was the ideal, the Holy Grail, which we only had to touch in order to be saved. Our approach was hopelessly naïve. It was strongly moral in character.¹²⁷⁹

Hankiss described the year 1992 to 1993, when he had found himself at the center of a political brawl, as:

I think 'We and They' might be an appropriate motto for this period. The main genre of this undercurrent was polemics. Nation, ethnicity, identities and ideologies were the main issues. The general approach was emotional. The mood was that of distrust, fear and intolerance.¹²⁸⁰

¹²⁷⁷ István Deák, interviewed by the author, 20 February 2012, New York, USA.

¹²⁷⁸ Kontler, *Millenium in Central Europe*, 470-71.

¹²⁷⁹ Elemér Hankiss, "Brilliant Ideas or Brilliant Errors? 12 years of Political Science Research in Eastern Europe," *European Political Science* (2002): 25.

¹²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

Róza Hodosán, whose second husband, the former co-editor of *Beszélő* Bálint Magyar had served as Minister of Education during the MSZMP-SZDSZ coalition, retired from politics in 1998.¹²⁸¹ The years 1994 to 1998 were rife with corruption scandals and economic problems. The SZDSZ's approval of the so-called Bokros-package, Hungary's most notorious austerity program to this day, stirred resentments. In 1998, less than 8% of the voters cast their ballot for the SZDSZ.¹²⁸²

Other former dissidents had never assumed political responsibilities. György Dalos spent the early 1990s commuting between Berlin, Vienna, and Budapest. In 1994, he finally joined the ranks of Suhrkamp authors, when Unseld published *Der Versteckspieler*, his satirical account of Budapest's dissident milieu in the 1980s.¹²⁸³ In 1997, *The Circumcision*, his semi-autobiographical novel about a Jewish boy growing up in Communist Hungary, became a bestseller in Germany and Dalos was appointed the director of the Collegium Hungaricum in Berlin.¹²⁸⁴ The most prominent case remains György Konrád, who continued to appear in public to weigh in on important matters such as the Democratic Charter and who sat during the SZDSZ party conventions in the front row. He continued to represent Hungary and Hungarian literature abroad: In 1998, he became the first non-German president of the Berlin Academy of Arts.

¹²⁸¹ Magyar and Pető, "Profi amatőrök – amatőr profik 6."

¹²⁸² Lendvai points out that during the Antall administration, real incomes had declined by 20%, but then in 1995-96 alone, they declined by another 18%. The Bokros csomag, named after the Minister of the Economy, Lajos Bokros, cut social spending, introduced tuition fees, devalued the forint and increased taxes. Lendvai, *Mein verspieltes Land*, 77-93. Magyar and Pető, "Profi amatőrök – amatőr profik 6. 1994."

¹²⁸³ György Dalos, *Der Versteckspieler*, trans. Elsbeth Zylla (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994). For the negotiations, see the correspondence between Döring and fellow lector Honnefelder, Dalos and Elsbeth Zylla in 1993 and 1994. DLA Marbach am Neckar, SVA: Suhrkamp / 03 – Lektorate/ Döring, Ahrend, BW mit Autoren, Dalos, György.

¹²⁸⁴ *Die Beschneidung*, trans. Elsbeth Zylla (Frankfurt am Main: suhrkamp, 1997). Christian Döring, interviewed by the author, 27 June 2012, Berlin, Germany.

Others tried to institutionalize their Western role models in the new Hungary. Wolf Lepenies, the director of the Berlin-based ‘Wissenschaftskolleg’, an Institute of Advanced Studies modeled on its Oxford and Harvard predecessors, came to Budapest to help Gábor Klaniczay, János Bak and István Rév found the ‘Collegium Budapest.’ György Bence became a founding editor of the English-language *Budapest Review of Books*, which sought to emulate the *New York Review of Books* in reviewing the Hungarian literary and scholarly publications. The title *Budapesti Könyvszemle* abbreviated in Hungarian to BUKSZ, pronounced just like the English ‘books.’¹²⁸⁵ In 1991, the Soros Foundation granted 2 million forints (about US \$ 36,000) to this new, liberal literary and cultural journal; it was discontinued in 2002.

Already in late 1992, Bence and Mária Kovács, disappointed the SZDSZ did not develop into a social democratic party, left for the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars in D.C., where he pursued the question: “The Fallacies of Studying Soviet Style Systems: Why Did We Fail to See the Moment of Failure Coming in Eastern Europe?”¹²⁸⁶ More than in the SZDSZ, Bence was frustrated by the direction FIDESZ, the Young Democrats, had taken. He and András Kovács had served as advisors to the student-politicians in the early years.¹²⁸⁷ In the mid-1980s, the FIDESZ had grown out of the ‘collegium movement,’ which had been an attempt to reform the higher education system. The FIDESZ founders had attended the István Bibó College, where they created their own journal by the title of *Magyar Narancs*, the Hungarian Orange, after Péter

¹²⁸⁵ “Soros Foundation Hungary 1991 Report of Activities,” HU OSA 13-3-3 Box 4.

¹²⁸⁶ From September 1992 to August 1993, he worked on the project: “The Fallacies of Studying Soviet Style Systems: Why Did We Fail to See the Moment of Failure Coming in Eastern Europe?” <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/staff/gyorgy-bence>.

¹²⁸⁷ Éva Karadi, interviewed by the author, 7 January, 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

Bacsó's popular satirical film *The Witness*.¹²⁸⁸ The first issue of this liberal, innovative weekly came out on October 14, 1989.¹²⁸⁹ Initially, there was a fruitful exchange of ideas between *Magyar Narancs* and members of the Democratic Opposition, since 1988 the Alliance of Free Democrats. The *Magyar Narancs* editors emphasized the weekly was *not* a party organ. Early issues reviewed the latest *Beszélő*, announced events in Vienna, Berlin, Munich and Frankfurt, and in the fall it published a tripartite series on the "History of Liberalism." In 1991, the Soros Foundation supported the magazine with over 3 million forint.¹²⁹⁰ Many in the SZDSZ believed that the FIDESZ and *Magyar Narancs* owed their popularity to the dissident's patronage in the 1980s, when the Bibó students had absorbed the Democratic Opposition's *samizdat* journals, and participated in its meetings.¹²⁹¹

At the beginning, the liberal, dynamic group of students that had founded the FIDESZ in March 1988 inspired many Western visitors, including George Soros.¹²⁹² In the fall of 1989, Viktor Orbán had received one of the Soros scholarships for Oxford University; however, he returned early to participate in the Oppositional Roundtable. In early 1990, *Der Spiegel* suggested: "The most exciting in this [election] campaign are the young, refreshingly disrespectful twens of the Association of Young Democrats. Since June 16, their leader, Viktor Orbán, a jurist educated in Budapest and Oxford, has the

¹²⁸⁸ The film portrays the life of a dike ward in Communist Hungary in the 1950s, who stumbles from one disaster to the next. He is entrusted with growing oranges in Hungary. Unable to admit the plan had failed, the protagonist presents a lemon to the 'big brother', insisting it is an orange, "a Hungarian orange." The movie was banned in Hungary and not shown until the Cannes film festival in 1981. Péter Bacsó, "A Tanú," (Mafilm, 1982 (1969)).

¹²⁸⁹ *Magyar Narancs*, no. 1, 14 October 1989.

¹²⁹⁰ By comparison, *Beszélő* received 1 million forint in 1991. "Soros Foundation Hungary 1991 Report of Activities," HU OSA 13-3-3 Box 4.

¹²⁹¹ Magyar and Pető, "Profí amatőrök – amatőr profik 4.." István Hegedűs, interviewed by the author, 17 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

¹²⁹² For instance, Wolf Lepenies, "Ich denke oft an Budapest," *Die Welt*, 8 January 2011.

reputation of a national hero.”¹²⁹³ The FIDESZ had headed into the first elections with a poster of a young couple kissing contrasted with a picture of Leonid Brezhnev and Erich Honnecker; their TV ads ran to Roxette’s song “Listen to your heart.” The Swedish rock band had come to Budapest to give a concert with the FIDESZ leadership on stage.

Initially, the former Democratic Opposition and the young hopefuls cooperated closely. Many of the former dissident intellectuals celebrated them as the future of Hungary, who could bridge the rural and urban divide.¹²⁹⁴ The FIDESZ leadership came from the countryside as well as from Budapest. The BBC correspondent Nick Thorpe recalled how he first learnt about Orbán:

When FIDESZ was founded Viktor Orbán and his batch came to see me, Miklós Haraszti introduced me to them. He rang me up: “I have this young man here and he wants to talk to you.” And he handed me Viktor Orban, which is a bit strange in retrospect. [laughs]¹²⁹⁵

Until today, controversies surround the alienation of the FIDESZ from the Free Democrats. Tensions between two camps, one rallying behind Gábor Fodor, one behind Viktor Orbán, had been on the rise.¹²⁹⁶ Many believed former dissident intellectuals, like János Kis and Miklós Szabó, had been grooming Fodor to be their heir apparent. Even President Árpád Göncz expressed his admiration.¹²⁹⁷ Rumors claim that the connections between Miklós Haraszti and Orbán severed when, during an election campaign event, the former adjusted Orbán’s tie, a public embarrassment for the young, self-conscious

¹²⁹³ Spiess-Hohnholz, "Wir wagen es, wir tun es," 215.

¹²⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁹⁵ Nick Thorpe, interviewed by the author, 11 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

¹²⁹⁶ György Petőcz, ed. *Csak a narancs volt. A Fidesz (egy) története* (Budapest: Iróadalom Kft., 2001). István Hegedűs, "Der Weg des FIDESZ von der oppositionellen Partei der Jungdemokraten zur populistischen Regierungspartei," (Berlin: Deutsch-Ungarische Gesellschaft, 2011).

¹²⁹⁷ Orbán, on the contrary, the President claimed had never been interested in meeting with him. 56-os Intézet, Oral History Archive, Interjú sorszám: 2/K, interviewer: Hegedűs B. András, 14 June 1990.

politician.¹²⁹⁸ Some still consider the FIDESZ's turnaround a sign of an "Oedipus complex."¹²⁹⁹ But even István Hegedűs criticized the oftentimes patronizing attitude:

[When] democracy had started, a lot of journalists, a lot of observers described FIDESZ as a young SZDSZ, a young Free Democrats and Orbán and [László] Kövér hated this. I did not like it either, but they *hated* it. [...] When Free Democrats said that FIDESZ is our natural ally, Orbán and Kövér became furious: What do you mean?¹³⁰⁰

Problems began when for one protest for the Democratic Charter, the organizers invited only Fodor, and not Orbán, to speak. Suddenly, the Fodor camp, commonly known as the 'Fodoristák', was criticized as 'agents' of the SZDSZ.¹³⁰¹ Hegedűs recalls how the Democratic Charter, which the Young Democrats had originally supported, was re-interpreted as the first sign of a liberal-leftist conspiracy.¹³⁰² László Rajk remembers the change in attitudes:

The Charter [...] was [...] modeled on the people's front before the second world war. You could leave the charter, [it] was only for the changes and not a cheap coalition... This is what was [claimed] by FIDESZ, [but] it was not. [Orbán] used very much the results, [...] he was just [an opportunist] weakening the Antall regime. I don't know when FIDESZ was ready with the strategy of replacing the [MDF] vacuum [...]. It was not before the election or during, it was after the elections when he suddenly realized [his] hidden national patriotic feeling.¹³⁰³

Fodor left the FIDESZ in 1992 and joined the SZDSZ to become the Minister of Education in 1994.¹³⁰⁴ At a party congress in 1993, the remaining FIDESZ leaders

¹²⁹⁸ Without any specific details as to when and where, several interview partners have mentioned this incident.

¹²⁹⁹ Magyar and Pető, "Profí amatőrök – amatőr profik 4."

¹³⁰⁰ István Hegedűs, interviewed by the author, 17 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

¹³⁰¹ Hegedűs, "Der Weg des FIDESZ". Petőcz, *Csak a narancs volt. A Fidesz (egy) története*.

¹³⁰² István Hegedűs, interviewed by the author, 17 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

¹³⁰³ László Rajk, interviewed by the author, 26 January 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

¹³⁰⁴ Gábor Fodor, "Szakítás," in *Csak a narancs volt.*, ed. György Petőcz (Budapest: Irodalom, 2001).

changed basic principles in its by-laws, which consolidated Orbán's power forcing the remaining critics to quit.¹³⁰⁵

With Fodor gone and the MDF falling apart, the FIDESZ shifted to the right.¹³⁰⁶ István Deák, who had hosted Orbán at Columbia University in New York in the early 1990s, explained the change as a result of the disintegration of the MDF:

Even the MDF was a party that in many ways saw itself as progressive [although] it already had these elements of state-centralization and nationalism which is so characteristic of FIDESZ [today]. There was MIEP, there was Csurka's MIÉP, after a while, but he wasn't so terribly talented at organizing it. And Orbán [...] came to the conclusion very wisely from his point of view, there is a big hole to be filled. He has no chances on the left – they got 8% in one election [of 1994] – that he can change to a national line and immediately he had a huge following!¹³⁰⁷

Csilla Kiss believes that the reinvention of FIDESZ was successful only because of Hungary's economic decline, inconsistent budget policies, and particularly the Bokros package. Orbán's new target audience became the "new middle class of provincial towns and small business. [...] Populist economic policy was accompanied by support for a strong state and a conservative Catholic line on social issues."¹³⁰⁸ In the spring of 1998, Orbán led a convincing campaign against the "most corrupt government in history," promised 50% tax cuts, and the restoration of Hungarian pride.¹³⁰⁹ There was no empathy lost between the former liberal allies, the FIDESZ and the SZDSZ. Age 35, Orbán, the

¹³⁰⁵ Among other regulations, they abolished the age limit of 35. For more, see Csilla Kiss, "From Liberalism to Conservatism: The Federation of Young Democrats in Post-Communist Hungary," *East European Politics and Society*, no. 16 (2002).

¹³⁰⁶ József Debreczeni, *Arcmás* (Budapest Noran-Libro, 2009), 101-23.

¹³⁰⁷ István Deák, interviewed by the author, 20 February 2012, New York, USA.

¹³⁰⁸ Kiss, "From Liberalism to Conservatism," 744-45.

¹³⁰⁹ Orbán's former friend and now adverse biographer József Debreczeni points out that in 1996 polls actually Fidesz at only 9%. Debreczeni, *Arcmás*, 111.

political “comet” according to Paul Lendvai, won the elections in 1998 with over 38% of the votes, making him the youngest prime minister in Hungarian history.¹³¹⁰

The elections of 1998 suggest that the first phase of the post-1989 transformation of Hungary had come to an end. The MDF was but a shadow of itself; István Csurka’s MIÉP, the Hungarian Justice and Life Party, passed the threshold of 5% and entered parliament. The SZDSZ had been reduced to less than 8%, a precipitous fall from which it has never recovered. By 1998, it was clear that the former Democratic Opposition had failed to establish a liberal party. Although intellectually appealing as the first two election rounds suggest, there was no place for liberal politics in the new Hungary.

The MSZP did not suffer nearly as much from the coalition years and received a stunning 30% in 1998. The FIDESZ entered a coalition with the Independent Smallholders. But ideologically, the FIDESZ hardly resembled the radical, liberal party of 1989. Instead, it had appropriated much of the nationalist rhetoric and symbolism initiated by the MDF, which was the smallest junior partner in the center-right coalition.¹³¹¹ The Fidesz was now the leading party on the right. Its main adversary was not the SZDSZ, but the MSZP. Hungary’s political life had entered a new era.¹³¹²

The following year, in 1999, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the peaceful revolutions, Gáspár Miklós Tamás, ever the cynic, reflected on the impossibility of the dissidents’ success:

We were a generation that had to change the world [but] it was forbidden by its own philosophical preferences to have a philosophical blueprint for that. We couldn’t have utopian plans since we were insurgents against revolutionary utopia [i.e. socialism]. We couldn’t use rhetoric of redressing millenary ills and putting right what is wrong with the world because this was exactly the

¹³¹⁰ Lendvai, *Mein verspieltes Land*, 95-107. "Ungarn: Gezähmte Wilde," *Der Spiegel* 52, no. 23 (1998).

¹³¹¹ Some aspects will be discussed in the following chapter. *Mein verspieltes Land*, 95-107.

¹³¹² Batory, *The Politics of EU Accession*, 3.

approach of the people we [... he chuckles...] pushed a bit and then they overturned themselves.¹³¹³

It was a belated admission of what Timothy Garton Ash had called the Hungarian and Polish “refolutions”. The incompatibility of their ideological premises as dissidents and their post-1989 pursuit of political offices was not a belated epiphany, but a dilemma they had been aware of all along.¹³¹⁴ The most subdued if not resigned response about the legacy of the international network has probably come from János Kis, the erstwhile intellectual leader of the Democratic Opposition, who has pursued his calling as a professor of philosophy at the Central European University:

I would say that the network of personal friendships remained, of course. But very understandably, once it came to the formation of parties, [...], the party looks for other [...] partners, not for journalists, not for human rights defense organization, or [...] writers. So many of those people [...], for example Timothy Garton Ash and Jacques Rupnik in France have remained friends – but that is a personal matter.¹³¹⁵

VI. Conclusion

The years from 1987 to 1998 represent a fight over the direction that Hungary should take in the new era. It was a time of dismissed alternatives and missed opportunities, but also one of successes. At the end of the 1980s, Hungary was the pacemaker of reforms in the Eastern bloc. The reform communists ceded ground as new civic initiatives were voicing popular concerns. Developments spiraled out of control as Hungarians gained relative freedom of movement on 1 January 1988 and when the regime literally started pulling down the Iron Curtain by spring 1989.

¹³¹³ Gáspár Miklós Tamás, “The End of Radical Philosophy,” conference paper, “Past & Present,” event recording, 26-28 March 1999. HU OSA 203-13-1 DVD 135.

¹³¹⁴ Timothy Garton Ash, “Eastern Europe: Après le Déluge, nous,” *New York Review of Books* 37, no. 13 (1990).

¹³¹⁵ János Kis, interviewed by the author, 24 April 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

People protested the environmental dangers of the planned construction of the Nagymaros-Gabčíkovo dam, which threatened to destroy the Danube basin, one of Hungary's most precious and sensitive natural heritage sites. The other major concern was the discrimination against the Hungarian minority in neighboring Romania. The key to the symbolic overthrow of the one-party state was the rehabilitation of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, which the alliance of Fifty-Sixers, the Democratic Opposition and their international supporters had championed. The cataclysmic event was the reburial of the '56 martyrs on 16 June 1989 and the legal rehabilitation of the revolutionaries the following month, on the day that János Kádár passed away.

Despite the huge strides towards democratization, the dissidents and their Western friends were deeply worried about the rise of nationalism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia in the region. The transformation also brought a renegotiation of political taboos, programs and aspirations that did not square up with what the dissidents had imagined for Eastern Europe. Although György Konrád was honored for masterminding the peaceful transitions in a newly united Germany, at home he experienced turmoil, confusion, and personal attacks. Western recognition of the former dissidents continued unabated, whereas at home they slowly retreated from the political responsibilities that they had temporarily taken upon themselves. Although they could resort to their original professions as philosophers, writers and artists, some grew deeply disappointed by the direction Hungary's political culture was taking.

In the first years, they had sought to battle the nationalist rewriting of the country's history and the perceived threat to newly won freedoms. The revival of interwar symbols, their irredentist and chauvinistic connotations, to prop up a Christian

Magyar nation-state repelled the cosmopolitans. In recognition of political realities, they made concessions to join the government of the reformed and reconstituted successor party of the MSZMP in 1994. However, they did not halt the country's economic decline nor manage to make classic liberalism a mainstay of Hungarian politics. By 1998, after the third round of democratic elections, almost all former dissidents had withdrawn from the political limelight. That year, Hungary joined NATO and was negotiating its membership in the European Union. Although the former Democratic Opposition had paved the way for the expansion of these Western organizations, they had little to do with the actual accession process.

Nevertheless, their struggle to fight off nationalism was not unsuccessful. Their ranks remained steadfast as their coming together in Cracow in September 1991 for the final conference of the Fondation demonstrated. Although the organization closed down, its network survived in form of the newly constituted Open Society Institute and the Central European University. The fear of nationalism inspired the founding of the CEU just as much as the recognition that a new generation had to be trained – along Western principles of higher education – to manage the region's transformation. When Soros met resistance from politicians and intellectuals who disliked his influence and adhered to a different vision for their countries, he gave up on his dream of campuses in all capitals of Central Europe and consolidated in Budapest, the home of his most successful open society branch yet. Others had to give up on their dreams, too, as Czechoslovakia filed the velvet divorce and Adam Michnik reserved his right to disagree with the Lech Wałęsa cementing the disintegration of Solidarity. In light of these developments, the squabbles

over Hungary's symbolic landscape placed third, if not fourth in the *New Yorker's* ranking of priorities.

Two dramatic developments undermined the former dissidents' legacy and erstwhile aspirations: first, the Yugoslav successor wars to the south of Hungary and the genocide in Bosnia; and second, the rightward drift of their former liberal junior partner, the FIDESZ. Particularly the New Yorkers, with the quadriga of the *New York Review of Books*, George Soros, Aryeh Neier and Susan Sontag taking the lead, approached the conflict in the former Yugoslavia with the same ideological premises as they had once justified their human rights activism on behalf of the East European opposition movements. Evoking the Holocaust had turned into a legitimating strategy for intervention and humanitarian aid.

The makeover of the FIDESZ as center-right party filled the ideological vacuum after the disintegration of the MDF. For many, it was a political and a personal defeat that education, freedom of movement and access to information – which the former dissidents had fought for – did not result in the same liberal convictions. The legacy of the network has prevailed in more elusive, but nonetheless significant areas: it continued to shape the discourse on Europe through the *New York Review of Books* and the narrative of the Cold War through publications such as Tony Judt's *Postwar. A History of Europe*. For at least the first ten years since the collapse of state socialism, the network maintained a general consensus in values and opinions. Members continued to cooperate, now that all had assumed proper positions as journalists, publicists and professors and they valued each other as friends. In that narrow sense, the dissidents' Republic of Letters has prevailed.

Conclusion

I. The Making of An International Network

Hungary's current economic performance does not fare well when compared to 'goulash communism.' In 2013, the OECD found that today "Hungarians are less satisfied with their lives than the OECD average."¹³¹⁶ Surveys indicate that János Kádár remains one of Hungary's most popular politicians. The reverence is indicative of a strange nostalgia for the good old times, when the country was a poster-child of Socialist prosperity, when Hungarians owned dachas at Lake Balaton, travelled abroad, consumed freely and widely, and felt at peace with a regime that not only left them alone but provided for them.¹³¹⁷ At the same time, the country is run by a prime minister who dismisses the accomplishments of the previous twenty years as deception and vilifies forty years of state socialism as a homogenous period of foreign imposition and oppression. Meanwhile, the prime minister's critics accuse him of dismantling democracy and establishing an autocracy.¹³¹⁸ Within less than ten years since Hungary joined the European Union, the country has turned into a pariah allegedly violating commonly accepted values and practices.

The current situation contrasts sharply with Hungary's place in the international community and its domestic situation in the last phase of the Cold War. This analysis has sought to highlight the country's distinct position within the bipolar world order and the

¹³¹⁶ OECD, "Hungary. How's Life? Measuring Well-Being,"(2014).

¹³¹⁷ Zsuzsanna Wirth, "Kádár János olyan jól csinálta, hogy nem tudunk leszokni róla," *Origo.hu*, 28 May 2013. András Mink, "The Kádár of History," *Budapest Review of Books* 01-04(2001): 37.

¹³¹⁸ Kornai, "Taking Stock".

impact it had on the transformation after the collapse of state socialism in 1989 through the lens of the Hungarian dissidents and their Western friends from 1973 to 1998.

This study has explored the motivations of members in an international network seeking to undermine the status quo, their mutual influences and aspirations. It has investigated the limits that the Cold War framework has imposed on critical intellectuals eager to engage in a dialogue across national and bloc boundaries, and the opportunities that they created for themselves and like-minded in face of systemic obstacles. Of special interest have been the establishment and operations of this network in the late 1970s and the 1980s in order to highlight the prehistory of the collapse of state socialism. Unlike previous work, the analysis extends until 1998 to better assess the legacy of East European dissidents on the transformations of the region using the case study of Hungary.

By the mid-1980s Hungarian dissidents known as the Democratic Opposition received much exposure in the Western press, had extensive contacts with like-minded intellectuals and activists in East and West, travelled to the other side of the Iron Curtain, and invited their Western friends to Hungary. The formative experiences most participants made in the 1960s help explain this network between intellectuals from New York, West Germany, and Budapest, which also included Paris, Vienna, Warsaw and Prague.

Globally, the 1960s, especially the year 1968, were a time of revolt in which a younger generation coming of age after the end of World War II came to question the post-war settlements and status quo. Within their respective national contexts, the intellectuals in the U.S., West Germany and Hungary took an active part in the social movements and protests against the established order.

In the U.S., the divisive issues were the Vietnam War, American interventionism abroad, the betrayal by the older generation of intellectuals, the original Cold Warriors, and the manipulation of the public. The *New York Review of Books* became the forum for those outward-looking intellectuals who refused to be co-opted and considered a skepticism towards the powers that be a necessary corrective and guarantee for integrity. In West Germany, the protests of the 1960s were complicated by the country's Nazi past, which had resulted in the contrast between a conservative political establishment and an articulate left-wing intellectual milieu in the 1950s. The Frankfurt School and the Suhrkamp Publishing House paved the way for '68. West German students only had to look to the twelve years of Nazi rule to distrust intellectuals, scholars, and journalists too close to the halls of power. Before the term Holocaust gained ground, Auschwitz and fascism were the widely employed terms for enemies and antagonists.

“Global” in 1968 also meant that the participants were often well aware of the concerns of their comrades-in-arms abroad. For instance, West German anti-Americanism corresponded to the student and anti-War protests in the U.S. In Hungary, the crushing of the Prague Spring in August 1968 and the reception of the social movements in the West ushered in the end of Marxist revisionism and the separation of the Lukács School from the Lukács kindergarten. In Hungary, the 1960s were much more subdued because of the 1956 revolution, the last round of amnesties had just occurred in 1963. Radical groups, like the Maoists, were a more isolated phenomenon. In the case of György Konrád, never a radical, his employment in the social welfare department and then in the urban planning office led to a rethinking of his ideological premises.

In general, the 1970s forced the moderation of opinions as the political landscape fragmented. Mostly, the reconsideration was the result of real experiences that disproved their beliefs in socialism, revolution, and radicalism. They had never rescinded their left-of-center convictions, but the comparison with the New Left was misplaced because, in the course of the 1970s, they approached a classic liberal equilibrium. Susan Sontag had demonstrated her opposition to U.S. policies with a trip to Hanoi and Enzensberger with an extended stay in Cuba. Both had returned disillusioned. So while the 1960s were characterized by the wild days of opposition and protests, the 1970s required introspection leading to a search for a new political cause and a refinement of intellectual identity. Susan Sontag best expressed the change in 1975:

The Seventies could be a more serious time of political education, with a growing and history-minded distrust of all slogans of historical optimism, a respect for the implacableness of cultural diversity, a lessening of affection for our own innocence, an awareness of the perils of self-righteousness – “liberal” virtues, all, but no less necessary if the anger that still burns in America is to have political meaning.¹³¹⁹

Mere opposition to the status quo was no longer sustainable, especially since the status quo had changed: in the U.S., the unlikely Richard Nixon, voted into the White House by the ‘silent majority’, took the first steps towards détente, although Watergate again confirmed the intellectuals’ distrust of politicians. In West Germany, the Social Democrat Willy Brandt revolutionized politics in daring more democracy at home and opening up to the country’s neighbors in the East with his “Neue Ostpolitik.” When Brandt dropped down to his knees in front of the Warsaw ghetto monument in 1970, he

¹³¹⁹ Sontag et al., "A Special Supplement: The Meaning of Vietnam."

asked for forgiveness for Nazi crimes and demonstrated that West Germany was ready to engage peacefully with the East.¹³²⁰

In Hungary, Kádár's social contract had set the foundation for 'goulash communism,' relative prosperity and unprecedented embourgeoisement. It was not the demands for revolution or reform of the 1960s, but the economic crisis of 1973 that forced political changes. In Hungary, the pressure was handed down in two big trials, the first against Lukács's former students, the second against the enfant terrible Miklós Haraszti. While the older philosophers emigrated, the younger generation of sociologists and philosophers prevailed, Konrád being the most prominent case.

Nevertheless, the incentive for all members of the network to actively engage in a new type of politics came from abroad. Instead of far-away socialist experiments, Hans Magnus Enzensberger discovered repressed writers closer to home. He used his vast network, reputation, and ingenuity to support the Hungarians and to open the West German literary market to them. In the U.S., within the Cold War framework it is less surprising that inspiration initially came from Soviet poets and writers like Vladimir Bukovsky and Joseph Brodsky, and most prominently Andrei Sakharov. The activists in Moscow breathed life into the Helsinki Final Act, demanding respect for its human rights provisions. In response, the New Yorkers rallied behind their cause and, true to their commitment to independence and nonpartisanism in the Cold War, founded the double organization of Helsinki Watch and Americas Watch.

The activism on behalf of East European critics was not wholly disinterested. The defense of human rights offered a common aspiration that could overcome the

¹³²⁰ Tony Judt, "How the East was Won," review of *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent*, by Timothy Garton Ash, *ibid.* 40, no. 21 (1993).

fragmentation of society and, as Richard Sennett noted, urban culture. Interest in Eastern European opposition created a dynamic synergy between the Institute for the Humanities, the *New York Review of Books*, and Helsinki Watch that bridged professions and academic disciplines. The perceived negative effect of fragmentation also explains in part the New Yorkers' and the Hungarians' fascination with the Polish opposition, which with the foundation of the Workers' Defense Committee KOR in 1976 mended the common social barriers between workers and intellectuals.

At the end of the 1970s, the treatment of dissidents – who still opposed the term – in the Western press progressed from confusion to caution and finally to acceptance of the concept of East European dissent as self-explanatory. At first, a Western audience needed comparisons with more familiar concepts and terms, but soon the opposition to state socialism had established an autonomous identity and did not have to be circumscribed by other means. However, the development of a common language and reference system was important, because it suggested that dissidents were an integral part of the same culture and shared the same cultural heritage. The recognition of one's self in the other occurred most strikingly in Venice in 1977, when the New Yorkers met György Konrád at the Venice Biennale. They discovered a writer, who was repressed in his home country for articulating views that they too held. Moreover, Konrád, the dissident and Holocaust survivor, confirmed their anti-totalitarian, liberal worldview and their validity across bloc boundaries.

In the case of the Hungarians, the combination of pressure from above, restrictions on everyday lives such as the ban on practicing their professions, and inspiration from Poland and Czechoslovakia led to increased activity in Budapest,

especially in the private apartments in Budapest. To address the self-diagnosed absence of a coordinated opposition, the Budapest non-conformists put together three *samizdat* projects in 1977 and 1978. The *Bibó Commemorative Book* can be interpreted as an attempt to establish a distinct intellectual tradition, find a common historical narrative and weld different ideological trends of the Budapest circles together.

The key moment for the international network's growth was the outbreak of strikes in Gdańsk in August 1980. It restored the hope that grass root movements could still bring about significant change. The founding of the independent trade union Solidarity temporarily suspended the Brezhnev doctrine and permanently changed Cold War dynamics: The Polish opposition impressed the New Yorkers and Hungarians not only because of the alliance across social classes and vibrant underground culture, but also especially because of the contest between 'the people' against 'the state.'

The Budapest intelligentsia looked to Poland with admiration. Historically, they could claim to be brothers in the fight for independence. Not only in 1848 did both people battle the Habsburg and Russian rulers, but more recently in 1956. But by comparison, the Hungarian critics lacked the broader appeal; with the exception of the Organization for the Support of the Poor (SZETA), there was hardly any contact between Hungarian workers and the non-conformists in Budapest. The identification with the Poles went so far that some of the Hungarians learned Polish; others travelled to Poland to learn about the production of *samizdat*. Nevertheless, the euphoria in Hungary was not universal, some urged caution remembering the brutal endings in 1956 and 1968. Moreover, it was questionable whether the risks of opposition were worth the possible outcome, especially since the goals of any form of dissent had yet to be defined. For

individuals with young families who already suffered from work restrictions these were existential decisions. The dispute surrounding the founding of the *samizdat* journal *Beszélő* reflects these concerns.

II. Taking on the Cold War Status Quo

The Polish crisis stimulated and coincided with the contraction of the international support network. In the fall of 1981, in response to their activism the New Yorkers Jeri Laber and Richard Bernstein were banned from attending the book fair in Moscow. Instead they recruited their exiled Russian friends, chief among them Joseph Brodsky and Vladimir Bukovsky, for a counter-event in New York's Public Library. The Hungarian-born hedge fund manager George Soros attended the event: he had just hosted an unexpected visitor from Hungary, his former schoolmate, the playwright István Eörsi who held a teaching fellowship in the U.S. and opened Soros's eyes to the developments in Eastern Europe. Intrigued, Soros sought out those New Yorkers who were already engaged with the dissidents behind the Iron Curtain, and what ensued can probably be described as a meeting of the minds centered on the New York Institute for the Humanities.

Within a short time, under its director Aryeh Neier, the Institute had turned into the intellectual center of the network, where human rights activism merged with the New Yorkers' historical and cultural interests in all things European. Exiled writers and scholars walked the corridors of the Institute. George Soros immediately fit into this community of critical and eccentric thinkers. The mutual appreciation between Aryeh Neier and George Soros – both men of action with a vision, strong belief in liberalism, and managerial talents – cannot be overstated. The New Yorkers, George Soros and the

East Europeans mutually benefitted from the synergy, often in very personal ways. Soros for instance realized his long-time dream of a life as a philosopher. Moreover, he could realize visions of his own grandeur with the help of the network, which profited from his generosity, philanthropy and expertise in the international financial market.

Nevertheless, it took the declaration of martial law in Poland in December 1981 for the network to reach full maturity. Annette Laborey from the *Fondation pour une entraide intellectuelle européenne* brought indispensable inside knowledge and connections behind the Iron Curtain to the network. She had found herself in a desperate situation. On the one hand the conditions and threat to cut funding from the Ford Foundation hung over her head; on the other hand, she had hosted and come to identify very strongly with the Polish cause. When some of her grantees could not return home anymore after December 1981, following a recommendation from Ford, she contacted Aryeh Neier and George Soros, who in return relied on her recommendation for fellows and worthy projects from Eastern Europe.

Paradoxically, the Hungarians benefitted the most from the Polish crisis, since Kádár's peculiar liberalism allowed many of them to travel abroad *and* return. With Konrád having taken the lead in 1976, the West German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) sooner or later invited most of the writers from the Hungarian Democratic Opposition to West Berlin, the front city of the Cold War. Several of the sociologists and philosophers from Budapest were invited to the Institute for the Humanities, most importantly György Bence. Jeri Laber from Helsinki Watch helped him to get out, after Neier had sent her on a reconnaissance tour through Eastern Europe, only days before the declaration of martial law in 1981.

The personal encounter was extremely important as the Venice Biennale already indicated. In Laber's case, talking to the dissidents often turned into a confrontation with their own family heritage. Laber was not the only one who descended from Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust became real in the stories of the dissidents, and the Western visitors realized that these stories could have been their own. Only towards the end of the 1970s did the Holocaust become the accepted symbol for universal evil; the rise of human rights was one of the reasons for this development. The solidarity with the dissidents confirmed the Westerners' ideological beliefs in liberalism and reinforced their commitment to support those fighting the "totalitarian" regimes in the Eastern bloc.

Growing into the network of intellectuals in New York, George Soros realized that he could make a difference in aspiring to open closed societies, the concept his revered mentor Karl Popper had established. Although this study only discusses some of his philanthropic investments, the network described here represents the core of what has become known as the 'Soros Empire.' Initially, as the failed attempt to establish an exchange program with Columbia University suggests, Soros seems not to have had a comprehensive master plan. But through a snowball effect, he ended up funding multiple organizations engaged with the East European opposition movements. He saved the Institute for the Humanities and Fondation pour une entraide intellectuelle from financial collapse, and he became an important member of the U.S. Helsinki Watch Group.

In 1982, barely a year had passed since their first meeting at New York Public Library, when the New Yorkers invited Soros to attend the founding meeting of the International Helsinki Federation in Bellagio, Italy. The meeting was significant because

it connected West European monitoring groups with the U.S. Helsinki branch, émigré organizations and dissident groups in Eastern Europe. The Federation set up its headquarters in Vienna. The Austrian capital was accessible even for East Europeans, the country's neutrality underscored the organization's political independence, and historically the city represented the heart of Central Europe. For the Hungarians, the direct comparison with the Polish and Czechoslovak opposition movements represented a dilemma: with leaders in Warsaw and Prague regularly imprisoned, dissident life in Hungary appeared relatively tolerable. Therefore, emphasizing solidarity and a common front against the socialist regimes in the region was essential. Additionally, they redoubled their support for the persecuted activists from the Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia and particularly Romania.

The choice of Vienna as headquarters highlights the importance of the periphery in the Cold War. Since 1982, the Austrian capital was also home to the Institute for the Human Sciences, an institute for advanced studies aiming to maintain a scholarly dialogue between East and West. It had grown out of the seminars at the Inter University Centre in Dubrovnik and was founded on the Central European tradition of phenomenology. Its history emphasized once more the significance of the Polish crisis for the international supporters of the East European opposition movements and the relevance of the "Polish Pope," John Paul II, who declared himself a friend of the institute and its non-denominational, non-partisan goals.

The links to phenomenology had originally led the founder, Krzysztof Michalski, to Prague. Since 1979, professors from Oxford attended the underground seminars in the Czechoslovak capital. The key organizers Kathy Wilkes, Bill Newton-Smith, and Roger

Scruton were motivated by the idea that education should be free and the desire to secure the tradition of phenomenology in one of its places of origin. Independently from the New Yorkers, they too created an institutional framework for their activities, the Jan Hus Fund, and smuggled manuscripts out of and money and books into the country. With the help of the émigré Jan Kavan, they quickly established a well-functioning system that became a model for branches in France and West Germany and even survived the regime's crackdown on the visits and banning of its main organizers.

As Prague was becoming a forbidden city, Wilkes and Newton-Smith joined the workshops at the Inter University Center in Dubrovnik. The "pearl on the Adriatic" in non-aligned Yugoslavia was also accessible to Easterners and Westerners and had become a popular travel destination for those seeking to circumvent Cold War restrictions on academic exchanges and scholarly dialogue. The success of the IUC, which rooted in the visionary spirit of its founder, Ivan Supek, and the dedication of its general secretary, Berta Dragičević, inspired Krzysztof Michalski, who since a fellowship from the Fondation had been working together with his mentor, the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, to create a more permanent institution: the IWM. Since Michalski had originally been interested in the Czech philosopher Jan Patočka, the IWM promptly established ties to the underground in Prague, and with that to the Jan Hus Fund and the adventurous British professors in Oxford and London.

Through Aryeh Neier, Jeri Laber, and Annette Laborey, George Soros must have had quickly learned about the various initiatives and organization. He became not only the main donors to many, but also a member on various boards. By 1984, he considered founding his philanthropic foundation. He had identified Hungary, his home country, as

ideal test case for Popper's theories of open societies. Soros knew the regime in Budapest to be vulnerable to hard currencies and personal flattery. He moved to exploit both. By 1985, Soros had convinced the regime to co-sign the charter of and cooperate in the Soros-MTA Foundation. The regime might have (mis-) perceived the organization as a welcome resource of U.S. dollars and Western technology. However, the Soros-MTA quickly turned into a self-perpetuating generator of civic initiatives, academic research and foreign exchanges. The belated attempt in 1987 to stop the popularity of the funding programs, for which Soros used his connections in the international network in New York, Oxford and Dubrovnik, by banning the publication of the calls for applications in the weekly *HVG* utterly failed and revealed the regime's dependency on foreign pressure and popular contentment. The Soros-MTA had taken over state functions, with Soros as president and Miklós Vászárhelyi as regent.

Such connections do not only illustrate the significance of the periphery, but also the interlocking of human rights activism and academic interests. The evolution of the New Yorkers' concerns underscores this point. Carl Schorske, one of the founders of the Institute for the Humanities, had pioneered the study of *fin de siècle* Vienna. It complemented the expertise in modern French and German culture that had fascinated Robert Silvers, Susan Sontag, and Richard Sennett. The understanding of a coherent cultural sphere that roughly matched the Habsburg Empire at the turn of the century preceded the New Yorkers' defense of human rights. The idea of Central Europe as a historic entity corroborated the justification for their contemporary activism on behalf of the opposition movements in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. It was further

underscored by the Holocaust, which had ravaged the same region, historically the home of Europe's Jewry and often also the home of their ancestors.

Schorske's analysis of the anxieties that young artists and intellectuals in Vienna felt and expressed around 1900 as a response and renunciation of their fathers' failed liberal promise to unite the "dungeon of nations" shows distinct parallels with György Konrád's *Antipolitics*. Konrád assigned the writer also the non-political role of a critical observer, always ready to intervene publicly to bemoan grievances, but independent from everyday politics. If these parallels between the fin de siècle and the 1980s were not sufficiently convincing, Karl von Schwarzenberg, bon vivant and son of a Bohemian noble family who once had estates throughout the region, was elected the Helsinki Federation's president.

The network's greatest triumph probably came in October 1985, when at the initiative of the U.S. Helsinki Watch group, the International Helsinki Federation organized an Alternative Forum to coincide with the official Helsinki Review Conference in Budapest. Within two years since its founding, the Federation had perfected the tools of human rights monitoring and managed to bring internationally known intellectuals and noted friends of the East Europeans to the event to guarantee maximum exposure in the Western media, which would echo the dissidents concerns and report on the violations of the Helsinki Final Act. Although apart from the Hungarians none of the opposition leaders from the other East European countries could attend, it *appeared* to be a dissident gathering. One reason for this impression was that the regime made a half-hearted attempt to bloc it. Another reason was that the Western intellectuals acted as if they were dissidents. After all the official venues had become unavailable, the conference

proceeded in overcrowded private apartments. With the exception of some of the female organizers such as Kathy Wilkes, Annette Laborey and Jeri Laber, this was probably as close as many of the Western intellectuals in attendance got to a romanticized bohemian East European dissident life.

The Alternative Forum was a resounding success in amplifying the dissidents' concerns about censorship and minority persecution. Although there had been instances of violence and police harassment against the *samizdat* producers and editors of *Beszélő*, particularly in the wake of the declaration of martial law in Poland, the Hungarians were aware that, compared to Poland and Czechoslovakia, they were relatively well off. Hence, they declared their solidarity with those prevented from attending and echoed the shared interests in democratization, reforms, human rights and civil liberties. György Konrád articulated what the network had accomplished: a virtual Republic of Letters. Although the Poles and Czechs were missing, they were there in spirit. It constituted a meritocracy built on shared, 'antipolitical' values and mutual appreciation. Therefore, it was "only natural," as Konrád argued, that his Russian and American friends were members of said republic, too.¹³²¹

Not so welcome to the international, cosmopolitan Republic of Letters were the *népi* writers among the Hungarian opposition. Although they participated in the Alternative Forum, the exposure that they received in the Western media was hardly unequivocally positive. Particularly the Western members of the network, most notably Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Timothy Garton Ash, treated them with derision and contempt in the Western media. Regardless of the fact that by the 1990s, it was clear that

¹³²¹ György Konrád, "The Reform of Censorship?". HU OSA 318-0-5-Box 2, Folder: Cultural Symposium 1985 Oct Budapest.

they had been right in pointing out the anti-Semitic and xenophobic tendencies of some leading *népi* writers, neither Enzensberger's conciliatory gesture of re-publishing Gyula Illyés's *The People of the Puszta* nor Sándor Szilágyi's response to Garton Ash's divisive article in the *New York Review of Books* alleviated the growing disharmony in Budapest.¹³²²

The almost irreconcilable differences between what in Hungary is known as *urbánus* and *népi* traditions had become evident a few months before at a meeting in Monor in June 1985. Revisiting the controversy surrounding the list of invitees and the speeches that *népi* leaders like István Csurka and Sándor Csoóri had given at either occasion, reconciliation was highly unlikely despite attempts to find common ground in the defense of Hungarians in Transylvania for instance. But Csurka's anti-Western, anti-cosmopolitan, anti-modern, and soon more explicit anti-Semitic worldview and the populist commitment to allegedly ancient Magyar traditions were simply incompatible with the convictions of the Democratic Opposition, if not with members of the Budapest intelligentsia as such. Constructing a Hungarian identity that was based on Christianity and folk culture by definition excluded the Jewish-born, former Marxist critics in the country's capital.

The two camps can be juxtaposed in two mutually exclusive historical narratives about the region's past: the cosmopolitans promoted Central Europe as a viable, peaceful alternative to 'Yalta Europe' that would have reconnected the countries of the region with Western Europe, to which they rightly belonged in their view, and emancipated Europe as a whole from the two militarized super powers. Meanwhile, the populists held on to

¹³²² Illyés, *Die Puszta. Nachricht von einer verschwundenen Welt*. Szilágyi, "An Event in Hungary. A Response."

the conquest of the Magyar tribes of the Danubian basin and the missionary Christianity of Saint Stephen, a domination that had supposedly only vanished with the 'dictate' of the Trianon Treaty in 1920.

The next two years made clear that the two sides did not need each other anymore in pursuit of their political goals. The Democratic Opposition garnered international support for their demands to rehabilitate the 1956 revolution: not only did Radio Free Europe echo their announcements but it was also visualized in László Rajk's monument on Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris. The cosmopolitans had won the allegiance of the Fifty-Sixers, whose presence lent their commemorative celebrations and their opposition to the Kádár regime moral integrity and credibility. Labeling '56 a counter-revolution had been the founding myth of Kádár's illegitimate rule. Questioning that interpretation was the symbolic key to undermining the regime as the nomenklatura was showing signs of disintegration, and the dependency on foreign support for and instability of goulash communism became visible.

The populists did not need the alliance with Democratic Opposition either because they put their money on the reform communist Imre Pozsgay and the influence that they had in the Hungarian Writers' Association. The rupture between the two camps was cemented with two uncoordinated events in 1987: first, János Kis published his 'Social Contract' – a political agenda with a list of reform proposals – and second, the *népi* writers assembled in Lakitelek to found their own independent civic movement, the Hungarian Democratic Forum. While civic initiatives mushroomed in the next months, it took the Democratic Opposition until November 1988 to drop its reservations against founding yet another organization before founding the Alliance of Free Democrats.

By 1988, the regime was ceding more and more ground to the protesters and dissidents. The significant makeover of the Politburo in May 1988 was insufficient, and Miklós Németh replaced the party cadre Károly Grósz, falsely hailed abroad as reformer, as first secretary in November. Confronted with a skyrocketing debt and a dilapidated border system that had become obsolete since Hungarians could apply for a world passport beginning January 1988, Németh asserted the power of the government over the party. In February, the transition to a multiparty system was accepted. In April, he was elected prime minister. After two months of consultations with Vienna and Bonn, and with Gorbachev's tacit approval, Németh announced the opening of the border to Austria in May.

Three events have hindered the acknowledgement of Németh's contribution to a peaceful transition in Hungary: first, at the end of January, in what can only be described as an attempt to reach for the crown, Imre Pozsgay publicly and without consulting the other party leaders declared 1956 a popular uprising. Second, although he had approached Árpád Göncz about honoring the rehabilitation of Imre Nagy with a public reburial, he 'only' attended the ceremony on 16 June 1989 as private citizen leaving the stage to the Fifty-Sixers and the leaders of the new parties. Third, he ceded his place in the symbolic border opening near Sopron to the new foreign minister Gyula Horn, who actually had had little to do with the decision making process leading up to the opening.

As the regime was breaking down, new foes appeared on the horizon. The collapse of existing political taboos opened the door for nationalist resentments and anti-Semitism, old spirits that were returning to haunt the region. Attuned to changes in political moods, the international network sensed the rise of nationalism early. The

Hungarian dissidents talked George Soros into financing a workshop series in Dubrovnik in the spring of 1989 to stem the tide. At the initiative of Miklós Vászárhelyi, the participants resolved to found a university to train a new generation for the coming transition. They only had to get Soros on board, who appalled by bureaucratic lethargy was initially reluctant to institutionalize his philanthropy in such a way.

In the next months, the SZDSZ had played a prominent role in the negotiation of a peaceful transition and prevented Imre Pozsgay from assuming the presidency in premature elections. An anti-Semitic smear campaign that had its origin in the MDF and sought to strip the SZDSZ off its dissident credentials overshadowed the seeming victory over the old system in the four-yes-referendum. In the elections in the spring of 1990, the former dissidents came in second place. Although the MDF won the premiership, the SZDSZ shaped the immediate post-1989 period. László Rajk, Miklós Haraszti, Róza Hodosán, Gáspár Miklós Tamás, Bálint Magyar and other leading former dissidents were elected members of parliament; the former dissident lawyer Alajos Dornbach was elected Speaker of the Assembly; the former *samizdat* producer Gábor Demszky became mayor of Budapest, the party struck down a controversial abortion bill, and most importantly, Árpád Göncz became the first president of the democratic and sovereign Republic of Hungary.

Once Eastern Europe had witnessed its peaceful revolutions and the beneficiaries of Soros's philanthropy were taking on political responsibilities, Soros recognized the need of a Western-style university for graduate studies. In line with the dissidents' idea of Central Europe, he envisioned a multi-campus university with departments in all the capitals of the region. But he met stern resistance, particularly in Prague where he had

hoped to set up the center of the CEU. Not everyone appreciated the influence and vision he had for the region; others resented him for his association with the dissidents. In the end, he consolidated the CEU in Budapest, where the new government had inherited the debt and terms from the 1985 agreement between the Soros and the Kádár regime. Moreover, he could count on his friends from the former Democratic Opposition; many of them would join the board, the administration or sooner or later teach at the CEU.

Disputes over historical symbols and the country's "new" identity dominated the first years after 1989. The prime minister aspired to establish a Christian conservative image, reflected in the MDF's choice of Saint Stephen's crown as national symbol. Rhetorical blunders raised concerns because they evoked a questionable tradition as legitimation for the new Hungary. Preferred symbols appeared reminiscent of the restoration of 'Greater Hungary' and the irredentism of the interwar period, which had resulted in the alliance with Nazi Germany in 1940. The former dissidents took the lead in opposing the MDF's historicizing. But as the prime minister's health deteriorated, he lost control over his own party. Instead of addressing pressing budget concerns and a collapsing economy, too much time seemed to be dedicated towards disputes over the proper historical narrative.

Nevertheless, the early 1990s also witnessed the rapprochement with Western Europe, to which the former dissidents had aspired. Antall was a European Christian conservative who embraced the idea of Central Europe in the form of the Visegrád Group. Although it looked very different from the imaginations of the 1980s, the alliance of the three, then four states built on the "rediscovery" of Central Europe and turned it into a stepping-stone towards membership in NATO and the European Union.

But not all excitement was unfounded: the Democratic Charter proves that the SZDSZ could mobilize a mass movement, when new, hard won freedoms were at stake. The independence of the media and freedom of the press had been a heartfelt issue already in the 1980s. As president of the International PEN, György Konrád's role as patron of the movement guaranteed Western media attention, as it already had in 1985. Yet, his leadership raised the question of intellectuals and politics again. He had refused to assume a political office, an attitude in line with his pronouncements in *Antipolitics*.

Whereas the New Yorkers focused on the Velvet divorce in neighboring Czechoslovakia and the fragmentation of Solidarity in Poland, the newly united Germany paid close attention to the developments in Hungary precisely because of Konrád's prominent role. The laudation of the 1991 Peace Prize honored the Hungarian Holocaust survivor and long-time Suhrkamp author for masterminding the peaceful transformation of Eastern Europe and the reintegration of the continent. Indirectly, his ideas of Central Europe also acknowledged the impact of German culture in the East in a more positive light than the dominant focus on the Second World War could possibly allow. In that way, he had also paved the way for the unification of East and West Germany and the positive role it could play in Europe. For that reason, what Konrád had to say about the democratization of his home country mattered to a German audience.

The New Yorkers in the meantime were focused on the war in the former Yugoslavia, which awakened their worst nightmares. They approached the genocide in Bosnia with the same concepts and rhetoric as they once had the opposition movements in Eastern Europe. The Inter University Center in Dubrovnik also became a victim of the military aggression; tragically, however, most former supporters and friends abandoned

the IUC. The systemic violations of human rights in Bosnia evoked images of the Holocaust and focused the New Yorkers' human and financial resources. Aryeh Neier coordinated the Open Society Institute's response, Susan Sontag risked her life to provoke an international response to the siege of Sarajevo, and George Soros spend millions in humanitarian aid.

Unlike Konrád, other former dissidents, had seized the moment and had been successfully elected to parliament. However, the building of alliances in the new Hungary proved challenging. To guarantee the Democratic Charter's nonpartisan profile, the organizers had invited the successor party to the MSZMP, the Hungarian Socialist Party MSZP, to join. In 1994, the political opponents of the SZDSZ exploited the impression the closing of ranks in the civic movement could make. And the Free Democrats added fuel to the fire when they went back on their campaign promise and entered the governing coalition with the MSZP making Gyula Horn the new prime minister.

By the mid-1990s, disappointment over their own ineptitude as well as the direction the country seemed to be taking and the remaking of FIDESZ, the SZDSZ's erstwhile liberal junior party, as a Christian conservative center-right party took hold of most dissident-turned-politicians. More professional politicians surpassed them in influence in the party that they had founded in 1988. Their former disciples, or whom they had imagined as such, turned into their outspoken enemies. Viktor Orbán remodeled the Young Democrats to bolster his position and consolidate his power. The standard argument for the resentful divorce of the FIDESZ from the SZDSZ claims that Hungary could not accommodate two liberal parties. By 1998, it seemed that it could not accommodate any liberal party. The FIDESZ had filled the center-right vacuum left after

the implosion of the MDF. When Orbán was elected prime minister for the first time, the SZDSZ had been reduced to a mere 9% of the votes. Most former dissidents had left the limelight of the political stage to resume professions that reflected their intellectual identities.

III. Legacy: What is left?

Assessing the legacy of the international network that supported the Hungarian dissidents produces an ambiguous balance sheet. Of course, the story in itself does not end in 1998. Soros's Open Society Institute competes with the Ford Foundation as largest philanthropic organization in the U.S. The IWM in Vienna adjusted its mission to support and advise the transformation processes in Eastern Europe. Even the IUC in Dubrovnik has recovered from the destruction of its building and the devastating impact of the Yugoslav successor on the region. The Central European University is unquestioningly one of the network's greatest successes.

In the 1990s, Hungarian writers could build and expand on the connections in Germany built during their time as dissidents. Konrád became president of the Academy of Arts in Berlin and György Dalos the director of the Collegium Hungaricum. In 1999, the prestigious Frankfurt Book Fair featured Hungary as theme country. However, the book fair's title "Unbegrenzt – Unlimited" was misleading: represented were predominantly the cosmopolitan writers, almost exclusively former members of the Democratic Opposition such as Konrád, Dalos, Árpád Göncz, György Petri as well as Péter Eszterhazy, Péter Nádas and Miklós Meszöly.¹³²³ Soon after the Frankfurt Book

¹³²³ "Ungarische Autoren auf der Frankfurter Buchmesse 1999," Frankfurt '99 Gemeinnützige GmbH, <http://www.frankfurt.matav.hu/nemet/>.

Fair in 1999, however, interest in Hungary seems to have petered out. The Suhrkamp editor Christian Döring explained the phenomenon:

I think that [...] 1989-90 was a caesura in the perception of Eastern and Central Eastern European literature. [...] Historically, that is almost a banal statement. Interests expanded and shifted elsewhere. I for one produced a lot of Romanian – meaning: Transylvanian and Banat – writers for the ‘edition suhrkamp.’ These were Romanian writers who came to Germany as dissidents. But in that moment [...] when, cynically speaking, the ‘dissident bonus’ ceased, [the Hungarians] became ‘normal’ writers and these ‘normal’ writers were judged aesthetically and suddenly some fell through the cracks. [...] Everything pluralized – how should I put it? – they were integrated in the German book market with all its brutal logic, [...] with all its over-saturation: “Oh, another Hungarian author?” and “tah, what was his name again?”¹³²⁴

In 2002 and 2003, a 70-year-old György Konrád published a two-volume-autobiography, which was condensed and translated into one volume with the English title *A Guest In My Own Country*.¹³²⁵ The foreign-language publications reflect not only the priorities of the West, but also how Konrád has organized his life accordingly. More than two thirds of the book deal with his experience until 1956. Growing up in interwar Hungary and surviving the war and the Holocaust dominate the account, followed by the post-war years until the crushing of the Hungarian Revolution. It reflects the continued idealization of Konrád as the survivor of both totalitarian systems in Europe.

For the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Dalos, who has settled in Berlin, published a personalized account of the peaceful revolutions in 1989.¹³²⁶ The last chapter was a reprint of his prescient 1985 *Kursbuch* article “The liberation of the Soviet Union from its satellites.” In 2010, he received the Award for European Understanding of the Leipzig Book Fair. In his biography of Mikhail Gorbachev,

¹³²⁴ Christian Döring, interviewed by the author, 27 June 2012, Berlin, Germany.

¹³²⁵ György Konrád, *Elutazás és Hazatérés* (Budapest: Noran, 2002). *Fenn a Hegyen Napfogyatkozáskor* (Budapest: Noran, 2003). *A Guest in My Own Country*.

¹³²⁶ György Dalos, *Der Vorhang geht auf. Das Ende der Diktaturen in Osteuropa* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2009).

published two years later, Dalos admitted the dissidents' ineptitude as political leaders and their failure in guiding Eastern Europe through the democratization process.¹³²⁷

Ferenc Kőszeg recalls that when he had approached German publishers for a translation of his 2009 autobiography, he barely provoked shoulder shrugging.¹³²⁸ Again, György Konrád's case is exceptional and illustrative at the same time: as president of the Academy of Arts in Berlin from 1997 until 2003, he used his moral authority as Holocaust survivor to passionately contribute to the debate about a Central Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, turning from opponent to admirer of the model in place now.¹³²⁹

The Hungary that came to join the European Union in 2004, the fulfillment of the 1989 promise of a 'return to Europe,' looked different from what the dissidents had imagined in the 1980s.¹³³⁰ They seemed to have lost the authority to influence official historicizing. As prime minister, Viktor Orbán initiated a series of events and construction projects for the Millennium Year of 2000, the mythical anniversary of the founding of a Christian Hungary. Moreover, a narrative of twentieth century that eclipses the period from 1944 to 1989 has been institutionalized in the highly controversial, antagonizing Terror House Museum in Budapest, which opened in 2002 in time for the elections, which the incumbent Orbán lost regardless of historical narrative of Hungarian victimhood and the anti-Communist propaganda expressed in the museum's

¹³²⁷ Gorbatschow. *Mensch und Macht. Eine Biographie* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2012).

¹³²⁸ Ferenc Kőszeg, interviewed by the author, 19 April, 2012, Budapest, Hungary. Kőszeg, *K. története*.

¹³²⁹ György Konrád, "Wovon kündigt diese Werk? Gedanken zum Holocaust-Mahnmal in Berlin," in *Denkmale und kulturelles Gedächtnis nach dem Ende der Ost-West-Konfrontation*, ed. Akademie der Künste (Berlin: Jovis, 2000). "Holocaust-Mahnmal: Komm herein in den Stelenwald!," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 31 August 2005.

¹³³⁰ Daniel Thomas, "Constitutionalization through Enlargement: The Contested Origins of the EU's Democratic Identity," *Journal of European Public Policy* 13, no. 8 (2006). Békés, *Back to Europe. The International Background of the Political Transition in Hungary, 1988-1990*.

exhibition.¹³³¹ At the end of the exhibition, the visitor watches a video of Viktor Orbán's speech on Heroes Square on 16 June 1989, in which he calls on the Soviet troops to leave the country. On the opposite wall, a screen shows the withdrawal of the troops in June 1991, as if with the snap of a finger Orbán's wish had come true.

The beginning of the new millennium was fraught with disagreements that strained the former network: Westerners and former Hungarian dissidents could not agree on the proper response to the attacks in New York on 11 September 2001. Some approved of the American-led 'war on terror' and military interventions, others disagreed. Curiously, both sides employed familiar arguments using reference to Hitler and the Holocaust to argue either way.

Moreover, the ranks of the international network have thinned. For instance, the SZETA founder and *Beszélő* editor Ottilia Solt passed away in 1997, György Petri in 2000 and Miklós Vásárhelyi "without [whom] probably neither 1956 nor 1989 would have happened" in 2001.¹³³² Susan Sontag, the icon of their New York supporters, succumbed to cancer in 2004.¹³³³ Two of Hungary's most critical commentators, György Bence and István Eörsi, passed away in 2005 and 2006 respectively. Tony Judt passed away in 2010, but he has left an indirect yet intriguing indicator of the network's legacy with the historical narrative expressed in *Postwar. A History of Europe Since 1945*.

¹³³¹ István Rév, *Prehistory of Post-Communism. Retroactive Justice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 277-303. Krisztián Ungváry, "Belastete Orte der Erinnerung," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (2009). András Török, "All along Andrassy út," *Budapest Review of Books*, no. 01-04 (2002). For a visualization of the rooms, see the website: <http://terrorhaza.hu/en/exhibition/exhibition.html>.

¹³³² Paul Lendvai, "Ein großer Europäer aus Ungarn: Miklos Vasarhelyi," *Die Welt* (18 August 2001), <http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article468653/Ein-grosser-Europaeer-aus-Ungarn-Miklos-Vasarhelyi.html>. Gábor F. Havas, "Miss Marple és az 'anyagias tények'. A Solt Ottilia Halálára," *Beszélő* (6 May 1998), <http://beszelo.c3.hu/98/05/06havas.htm>.

¹³³³ Her son David Rieff wrote a book exclusively dedicated to her battle with cancer: David Rieff, *Swimming in a Sea of Death: A Son's Memoir* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008). Also see Gáspár Miklós Tamás's very personal good-bye to a friend: Gáspár Miklós Tamás, "Susan Sontag. An Orbitalary," *Common Knowledge* 11, no. 3 (2005).

Judt started working on this opus magnum as a fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna in the 1990s. He finished it while he was the director of the Erich Maria Remarque Institute and the Institute for the Humanities at NYU. It represents “an avowedly personal interpretation of the recent European past. In a word that has acquired undeservedly pejorative connotations, it is *opinionated*.”¹³³⁴ Judt’s narrative reflects the formative impact the encounter with the East European émigrés and dissidents had on his political views and his professional understanding of history.

His strong emphasis on European high culture reflect not only his personal sophistication and expertise in West and East European culture, but also the common ground on which the East-West network had been founded. Several chapters read like long lists of suggested readings and films. The cultural elitism inherent to the network that partly also endeared Judt to Robert Silvers appears in his priorities. He does not discuss “mundane” topics, but contextualizes such trends as the *Nouvelle Vague* in French cinematography and the formative, critical influence of directors like the West German Werner Fassbinder and the Polish Andrzej Wajda.

Postwar represents a very intellectual, quintessentially *liberal* interpretation of European history in the twentieth century. The chapter “The Spectre of Revolution” about the revolts of 1968 reflects Judt’s retroactive repudiation of ’68 in the West, the New Left, and his own youthful revolutionary convictions. His almost derisive treatment of all leftist ideologies, particularly in the West, originated in his encounter with Jan Gross and Irina Grudzinska-Gross in Atlanta. With their help, he had met the East European dissidents. In the 1980s, he came to believe that their fate dwarfed the concerns of self-declared Western revolutionaries, and motivated him to review his own biography

¹³³⁴ Judt, *Postwar*, xiii.

as well as his family's history in a new light.¹³³⁵ His biased, almost contemptuous assessment of 1968 can only be understood in conjunction with these breaks in his intellectual biography, which he outlines in his autobiographical articles in the *New York Review of Books*, collectively published in *The Memory Chalet*, and his conversation with Timothy Snyder, published in the late 2000s.¹³³⁶

But also the chapter "The End of the Old Order," which discusses the end of the Cold War from the Polish crisis to the peaceful revolutions of 1989, is informed by his friendships with the dissidents and the discovery of the Cold War borderland through their eyes.¹³³⁷ They allowed Judt to criticize the deceitful structure of Cold War rhetoric and demean American triumphalism and exceptionalism. However abstract and anachronistic, he suggested that

With the conclusion of the Helsinki Accords it seemed to Washington *and* Moscow that the Cold War was ending to their own advantage. Indeed, the situation in Europe suited both powers, with the US now comporting itself rather like czarist Russia in the decades following Napoleon's defeat in 1815: i.e. as a sort of continental policeman whose presence guaranteed that there would be no further disruption of the status quo by an unruly revolutionary power.¹³³⁸

This and the chapter "The Reckoning" are sober assessments of the successes and failures of the transformation of Europe, the dissidents' struggles, the lack of popular support in 1989 and the formative role of reform Communists and Mikhail Gorbachev.¹³³⁹ It is unlikely Judt would have discovered this narrative of European history if he had remained an Oxford professor of French intellectual history. Therefore, it is unsurprising that he acknowledges the influence of many members of the network

¹³³⁵ "The Spectre of Revolution."

¹³³⁶ *The Memory Chalet. Thinking the Twentieth Century.*

¹³³⁷ "The End of the Old Order."

¹³³⁸ *Postwar*, 590.

¹³³⁹ "The Reckoning."

described here. And the personal experiences and the friendships that have prevailed seem to be the most important legacy of this network to many of the former members.

Appendix

I. List of Archives

Állambiztonsági Szolgálat Történeti Léveltár

Budapest, Hungary

Holdings:

Files on members of the Democratic Opposition, George Soros, Nick Thorpe.

Deutsches Literaturarchiv

Marbach am Neckar, Germany

Holdings:

Suhrkamp publishing house; press releases, correspondence, Christian Döring, Hans-Henning Paetzke, György Konrád, Elisabeth Borchers, György Dalos, Siegfried Unseld.

NYU Archive, Elemer Bobs Library

New York University

New York City, USA

Holdings:

Institute for the Humanities: administrative files, budget, correspondence, fellowship announcements, Richard Sennett, Aryeh Neier, David Rieff, lecture series: "Writing & Politics."

Forschungstelle Osteuropa

University of Bremen

Bremen, Germany

Holdings:

Dalos personal archive, Bibó emlékkönyv, Hungarian *samizdat* & posters.

Institut für die Buchwissenschaften

University of Mainz

Mainz, Germany

Holdings:

Rotbuch publishing house archive, correspondence, press clippings, Haraszti, Dalos, Enzensberger.

Inter-University Centre Dubrovnik

University of Zagreb

Dubrovnik, Croatia

Holdings:

IUC administrative files, reports, board meeting minutes, posters, announcements, newspaper clippings

Open Society Archive

Central European University

Budapest, Hungary

Holdings:

Radio Free Europe print archive, Soros-MTA Alapítvány, Béla Király personal archive, *samizdat*, Index on Censorship, International Helsinki Federation, 'Democratic Charter.

ORF Archive

Vienna, Austria

Holdings:

Paul Lendvai, Reports from/ about Hungary

Országos Szechenyi Könyvtár

Budapest, Hungary

Holdings:

Magyar Narancs, Mozgó Világ, Századvég, HVG.

II. List of Interviews

Hungarian (-born) interviewees

János Betlen	Budapest	Monday, May 21, 12
Endre Bojtár	Budapest	Saturday, May 5, 12
László Bruszt	New York	Wednesday, February 22, 12
György Dalos	Berlin	Monday, July 25, 11 Saturday, June 6, 09
István Deák	New York	Monday, February 20, 2012
Gábor Demszky	Berlin	Monday, June 25, 12
Alajos Dornbach	Budapest	Tuesday, May 8, 12
Gábor Gyáni	Budapest	Tuesday, June 22, 10
Miklós Haraszti	Budapest	Thursday, June 3, 10

István Hegedűs	Budapest	Thursday, May 17, 12
Richárd Hirschler and Pál Réti	Budapest	Thursday, May 31, 2012
Róza Hodosán	Budapest	Wednesday, April 11, 12
Éva Karadi	Budapest	Saturday, January 7, 12 Sunday, January 22, 12
János Kis	Budapest	Tuesday, April 24, 12
György Konrád	Hegymagas	Friday, July 24, 09
János Mátyás Kovács	Vienna	Thursday, July 1, 10
Ferenc Kószeg	Budapest	Thursday, April 19, 12
Mári Pap	Budapest	Sunday, January 22, 12
László Rajk	Budapest	Thursday, January 26, 12
Gáspár Miklós Tamás	Budapest	Monday, December 12, 11
István Teplan	Budapest	Wednesday, May 23, 12
Viktor Polgár	Budapest	Wednesday, May 23, 12
Mátyás Vince	Budapest	Thursday, May 24, 12

Austrian (-born) interviewees

Béla Rasky	Vienna	Monday, August 8, 11 February 10, 2012
Paul Lendvai	Vienna	Sunday, February 5, 12
Erhard Busek	Vienna	Tuesday, February 7, 12

German (-born) interviewees

Karl Schlögel	Frankfurt (Oder)	Monday, June 22, 09
Dieter Esche	Berlin	Thursday, June 25, 09
Hans-Henning Paetzke	Budapest	Saturday, November 24, 12
Martina Lilla-Oblong	Düsseldorf	Sunday, December 23, 12
Christian Döring	Berlin	Tuesday, June 26, 12

American interviewee

Aryeh Neier	New York	Monday, February 27, 2012
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French (-born) interviewees

Roselyne Chenu	Paris	Tuesday, July 03, 2012
Gabor Rittersporn	Paris	Monday, July 02, 2012

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