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The Revolution and Industrial Workers: the Disintegration and Reconstruction of Socialism, 1953-1958

Mark Pittaway

Just over three weeks after the arrival of Soviet troops in Budapest to remove the revolutionary government of Imre Nagy in November 1956, the party newspaper for the industrial county of Komárom-Esztergom, announced to local miners that “the workers’ councils (the revolutionary organs in the factories) had been given responsibility for the economic life of the country”. In negotiations with the new Soviet-imposed government of János Kádár, the authorities signalled a willingness to make marked concessions the demands of miners, a key group within the workforce of the county. The “restoration of certain old privileges” like “the annual coal entitlement, rent-free accommodation and lighting, the re-integration of factories that had belonged to the mining enterprises with the mines” and “an expansion in family house-building” featured on the agenda of such discussions.¹ Talk of such concessions occurred against the background of a miners’ strike that supported the political goals of the Revolution and which paralysed the Hungarian economy. In Tatabánya, the centre of the largest of the county’s two coal fields, the Revolution had been ignited by a combination of a sympathy strike of the city’s bus drivers with the demonstrators in Budapest and a major demonstration led by younger miners. While the local party in the city and the mines did not collapse to the same extent as in the rest of the country, the implosion of the regime at national level allowed the demonstrators to seize control of the mines locally, set up anti-communist workers’ councils, and effectively organize a strike in support of the political demands of the

Revolution. Though they returned to work for three days in early November, believing the political demands of the Revolution to have been accomplished, the Soviet invasion provoked a protracted miners' strike, which dragged on for a full two months, causing coal shortages that closed schools and undermined medical services into early 1957.²

The targeted use of repression was at least as central to breaking the strike in the coal fields, as was the promise of concessions. Yet, repression often proved to be counter-productive; in Tatabánya the local police were forced to concede that the operations of the reconstructed state security agencies throughout December had not only provoked open demonstrations, but had in fact bolstered support for the strike.³ Where local state security forces intervened to arrest the organizers of demonstrations and strikes it was forced to legitimate their actions. When in December, one attempt to arrest such organizers provoked an explosion of armed conflict in one of the city's neighbourhoods, the party newspaper found it necessary to argue that the members of the new state security agencies were ordinary mineworkers dedicated to meet the demands of the "people" who "wanted to live in peace and quiet".⁴ As the post-revolutionary regime was consolidated, it was forced to build on the fiction that no "honest" worker had anything to fear from repression; only groups of "counter-revolutionary" agitators. The myth, projected by the Kádár regime, of the events of late 1956 as a "counter-revolution", in which anti-socialist agitators, "reactionaries" and "agents of imperialism" had stirred up discontent in order to overthrow socialism, had its local counterpart.⁵ In Tatabánya the overwhelmingly working-class character of the Revolution posed problems for the "revolutionary government of workers' and peasants". Therefore the local myth of the "counter-revolution", underpinned by the most significant political trials, sought to attribute the events to the most anti-communist activists in the factories and more significantly to local professionals, who, despite holding key positions in the city's revolutionary committee, were in reality either marginal or had been unable to control the consequences of the explosion of working-class anger.⁶

While repression was far from successful as a tool for consolidating the regime, the wave of working-class anger was beaten back through other means. The fear, rather than the fact, of political retribution had encouraged many of those who joined the demonstrations in the city to leave Hungary outright. In Tatabánya's Mine No. XI, at the end of January 1957, only 60 percent of those who had been employed there previous October continued to work there, some had left for other parts of the country, others had joined the flight from Hungary.⁷ Furthermore, forms of moral coercion deployed by the regime about the effects of shortages of coal, that were products of the miners' strike, on schools, hospitals and the economy in general, proved highly effective in mobilizing those who remained.⁸ These were often backed by more naked forms of blackmail – in December 1956 the county party paper warned that “if there is no coal, then Tatabánya's food provision will be in danger”.⁹ The failure of protest to remove the regime and intensifying economic hardship provided the central motivating factor for miners to go back to work.¹⁰ Yet breaking the strike alone did not translate into support for the regime; a sullen mood in the mines in early 1957 masked a climate of deep-seated, but silent anger, which occasionally broke through, carried in rumours of imminent strikes and protest.¹¹

The regime consolidated its authority in Tatabánya, and among the working class nationwide by following through promises of addressing directly the material grievances of workers. Most miners expected the re-imposition of socialist rule to lead directly to the return of despotic policies of plan-based mobilization in the workplace and those that had produced goods shortage and penury before the Revolution outside it. During the year following the Revolution the apparent openness of the party to working-class opinion in the city generated “surprise”.¹² Measures like the large increases in wages, the initiation of a housing construction programme, and other welfare measures underpinned this at national level; while more locally unpopular systems of remuneration at the coalface were abolished, and certain benefits-in-kind were restored.¹³ Through such measures a year after the end of the strike, party officials were able to record, displaying some surprise,

a degree a cautious optimism; “it seems”, commented one, “that there is trust in the party and the government”.¹⁴ This popularity was conditional and to some extent belied the fact that few accepted the official arguments about the nature of the Revolution, when questioned by propagandists about their attitudes to what had happened in 1956 while miners began referring to it by calling it the “counter-revolution”, they often slipped into describing it “a revolution”. Most took the stance that “you should give us an honest wage, I’m not bothered with the rest.”¹⁵

The defeat of the Revolution and the consolidation of the Kádár regime in Tatabánya, as in other working-class communities across Hungary, presented an ambiguous picture of an event defeated through the highly selective, rather than the very widespread use of force. Moral and economic coercion played a larger role, upon which were laid substantial concessions in the workplace and the community. While this produced a degree of popularity and support for the Kádár regime by the end of 1957, this co-existed with profound awareness of its deeper illegitimacy, as a regime imposed through force-of-arms by the armies of a foreign power. This outcome points to the need to look at the 1956 Revolution in a new and different way. It was certainly not “the first domino”, which led irreversibly to the decay, decline and collapse of state socialism thirty-three years later as many have suggested.¹⁶ While the revival of the memory of the 1956 Revolution played a fundamental role in the events of 1989 in Hungary, because of the way it symbolized the illegitimacy of the regime¹⁷, in the short and medium-term it led to its consolidation; yet this consolidation occurred on the basis of a very different pattern of socialist governance to that which had characterised its rule during the early 1950s, and which drew lessons from the outbreak of the 1956 Revolution.¹⁸ Given that the Kádár regime was a “post-1956” regime¹⁹, it is not surprising that in its dynamic of construction, consolidation, decay and collapse it embodied many of the ambiguities that were visible during the outcome of the Revolution.

The paradoxical co-existence of the stability of the Kádár regime with

perceptions of its deeper political illegitimacy was enabled, in part, by the fact that the Revolution and its outcome demonstrated definitively to Hungary's anti-communist majority that the country's post-war political order was not going to be dismantled either immediately, or easily. The collapse of the country's pre-war regime, German occupation and then Soviet occupation at the end of the Second World War, created a society that was deeply divided. Fear of communist dictatorship among the conservative majority, and a parallel fear of the right among the left-wing minority polarized Hungarian society during the immediate post-war years, creating the social roots of eventual dictatorship.²⁰ On the political right, many believed in the inevitability of conflict among the wartime allies, and that only an effective demonstration of anti-Soviet sentiment in Hungary would bring military intervention from Britain and the United States, in the interests of "liberating" the territory from the clutches of the Red Army. During preparations for the first post-war elections in autumn 1945 in conservative regions like the north-western county of Győr-Moson local opinion held that if the country "votes for the Smallholders' Party (the main party of the centre-right – M.P.) then the Soviets will leave the country, if they vote for the Communists they'll stay forever."²¹ With the creation of overt socialist dictatorship in the similarly conservative south-west of the country, growing political control led many to believe that the new socialist regime's days were numbered, as it would be removed as the result of an imminent war between the superpowers.²² As the dictatorship intensified its politics of confrontation and social transformation, especially through agricultural collectivization campaigns in rural areas, the belief in imminent western intervention to end socialist rule motivated explicit resistance. In villages on the north-western border in August 1950, smallholders refused to pay taxes or deliver foodstuffs to the authorities on the grounds that "the English were coming".²³ These expectations of deliverance through foreign intervention encouraged many to interpret the aggressive propaganda of western radio stations and other propaganda actions, such as the balloon campaigns, launched by similar bodies, as a promise of "liberation".²⁴

In this context the defeat of the Revolution and its failure to spark foreign military intervention against the Soviets produced a feeling of hopelessness and a gradual acceptance of the relative permanence of socialist regime. Belief in the imminence of foreign intervention was conspicuous in anti-regime rumour during 1957 by its absence.²⁵ The deep seated climate of resignation was expressed by an engineer in one Fejér county factory in March 1957; “only a third world war can help us, which will break out sooner or later; in the meantime it will be difficult, but afterwards the system will disappear.”²⁶ While one immediate popular response to this “culture of defeat”²⁷ among anti-communists was to retreat into the domestic sphere, into alcoholism or religiosity²⁸, it laid the foundations for the tacit acceptance of the reality of Kádárism by many of its opponents, particularly its rural and urban middle-class ones, and thus, their integration into the system during the 1960s.²⁹ While the notion of the “culture of defeat” explains many of the paradoxes of the post-1956 period among those who always opposed Hungary’s post-war socialist order, as well as the behaviour of those left-wing intellectuals, who initially supported socialism, but turned to Imre Nagy and notions of a reformed socialism in the mid-1950s, it does not explain dominant working-class attitudes and patterns of behaviour. Hungary’s industrial workers were not homogeneous politically to be sure, but as the case of Tatabánya shows, their awareness of the illegitimacy of the Kádár regime, co-existed with an extraordinary popularity among many that was gained at a very early date. By 1958, the government’s popularity was clearly discernible among workers in a number of different sectors and geographical locations.³⁰ This is especially surprising given the extensive participation of workers in the events of the Revolution. This, in turn, points to the need to consider the role of workers in the Revolution in greater depth, in order to explain their behaviour afterwards and thus tease out the nature of the relationship between the socialist state and working class in the Hungarian context.

Despite the speedy consolidation of the Kádár regime in working-class communities, the party leadership remained deeply shocked at the extent of worker participation in and support for the Revolution. In

early 1957 party officials commented with dismay that among the thousands who left the western county of Győr-Moson-Sopron for Austria, there were many “workers from traditional working-class families”.³¹ With the regime’s consolidation party officials underplayed the role and extent of working class discontent in the Revolution, arguing that the majority simply remained “passive” in the face of “counter-revolutionary” mobilization. This was because “the working class was primarily disappointed in the party leadership and did not see the party as the true representative of their class”.³² The notion of industrial workers as “passive” during the Revolution was, however, a myth, but so too was the party’s collective notion of what constituted the “working class”. In general terms, the party’s use of the term “working class” tended to subsume all wage workers into an imaginary and homogeneous entity, which universally shared the values of those of the skilled, urban, male elite of the workforce who had supported the labour movement pre-1948. This underpinned notions - prevalent in the discussions among leading party officials after 1956 - of the “working class” as a social body that would act as the bulwark of the regime.³³ These were underpinned by a hegemonic discourse of the working class outside the party leadership that stressed the pre-eminence of the male, skilled elite and subordinated other more peripheral groups – this discourse of the working class had structured hierarchical relationships between workers in workplaces and communities since the end of the nineteenth century. It was embedded in the practice and common-sense of the labour movement, and came to represent a pattern of relationships and cultural practices that shaped the contours of working-class identity by the mid-twentieth century.

The industrial and labour policies of Hungary’s socialist regime after 1948, caused a fundamental breach between industrial workers and the “new” state. In the workplace the regime attacked the privileges of the skilled through the introduction of labour competition, new wage forms and different management structures. At the same time they expanded the workforce aiming to subvert the hierarchies of gender, generation and those based on distinctions between the urban and the rural. Their economic policies produced endemic income insecurity, widespread

penury and severe shortage, while they responded to the tensions these produced with repression. These policies caused the crumbling of working-class support for the regime during the early 1950s, but the patterns of relations in the workplace caused by the chaos produced by the state's industrialization drive, allowed hierarchical relationships to reproduce themselves under new circumstances. Skilled workers, though profoundly alienated from the regime, continued to sit at the apex of modified hierarchical relationship in which greater numbers of working-class youth, women and those from rural areas were cast to a discontented periphery.³⁴

Considerable working-class anger alone was insufficient to provoke widespread mobilization – between 1953 and 1956, the initiation of the “New Course” under the government of Imre Nagy, followed by ever more bitter struggles within the party, led to the fragmentation of the authority of the regime. These were met, in turn, by a greater expression of the considerable working-class discontent that persisted in Hungary's factories, mines, and on its construction sites, that were never successfully alleviated by any of the protagonists in the struggle within the party. The onset of the revolutionary events in October 1956 was met with a social explosion in which many working-class Hungarians, particularly those young workers cast to the periphery, provided the most militant sections of the working-class crowds which drove forward the Revolution in the country's towns and cities. Different groups within the working class, especially the skilled, the young and rural workers, participated in the Revolution in highly distinctive ways. The re-construction the regime's authority was underpinned by different processes within different groups but, given the cultural power, employed by older, urban, skilled male workers within hegemonic discourses of the working class, it was the regime's ability to repair its relations with this group that was fundamental to the consolidation of its authority.

The Politics of Gradual Collapse: From Reform to Rebellion, 1953-6

The spring and early summer of 1953 was a period of intense worker protest across East-Central Europe that demonstrated the tensions, which socialist rule had created. In May workers in the tobacco plant in Plovdiv in Bulgaria rioted as a result of unfavourable changes made to work norms. In Czechoslovakia a currency reform was introduced in the same month cutting into wages and eliminating savings, which resulted in generalised revolt in Plzeň. In the German Democratic Republic decisions to tighten work norms led to a wave of demonstrations and strikes on 17th June 1953 across the country.³⁵ Whilst the events in the GDR did not lead to open mass protest in Hungary, they had an electrifying effect in workplaces. The notion that a population could express its discontent openly in a socialist state began, albeit slowly, to lift the lid on a well of discontent. Industrial workers in Budapest stated openly that "the Hungarian party can learn from the German party that it is not correct to apply pressure all the time through the norms". In a neighboring factory one party member called for the smallholders to be given back land that had been "donated" to agricultural co-operatives.³⁶

Against this background of growing social upheaval and under instruction from the Kremlin the Hungarian leadership modified their course. The country's effective dictator, Mátyás Rákosi was forced to relinquish his position as Prime Minister, though not, crucially as secretary of the ruling party. His successor as head of government, Imre Nagy, launched a policy that suspended collectivization drives in rural areas and placed the problem of working-class material discontent at the centre of government action.³⁷ The announcement of the "New Course" led to both the growing public expression of working-class discontent³⁸, and official attempts through the press to address the neglect of workers' "legitimate concerns" by the authorities in workplaces across the country.³⁹ More concretely it was met through a policy of concessions; the state moved to permit smallholders to leave agricultural co-operatives, fines and criminal penalties for work discipline infringements were revoked, an amnesty was granted to political prisoners, a higher priority was given to the implementation of protective legislation in the workplace, and wages were raised.⁴⁰

In terms of their impact on the working class “New Course” policies had two effects. On the one hand they failed to transform decisively the material conditions of industrial workers, except the skilled elites in some sectors. On the other, they strengthened many of the hierarchies that had reproduced themselves under the circumstances of the shortage economy of the early 1950s. This reinforcing of hierarchy was the product of the effects of different policies of different groups of workers, and these shaped the political attitudes of these groups towards Nagy’s reformist project. Among groups on the periphery of the workforce, Nagy’s project attained most popularity among anti-communist rural workers. This was not due, however, to the program’s effect on industry, but on agriculture, as many felt the “New Course” heralded an end to agricultural collectivization. Some had greeted its announcement by attempting to quit their jobs and return to agriculture; at Mosonmagyaróvár’s aluminum smelter the 250 workers, who owned land, tried to quit the moment of the program was announced. Their attempts were blocked by the plant director. Though this resulted in an explosion of discontent, only 100 departed illegally.⁴¹ As local party bodies and state authorities fought a rearguard action to prevent the dissolution of agricultural collectives and implemented more informal policies of administrative restriction against farmers⁴², this illusion dissipated. Despite this, however, the post-1953 period was a relatively good one for many rural workers, especially for those who belonged to a household with a farm that could produce for the market, as the incomes of individual smallholders rose faster, albeit from a much lower base, than those of industrial workers.⁴³ Though such workers had never accepted the legitimacy of the socialist regime, favorable policies towards agriculture did allow Nagy to win a degree of personal popularity in the rural milieu in which such workers lived. In one village in western Hungary Nagy’s relaxation of the collectivization drive was compared to “the liberation of the serfs in 1848”.⁴⁴ Yet the rising incomes of some rural workers and continuing problems of food shortage in urban areas exacerbated the unpopularity of such workers, with many urban residents, especially in Budapest, who argued that the “New Course” was a “peasants’ policy” rather than a “workers’ policy”

– a sentiment which legitimized the casting of rural workers to the periphery of the workforce.⁴⁵

The climate of the “New Course” reinforced the peripheral position of other groups within the workforce that had been generated by the reproduction of hierarchy within the working class during the early 1950s. This was especially the case with women, where Nagy’s arrival in office accompanied attempts to implement protective legislation in the workplace, which it reinforced. This tended not to protect women in unhealthy and low-paying jobs in traditionally feminized sectors, but instead acted to remove women from those traditionally regarded as male, and high-paying, where they had gained a toe-hold as a consequence of the affirmative action campaigns of the early 1950s.⁴⁶ Working-class youth, including young skilled workers, remained in a relatively marginal position in workplaces across the country. Their peripheral positions and consequent low wages led to considerable discontent that in turn drove many of them to seek better paid employment in neighboring establishments.⁴⁷ Placed in a peripheral position and deeply alienated, and often influenced by propaganda in western radio broadcasts many rejected the socialist system absolutely; in the Tatabánya mines one young miner urged a work-mate to “go to the West where at least you are valued for as long as you can work, here you are just treated like a dog to whom they occasionally throw a bone so you don’t starve”.⁴⁸

The hardening of reproduced hierarchies in the workforce was driven, in part, because Nagy’s relaxation of despotic policies in the workplace had led to an intensification of informal bargaining that favored the older, male, skilled elite. Often sympathetic party members, union officials and lower-level managers had participated actively in opening the floodgates to a wave of bargaining in late 1953 that enshrined considerable informal control over remuneration by the skilled elite in everyday workplace practice.⁴⁹ Often, despite state intentions and although they often complained about their “inadequacy”⁵⁰, the wage increases mandated by the Nagy government in late 1953 further boosted the position of experienced skilled workers.⁵¹ In some sectors,

especially coal mining the increases in skilled workers' wages were substantial, as they were linked to a premium system, which ensured that when it was introduced in late 1953 face-workers' wages increased by 22.3 percent in a two-month period, when production fell by 4 percent.⁵² Wage increases of this order generated a degree of satisfaction among miners, which went some way to defuse discontent.⁵³

Yet, despite the reinforcement of their position within the workforce as a result of the policies of the Nagy government in the workplace, the skilled elite as a whole were far from satisfied – something that was in part a product of economic chaos during 1954, when shortages intensified and power-supply problems forced industry into short-time working during the winter months.⁵⁴ Yet, it was also fed by a perception that in a climate that was relatively permissive to agriculture and to trade, urban workers were losing ground in income and prestige; a sentiment that led them to eventually welcome Nagy's dismissal in 1955.⁵⁵ It would take Imre Nagy's fall, and the policies pursued after his removal, to persuade the skilled elite of his merits. The turn away from reform, fronted by Nagy's successor, András Hegedűs, installed by Rákosi, who at the helm of the party had never accepted the "New Course", was prompted by the continuing economic chaos that gripped the country during 1954 and early 1955, and aimed to return to policies of renewed socialist industrialization and collectivization. Young workers, whose peripheral position had been barely touched under Nagy, remained profoundly antagonistic to the regime. Rural workers were infuriated by the renewed collectivization drives in rural areas, although anti-rural sentiment remained strong among their urban colleagues.⁵⁶ The skilled elite were confronted with the regime's attempts to hold down the wage bill – their attempts to increase production norms in heavy industrial sectors and to limit the impact of the premium system in the coal mines, that had guaranteed higher wages provoked enormous opposition. This opposition was indeed greater in many factories than it had been to equivalent measures in the early 1950s – in some heavy engineering factories skilled workers were no longer frightened, and refused to work until the older, abolished

norms were re-instated.⁵⁷ The tightening of the premium system in the mines provoked a storm of complaints often supported by local unions and party cells.⁵⁸

The pattern of reform, followed by clampdown, had antagonized most of the working class, and crucially its skilled elite. It also ensured that the experience of restrictive policies in 1955 created a popular hunger for further reform, in a context in which the authorities faced a workforce that would not be cowed as easily as it had been in the early 1950s.⁵⁹ This provided an explosive social background for the crisis of the socialist regime during 1956. The year of upheaval began in February with Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, the purges and the cult of personality to the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. The speech had an electrifying effect in Hungary⁶⁰, as it weakened fatally the confidence of many working-class party members in the regime. When Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin was revealed to closed party meetings across the country, working-class Communists reacted with total incredulity. In Sztálinváros party members in the factories questioned the local leadership asking them: "Stalin led the party for thirty years, how can it be that his mistakes have been discovered now?" and "What is the current situation in Hungary with the cult of personality ? Was Rajk wrong ?", alongside more mundane questions: "I own a copy of Stalin's complete works and have read them all. What do I do with them now?"⁶¹ In Budapest's United Lighting and Electrics Factory the Khrushchev speech soon became an open topic of conversation. Workers maintained that "the cult of personality was just as marked here (in Hungary) as in the Soviet Union, especially among the top leadership".⁶²

As the year progressed, the growing militancy of the debates in the Petőfi kör, the intellectual debating forum of the opposition to Rákosi, especially its debate on press freedom increased the boldness of workers, especially those among the skilled elite, in expressing their views – it also underlined growing support for major political change among all sections of the working class. In the United Lighting and Electrics Factory, workers argued openly that "the leadership is

destroying the national economy. The people no longer believe anything they say and they have no role anymore".⁶³ The news of the riots in Poznań and the mounting political crisis in Poland contributed to the snowballing of politicized discontent among the skilled elite; for many "the riots broke out in Poznań not because of the enemy and foreign spies, but because twelve years after the end of the war living standards remained low".⁶⁴ As Rákosi was removed as party leader and replaced by Ernő Gerő in July, the loss of regime control became more obvious as did the spread of open popular opposition. Workers complained not about Rákosi's removal from power, but the method by which it was achieved, arguing that it demonstrated Hungary's lack of national sovereignty. Furthermore there were growing signs of belief in the effectiveness of collective action; in the Ikarus bus plant it was argued that "under pressure from the masses the leadership has abolished the peace loans, if we exert even stronger pressure we will be able to force new measures to raise our living standards".⁶⁵ The effect of the combination of a loss of confidence within the party in its ability to govern and rising discontent was enormous; by September there was "a real feeling of panic" among members of the apparatus in Budapest.⁶⁶

By summer 1956, the crumbling of the regime was met with greater political assertiveness from among the working class, particularly its urban, skilled, male elite. They were often supported by some factory and union committees who joined their rebellion. This climate was fuelled by an obviously worsening economic situation. In Budapest's Duclós Mining Machinery Factory in August 1956 the factory party committee issued a statement demanding that "the rights of the workers be secured" in disputes with management; that workers were right "to demand a just wage system" and that the overly "formal monthly production meetings" be replaced with true forums of factory democracy.⁶⁷ More locally, within workplaces working-class anger was directed at the autocracy and arrogance of management, supported by the official functionaries of the party, union and youth organisation. In the Chinoin Pharmaceuticals Factory, skilled workers complained in spring 1956 that "the cult of personality manifests itself inside the

factory, particularly among the middle and upper level economic cadres. It has been common for workers not to criticize, or make suggestions just because they were scared of the management".⁶⁸ Generalized rebellion among oil workers at the Lovászi Oil Drilling Plant in July 1956 was provoked by what workers saw as the "unjustified" payment of large plan fulfillment premiums to management, at a time when workers' wages had fallen. Most complaints concerned low wages and social provision, the focus of their attack was on management. Károly Papp, the director of the plant, was attacked openly for promoting a "cult of personality" around himself, and using factory property to celebrate his birthday lavishly.⁶⁹

As part of this wave of criticism, the skilled demanded greater democracy in the factories. One fitter in the Duclós Mining Machinery Factory complained in August that "it is useless complaining to the party and factory committee because they can't do anything. What happens here is basically what the director says". He saw the only remedy as being "to give the trade union a greater role".⁷⁰ By September the factory press began publishing similar complaints. One former trade unionist wrote in the paper of Budapest's Danube Shoe Factory that "in the period following the liberation old, committed trade unionists were promoted to become managers. We should say clearly that later these comrades became detached from the workers, they became one sided and didn't speak up sufficiently for their interests new people filled the trade union and the beginnings of the co-optation, not the elections of the (new) leaders (of the unions) began the union leaders regarded anyone who stood up for their interests as the enemy, and dealt with them in this manner".⁷¹ Yet as the mood for change in workplaces gathered pace, the regime was close to collapse. The growing thaw in relations with Yugoslavia, the re-burial of László Rajk on the 6th October, the retention of power by Gerő, discredited by his Stalinist past, and the lack of any clear leadership from the regime pushed the situation to crisis point. When the Revolution began on the 23rd October, with student demonstrations in Budapest, industrial workers would play more radical roles than they had done beforehand.

The Power of the Working-Class Crowd: October-November, 1956

In the prison camp attached to Mine No. XVIII in the geographically isolated, western Hungarian mining town of Oroszlány, many of the prisoners, who worked in the mines under sentence, concluded in mid-October that “they wouldn’t be shut inside for much longer”. As students prepared to demonstrate in Budapest to secure political change, at noon on 23rd October the prisoners attempted to overpower the guards at the mine entrance and break out. The factory guard was only able to restore order by firing on the prisoners, killing three. When three days later, the local Revolution was launched by a crowd of around 500 young workers, who marched through the town shouting “Work! Bread! Rákosi to the Gallows! (*Munkát! Kenyeret, Rákosinak köteleit*)”, they were motivated as much by solidarity with the prisoners as with demonstrators in Budapest. After the leaders of the demonstration delivered their demands to the local radio station, around 150 proceeded to Mine No. XVII where they freed the prisoners, after the guard refused to fire on the demonstrators.⁷²

While much of the historiography of the revolution has tended to see revolutionary mobilization as being sparked by the events in Budapest on 23rd October, the opening of the archives and research into the “local revolutions” has qualified this Budapest-centered account, unveiling evidence of much unrest, just as in Oroszlány, that took place before or as the events in Budapest got underway.⁷³ Student mobilization in provincial centers such as Debrecen, Miskolc and Szeged was marked, while the authorities were made aware of the simmering discontent and strained patience of industrial workers in their cities.⁷⁴ Even where the explosion of Revolution occurred in response to the events in Budapest, as in many of the capital’s working-class suburbs, or in Tatabánya as was discussed above, the signs of political mobilization were present prior to the 23rd October, while local events themselves were driven by dynamics particular to their location.⁷⁵

The Revolution, right across the country, involved a rapid re-location of political power from the party and regime to the revolutionary crowd, which during the last week of October and the first days of November acted as the locus of political legitimacy. In cities across the country, the crowd, organized through initially peaceful demonstrations, assumed the role as the representative of the “will of the people”, demanding a change in the political order.⁷⁶ Crowds played a central role in the “cleansing” of public space, through the deliberate and at times, almost theatrical removal of monuments and artifacts associated with either the Red Army or the socialist regime.⁷⁷ The frequent incidents where representatives of either the army or state security services fired on initially non-violent crowds after 23rd October, both radicalized the revolution and underlined the illegitimacy of the regime.⁷⁸ Such acts of violence against revolutionary crowds bolstered their claim to act in the name of the people as a whole. Furthermore, they could and frequently did confer their legitimacy on revolutionary organs set up during the Revolution, while they played a role in supervising the actions of other organs that displayed an ambiguous attitude towards the will of the revolutionary crowd.⁷⁹

Though the revolutionary crowd appeared as the unified embodiment of the will of the nation, the crowds were far from homogeneous either politically or socially. In many towns, like Zalaegerszeg, secondary school students and industrial workers provided the core of the demonstrations that ignited local revolutions, which attracted members of other occupational groups to join vocal demands for change.⁸⁰ Workers played a central role in the demonstrations in urban centers right across the country, and often were over-represented among the dead and injured when crowds were fired upon; of those killed when the state security agencies fired on demonstrators in Mosonmagyaróvár on 26 October workers made up 65.15 percent.⁸¹ Workers were not the only people in the revolutionary crowds, though they played a crucial role in many, but the different groups within the workforce played very different roles either within the crowd; had very different relationships to the crowd; or, participated in crowds in different locations from many of their workmates. Working-class youth were the most radical

group in that they drove political change, and were most likely to participate in armed groups during the Revolution. The skilled were the most split politically and participated most actively in the struggles for control of the factories, while rural workers tended to return to spread the Revolution to their villages, and largely sought the reversal of agricultural collectivization.

The role of young workers in providing a group of militants who were prepared to drive forward the Revolution was fundamental. In Budapest, younger workers were frequently drawn to the initial demonstrations; played a central role in radicalizing those demonstrations, and then in spreading disturbances back to the industrial suburbs. One second-year industrial apprentice in the United Lighting and Electrics Factory, I.M., was working on 23 October when “I heard that there was a demonstration in Budapest in Stalin square”. Immediately catching the tram and trolleybus into central Pest he was forced to get off some way short of the square, because “the crowd was so big, that the trolleybuses stood in a jam and everyone went on foot.”⁸² Often youth participation in the early stages of the Revolution resembled lower-level and less political forms of youth disorder in industrial communities.⁸³ One group of young working-class males on hearing of demonstration determined to go to the hostel for local student nurses, and “take the girls off to the demonstration” in Budapest. Once they discovered that the director of hostel had locked the inhabitants in, they began to shout “Russians Go home, Rákosi to the gallows” until the police arrived.⁸⁴

Outside the capital, young workers played a central role in the first demonstrations in many communities. In Tatabánya, while striking local bus drivers provided the catalyst for the local revolution, they joined younger workers in seeking to transform their strike into an occupation of public space, as apprentices from the mining technical school and young miners from the workers’ hostels provided the core of initial demonstrations. The spontaneity of the demonstrations was demonstrated by the confusion of different slogans – some shouted the old, socialist slogan of “bread! work!”, while others sang the himnusz –

Hungary's national anthem – as they marched.⁸⁵ As the number of participants in the demonstrations increased, young workers took key roles in the “cleansing” of public space of monuments associated with either the Soviets or the socialist regime; in Nagykanizsa, those who pulled down the Soviet war memorial in the town were led by a twenty-six year old worker, whose working life had been filled through a series of jobs in the mining and construction sectors.⁸⁶ The activities of working-class youth extended not merely to violence against the symbols of the socialist regime, but they played a direct role in violence against those they perceived to be representatives of the regime. They frequently acted as the “agents” of the revolutionary crowd in carrying out demands for removing Communists from the head of public institutions. In Újpest's Danube Shoe Factory, the belief of the crowd that “the workers' council was in the hands of the Communist director”, led to four armed young workers, led by the son of one factory employee, deciding they would storm the factory and “arrest” the director, as part of a process through which the workers' council would be purged.⁸⁷

The issue of violence raises the question of the process by which working-class youths within demonstrations armed themselves and formed themselves into armed groups. The boundaries between these armed groups of young workers and the informally-organized “national guards”, that nominally served local revolutionary committees answerable to the crowd was a fluid one. In Tatabánya, a small section of the official demonstration successfully laid siege to the local police station freeing prisoners and gaining access to weapons. These were supplemented by those given to them after laying siege to a local army barracks. While some of the radical, armed demonstrations went to join the “fight” in the capital, a core of around thirty remained to form a “national guard” detachment, to guarantee the local revolution.⁸⁸ In Budapest, where peaceful demonstrations were fired upon, and with the subsequent intervention of Soviet troops, young workers who had joined the demonstrations moved to arm themselves, by demanding the weapons that were stored in factories for civil defense purposes. During the early hours of 24th October, young workers joined other

demonstrators in raiding factories for weapons – not all were undefended; in some, remembered one young worker “the porter on the door was already armed with a machine gun”.⁸⁹ In some factories, armed bands made up of young workers, and factory security guards engaged in gun battles at factory gates; in some cases, workers reporting for the morning shift were caught and injured in the cross-fire, though in the vast majority of cases the authorities were able to repel these attacks.⁹⁰

The attempts of the authorities to retain control over both factories, and more broadly, working-class communities foundered on the breadth of support among workers for the overthrow of the regime; even though many workers were less radical than their younger workmates. In factories in Budapest suburbs like Újpest, the student demonstrations provoked considerable sympathy among workers on 23rd October; in one meeting in the Chinoin Pharmaceuticals Factory “a university student spoke and read out their demands expressed as a series of points some of the points were met with enthusiastic applause”.⁹¹ On the morning of the same day the “sixteen points” – the demands of the Budapest student demonstrators⁹² - were circulated among the workers of the neighboring United Lighting and Electrics factory, where they had “a considerable impact”.⁹³ In the Chinoin the mood had only been defused by the director urging workers to “await the view of the party of the demonstration”.⁹⁴ The denunciation of the demonstrators as “counter-revolutionaries” by Ernő Gerő in his radio broadcast, the consequent demonstrations in front of the headquarters of national radio and the firing on crowds by the state security services there, followed by the news of the intervention of Red Army troops overnight turned the mood in the capital’s industrial suburbs into one of fury. In the United Lighting and Electrics factory the following morning two-thirds of the workers arrived at work, but during the morning the skilled workers in the tool workshop and in the vacuum plant stopped work to organize a mass meeting of all workers that launched the strike and decided to remove the red star from above the factory gate.⁹⁵ With the spread of the strike a large number of workers took to the streets to demand political change; over the course of the

morning there “were many people in front of the State Department store, and leaflets were distributed from a black car. They shouted and told me that we were all on strike”.⁹⁶ The crowd destroyed the Soviet war memorial; its more radical wing turned on the local police station, yet a majority remained at the site of the war memorial and as a result of local activists addressing the crowd they chose a body of people to represent them and thus take over public administration. Thus the crowd delegated a local “revolutionary committee” through chaotic acclamation, rather than election as such.⁹⁷

The dynamic of a strike in support of the Revolution, providing the spark for the creation of the working-class crowd through demonstrations was one which was replicated in other industrial areas across the country. In Nagykanizsa, the work stoppage began in the Transdanubian Oil Mining Machinery Factory where strikers called for support “for Budapest University students”, on the “Russians to go home”, “the introduction of a multi-party system”, “the removal of Communist leaders and managers”, “withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact” and “the removal of the Gerő government”.⁹⁸ Joined by workers from other workplaces and carrying national flags the demonstrators removed the emblems of the peoples’ republic from public buildings as they passed, converging on and demolishing the town’s Soviet war memorial.⁹⁹ The “election” of revolutionary organs was conducted under the same kind of chaotic circumstances as with the revolutionary committee in Újpest; though the election of the revolutionary organ in Tatabánya was to be conducted by a meeting of representatives of the city’s factories and mines, it was chosen in confused circumstances and effectively drew its legitimacy from the fact that it represented the crowd that had assembled in the city the previous day.¹⁰⁰

The confusion in which revolutionary organs were created to oversee local public administration, and their problematic role given that their legitimacy was located in the revolutionary crowd, was replicated inside enterprises. As many striking workers left to take to the streets; new organs inside workplaces – the workers’ councils – were created. Their ambiguous position was not only generated, as the example of

the machine plant of Tatabánya's Coal Mining Trust shows, by the chaos in which they were created, but also by the fact that they could be used by local Communist cells as part of an attempt to maintain control of their enterprises. The election in this plant took a disorganized form: "they shouted out names, and the workers replied whether they agreed to their election or not. The first to be elected was L.I., the party secretary, then me, then F., and then the others".¹⁰¹ The first workers' council in an enterprise, that of Újpest's United Lighting and Electrics Factory, was organized by the factory party committee, precisely with the intention of ensuring that "trustworthy people would be elected". This attempt was unsuccessful.¹⁰² Before revolution convulsed the whole country, the creation of workers' councils had been endorsed as a strategy by both the party and the official trade unions as means of controlling the economy in the circumstances of outright revolution.¹⁰³ In the Gheorgiu-Dej Shipyards the plant's party organization used its workers' council as cover to prevent local revolutionary activists empowered by the territorial revolutionary committee from gaining access to the site.¹⁰⁴

Even among the workers' councils where the party's attempts to influence the elections had foundered, and a coalition of skilled workers and engineers was able to take control, the councils were less radical than those elected on the streets – at least until the very end of October. In the forty-eight hours that followed the election of the United Electrics Workers' Council, it re-made the institutions of the factory. The factory's managing director and one production director were removed; the managing director was replaced with the president of the worker's council. It announced that it saw itself as provisional, existing only until full elections could be held. It abolished the Personnel Department which under Rákosi had been used as the representative of both the party and the secret police within the management of the factory. It further announced that the strike would be maintained and full wages would be paid, whilst low paid workers would be given a 15% wage rise and other workers 10%. It began the process moreover of more fundamental reforms to factory administration, beginning administrative de-centralisation and the

elimination of bureaucracy, an overhaul of the payment-by-results wage system in the factory, and called for the establishment of a 71 member general workers' council and for the creation of shop workers' councils under it.¹⁰⁵ The skilled worker majority whose thinking dominated the changes instituted by the workers' councils made their philosophy and distrust of centralization clear at a meeting of all the councils in Újpest on 29th October; "the mistakes of recent years show that we have to build from below, we have to solve problems using our own strength". Yet, they also underlined their distrust of the radicalism of bodies like the territorial revolutionary committee in Újpest that drew their legitimacy from the crowd; "it seems that the power that has been paid in the blood of our young people is falling into the hands of different, fractious elements".¹⁰⁶

The skilled elite that dominated the early workers' councils built on the calls for factory democracy that preceded the Revolution, forcing radical transformation of structures of management and working conditions. But politically they tended to be more moderate than much of the crowd; in the words of the newspaper of the workers' council of the Ganz Wagon and Machine Factory "with the help of Imre Nagy, we have already been able to start out on a road that will bring about the realization of our other demands But we aren't going to demand the immediate implementation of demands for which time is needed".¹⁰⁷ This stance, coupled with the knowledge that many Communists continued to participate in workers' councils, brought them into conflict with the revolutionary crowd and its delegated representatives. Distrust could deteriorate into conflict; on 29th October an incorrect statement on national radio that 1,500 workers reported for work at the United Lighting and Electrics provoked demonstrations against the workers' council, whom they accused of sabotaging the Revolution, despite the fact that the workers' council stated clearly that it "will not re-start work, until Soviet troops leave the country".¹⁰⁸ The failure to pay wages to strikers at the neighboring Duclós Mining Machinery plant provoked similar demonstrations at the factory gates¹⁰⁹, provoking complaints from the more radical workers in the crowd that this was because there were many "who did not represent the workers'

interests” on the workers’ council, leading to demands it be purged of Communists.¹¹⁰ The growing radicalization of the crowd, and the consolidation of the authority of territorial revolutionary committees, restricted the room for maneuver of many of the workers’ councils, especially those which were more weakly led. In Újpest, largely against the will of many of the workers’ councils, especially that of the United Lighting and Electrics, the local revolutionary committee decided that all the districts’ workers’ councils were “provisional”, and that “persons who had been functionaries could not be elected”.¹¹¹

In many of the workers’ councils the removal of former Communist functionaries provoked a marked radicalization of their policies. In the Chinoin Pharmaceuticals Plant, the Újpest revolutionary committee succeeded in re-constituting the workers’ council. The Revolution inside the factory was instantly radicalized, moving further politically than earlier workers’ councils, by banning Communists from organizing but allowing the newly re-founded Smallholders’ Party to set up a work-based cell, and forcing the director to resign after he refused to renounce Communism.¹¹² Workers’ councils set up at the end of October, and which were constituted in workplaces where the influence of skilled workers and a labor movement tradition was weaker tended to be more radical from their foundation. At the Nagylengyel Oil Drilling Plant, a workplace that was relatively new and located in a rural area, the formation of the workers’ council took a very different direction to that in Budapest. On 28th October, the local official union organization attempted to call workers together to elect a workers’ council – when the head of factory-level union began his speech by addressing the assembled workers as “Comrades!”, he was shouted down by workers who responded with “your time is up!”. An anti-communist workers’ council was elected as a result of the meeting, whose president proclaimed that “the time of the Stalinists is over; we have to wipe them out”. The mass meeting sacked most of the management, and crucially those responsible for setting norms.¹¹³

While the democratic socialist vision of the urban, skilled elite that was implicit in the early workers’ councils was eclipsed by the growing

radicalism of crowds, and was largely absent in workplaces in which this group was less well-represented, worker-peasants focused rather on joining a rural revolution directed against agricultural collectivization. Among Komló's miners there were many who "regularly went home for the weekend. So when the real Revolution came and the work was stopped, most of the people went home and did not return to Komló for several weeks."¹¹⁴ While long-distance commuters melted away returning to their home villages, in areas where there was substantial commuting from villages to industrial establishments on a daily basis, the Revolution in urban, working-class communities ignited Revolution in rural areas. In the village of Várgesztes, on the fringes of the Tata coalfield, all but 6 of the 97 households had members working outside agriculture in 1956, virtually all in mining. News of revolutionary events in neighbouring Oroszlány fed growing anger in the village that, in turn led to the overthrow of the local council, and its replacement by a national committee elected by the crowd.¹¹⁵ In rural areas, the largest local industrial enterprise and its worker-peasant workforce played a crucial role in spreading revolution to the villages. In Bázakerettye after demonstrators destroyed the Soviet war memorial, worker-peasants commandeered the trucks owned by the local oil drilling plant and used it to spread the revolution to their home villages, where they proclaimed that "there has already been a demonstration in Bázakerettye, it is time to burn the portraits of Stalin and Rákosi, and all red flags too".¹¹⁶

In rural communities dominated by worker-peasants, issues of agricultural land ownership figured prominently, together with demands for Soviet withdrawal and anti-communism. Worker-peasants were as likely to join the anti-collectivization revolt as were other village dwellers; in the mining village of Vértesszöllős, next to Tatabánya, demonstrators demanded the break-up of the local collective farm and the return of land to its previous owners.¹¹⁷ In Dömeföld, in the far south-west, the degree to which anger, even among rural dwellers with jobs in industry or mining was directed against those responsible for implementing the regime's agrarian policies was underlined. The first acts of the worker-peasant

revolutionaries were to break into the offices of the village council and burn the paperwork connected with the local collective and the taxation of local farmers.¹¹⁸ In nearby Becsehely, worker-peasants joined with individual landholders, in demonstrations against the local collective farm, demanding its dissolution and the distribution of its property, though failed to achieve their goal in the face of resistance from the members of the collective.¹¹⁹

The Fragmentation of Resistance and the Dynamics of Post-Revolutionary Consolidation, November 1956-June 1958

During his trial for “participation in a movement that aimed at the overthrow of the peoples’ democratic order” in September 1957, Imre Kovács, who had led the anti-communist workers’ council in the Tatabánya Mining Enterprise machine plant during the strike that followed Soviet intervention in November 1956, defended himself in part by denying his anti-Soviet stance. Yet, he also did so, by arguing that the demands of revolutionary bodies in Tatabánya that he had supported had “been largely met by the Kádár government” since the Revolution.¹²⁰ In making this rather strange defence, Kovács put his finger on the split opinion of many urban, and especially skilled workers of the government that the Red Army had brought to power; they felt, on the one hand, that many of their material aspirations were met, though they still continued to be fearful and mistrustful of the regime that ruled them. In the Domestic Worsted Mill in the capital, most workers in June 1958 spoke of the poor economic situation “before 1956”, and the better one “after 1956”, arguing that “the counter-revolution played a definite role in the improvement of the situation”.¹²¹ The deep-seated distrust of the regime, and perceptions of its illegitimacy were revealed in the working-class reactions to the execution of Imre Nagy in the same month. In the Csepel Works, many compared it openly to the show trial conducted against László Rajk in 1949 and wondered how long it would take the party to “re-habilitate” him. Others argued that “Imre Nagy died a freedom-fighter”, while some maintained that “had the trial not been held in secret, then Imre Nagy’s supporters would have hindered his execution”.¹²²

Yet this split opinion did not emerge overnight with Soviet intervention, nor was it shared by all workers, but emerged slowly over the course of the eighteen months that followed the arrival of Soviet tanks in many industrial communities in the days following their attack on Budapest on 4th November 1956. Their overthrow of Imre Nagy and attempt to replace him with Kádár was initially met with the same kind of explosion of working-class anger that had ignited the Revolution twelve days before. In Tatabánya's new town, remembered one local journalist, "there was a large telegraph pole with a loudspeaker, which carried the news from the miners' radio; one evening – Wednesday 7th November – they announced that the city's Soviet commander was speaking to the city's population. The crowd, with their bare hands, brought down the pole, broke it completely, and smashed up the loudspeaker when it crashed to the ground".¹²³ One other local miner spoke of the "blind rage" which greeted Soviet intervention and fuelled the strike. "Everyone was stunned that their independence, their neutrality was over", he remembered, "the people were most happy about neutrality There was Austria as an example, because they were neutral. The Russians went, they became neutral, and their living standards just went up Because of that neutrality was very important".¹²⁴

The motivations of working-class crowds were complex, but behind the political demands lay deep seated fury at the material poverty experienced by many workers under Rákosi. The role of penury in fuelling political protest presented the regime with both a problem and an opportunity. It offered the difficulty that without addressing material grievances successfully it would be unable to consolidate its authority; but it offered them a possibility, that if they succeeded in offering material improvement, combined with selective repression, they could encourage enough of the working class to forget their political demands and aspirations and accommodate to the situation. Yet, workers were also far from united about the extent to which they accommodated to the new regime, or, indeed, resisted it.

Armed resistance on the streets, in which working-class youth were over-represented was effectively smashed within days of the Soviet intervention. The armed guerrilla groups in the capital continued to resist before they were overwhelmed by superior Soviet firepower on the 8th November.¹²⁵ In Csepel armed resistance lasted for a further three days, falling to the Soviets on the 11th November.¹²⁶ It is very difficult to estimate the total casualties of the street fighting; official statistics that almost certainly underestimate the number of casualties give an indication. They show that in Budapest some 16,700 were injured and 2,502 were killed. Of those killed, a majority were under thirty and were industrial workers.¹²⁷ In the provinces resistance was more sporadic; in Tatabánya news of the Soviet intervention was greeted with anger, though many believed that armed resistance would be futile and the revolutionary bodies resisted calls to arm angry youths with petrol bombs to stop the advance into the town.¹²⁸ In Sztálinváros this was not the case; as news of the Soviet intervention spread "at least 80 percent of the male residents" prepared to fight Soviet tanks with petrol bombs. Aware of the preparations being made, the Soviets held back until the 7th November attacking the town initially by air and then by land. In the ensuing battle eight were killed and thirty-five wounded before the town was overrun.¹²⁹

In the factories the immediate reaction to the news of the Soviet intervention was one of furious shock. The result was an immediate and solid strike against the new government and its Soviet patrons. In the capital this strike remained solid for up to a week. In the United Lighting and Electrics Factory, the moderate workers' council backed the strike, not allowing workers into the factory until the 12th November. Even then due to reduced electricity supplies work was unable to start, while the workforce remained deeply distrustful and fearful.¹³⁰ More generally in Újpest "a mood behind the strike" remained¹³¹, while the radical territorial Revolutionary Committee struggled to master a situation over which, following the Soviet intervention, they had no real control. With the drift back to work they attempted to seize the initiative. Renaming themselves the Újpest Revolutionary Workers' Council, they threw down a challenge to the

Kádár government. Proclaiming that “every worker in Budapest wants to see order in the capital. Of course we do not wish to see any sort of order, but revolutionary order, one which is based on the realization of the demands of the Revolution”. In order to achieve this aim they invited representatives of all factories in the capital to Újpest’s town hall, in order to found a Budapest workers’ council.¹³²

In response to the move the Kádár government and its Soviet allies adopted a two track strategy. It issued a decree allowing the workers to elect legal Workers' Councils within three weeks of returning to work.¹³³ At the same time they attempted to prevent the Újpest meeting taking place. Soviet tanks surrounded the town hall and the members of the Újpest Revolutionary Workers' Council were arrested.¹³⁴ The meeting was postponed and held the next day under the auspices of the more moderate United Lighting and Electrics Workers' Council, which established the Budapest Central Workers' Council. The new council was split between relative moderates, who argued for a political compromise with the Kádár regime, and members of anti-communist workers’ councils who demanded that the Soviet-imposed government not be recognized.. The workers' representatives were much more militant, and it was only one of them, Sándor Báli from the Workers' Council of the Standard factory who gave the new body a clear strategy; to refrain from recognising the Kádár government but to negotiate with it.¹³⁵ The new council called for the introduction of a mutli-party system, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary and greater democracy in the Hungarian workplace. It negotiated with the government, though relations between the Workers' Council and the state were tense and by the beginning of December agreement seemed to be highly unlikely. Furthermore, it continued to be dogged by splits between moderates and radical anti-communists over both strategy and tactics.¹³⁶

At the same time that it became clear there was no basis for agreement between the council and the government, the body was becoming a de-facto national workers’ council, and thus a focus of opposition to the Kádár government.¹³⁷ Taking these factors into consideration Kádár

shifted from a policy of negotiation to one of repression. On 5th December some two hundred activists in the workers' council movement and the former intellectual opposition were arrested. This and the active prevention of plans to call a meeting to found a National Workers' Council and growing government intransigence led to a serious stand-off between the Budapest Central Workers' Council and the state. The Council called for a two day general strike on the 11th and 12th December and was immediately outlawed. Its members were gradually arrested over the next few days and by the morning of the 11th with the arrest of the two leaders of the council, Sándor Rácz and Sándor Báli, the government succeeded in effectively eliminating its most dangerous adversary.¹³⁸ Following the removal of the Greater Budapest Central Workers' Council state policy moved to one of explicit repression. Fear of retribution created a situation in which factory-level workers' councils refused to heed the strike call on 11th December, though much of the workforce did. Arrests of workers' council members continued throughout December.¹³⁹ On the 13th December the government banned strikes and demonstrations, a position that was to be strengthened in January 1957 when the government decreed that striking or incitement to strike be made a capital offence¹⁴⁰.

Yet Kádár's turn to repression was informed by a knowledge that by early December industrial workers were becoming ever more weary of strike action, in part because they came to see the eventual victory of Kádár as inevitable, but largely because of the effect of the collapsing economy on their incomes and the food supply situation. The Budapest party committee noted that "in the first half of November at a decision of the Workers' Council without any sign of resistance the factories would stop" yet "by the second half of November they (the Workers' Councils) tried to find better justifications for work stoppages: wage demands, solidarity, strike" yet even at this stage "the desire to work is growing".¹⁴¹ On the first day of the forty-eight hour general strike – the 11th December – in Újpest in most of the factories no work was done. In the Magyar Pamutipar cotton factory, however, work began as normal on the morning shift and only when the news of the arrests of

the leaders of the Greater Budapest Central Workers' Council arrived, did workers walk out. Despite this on the 13th the Workers' Council in the plant vowed that it would re-start production and take greater care over the maintenance of work discipline. By this point, however, it was not merely a recognition of the defeat of the Revolution or growing fear of police retribution that was deterring workers from resorting to the strike weapon, but the growing fear of unemployment given the crisis ridden state of the economy and the lack of strike pay.¹⁴²

Despite the gradual breaking of the strike, and the elimination of revolutionary organs in cities and villages alike, the situation in industrial communities remained tense well into 1957. Many younger workers had fled the country, while worker-peasants remained in their villages for months afterwards. Among urban and skilled workers a culture of protest simmered. During the early part of the year anti-regime leaflets were still being circulated throughout the United Lighting and Electrics. One leaflet stated that "Kádár still keeps the Rákosite Antal Apró, out with the swindler Márosan, bring Imre Nagy into the government, out with the Soviet Army, declare Hungarian neutrality, why is the Kádár government scared of arming the peasants and workers ? Perhaps they are fascists".¹⁴³ On the national holiday of 15th March anti-government leaflets circulated in the Stalin Steel Works.¹⁴⁴ On the first anniversary of the outbreak of the Revolution, 23rd October 1957, rumors - "they are striking in Csepel", or "in Újpest there were demonstrations" - were widespread.¹⁴⁵ In the United Lighting and Electrics some of the workers engaged in a deliberate act of sabotage to commemorate the Revolution by destroying the electrical box that supplied power to light the red star on the front of the building, thus ensuring that during the week following the 23rd October it did not light up.¹⁴⁶

Yet, during the first half of 1957, what was marked, was the way in which even urban workers underlined their distrust of the government, through support for cultural practices and institutions associated with anti-communism, even though they had not done so in the Rákosi years. One of the concrete manifestations of this was the growth of

popular religious observance following the suppression of the Revolution. In the capital in 1957 the population was considerably more assertive about its perceived right to celebrate Christmas than it had been in previous years. For midnight mass and for the Christmas day services the churches in many "working class" districts of the capital were full, according to one party official "there hasn't been such attendance (at church) for years".¹⁴⁷ In contrast to the pre-Revolution years when church congregations in the capital had been made up of elderly women, during Christmas 1957 in one industrial district 25 to 30 percent of the congregations were aged between 18 and 20. In another similar district some 60% of those attending the Christmas morning service were male manual workers. During 1958 it was noticed that a significant minority of manual workers in one district spent ten minutes in their local church before and after work each day. Furthermore in schools in the same districts some the parents of 38% of children from worker households opted for religious education.¹⁴⁸

This was combined with a retreat from the public realm entirely, which was especially marked among the young, and among worker-peasants. Alienation from official political activity could be seen among younger workers who tended to develop more individualistic and exclusively material aspirations. One young female commuter who worked in the Zalaegerszeg Clothing Factory illustrated the attitudes of this group. She was described as "exhibiting passivity" as far as political questions were concerned, and refused to participate in any political organization established in the factory, and her sole ambition was reported to be becoming a skilled worker.¹⁴⁹ These attitudes fed through to the newer skilled workers; another party brigade that spoke to three newly trained skilled workers in 1958 found them uninterested and uninformed about politics at all. In many cases interest in things material was strong.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore one other symptom of withdrawal from the public realm after 1956 that was particularly pronounced among male workers was the increase in the already high number of alcoholics and in alcohol related domestic violence as a consequence.¹⁵¹

It was in a climate dominated by withdrawal and distrust of the government, that the Kádár government offered tangible material

improvements – improvements that met working-class hunger for better economic circumstances for their own households; something which had lain behind the anger that stimulated working-class mobilization during the Revolution. By the end of 1957 as a result of wage increases the average income of a working family in Budapest was 18 percent higher than it had been a year previously.¹⁵² In Újpest in 1958 there was much greater satisfaction with wage rates than there had been several years earlier, though workers felt that not all problems with wages had been solved.¹⁵³ In the Zalaegerszeg Clothing Factory Kádár's policies had a similar effect; in 1952 the average wage of workers in the factory had stood at 703 Forints per month, by 1957 the average wage level had risen to 1,147 Forints per month. The problems of the wage system for the workers on the production line changed little. Though the intensity of work was reduced, and the situation with raw material provision improved, as wages were raised many of the problems of the wage systems remained.¹⁵⁴ The visible improvements in living standards had led to the development of a degree of trust between the government and industrial workers by early 1958 in Budapest, as in other working-class areas.¹⁵⁵

It would be a mistake to overestimate this degree of trust, however. The memory of the 1956 Revolution was never far below the surface in 1958. Many workers attributed their improved financial situation as due in a large part to the 1956 Revolution. Workers, furthermore, remained to some extent distrustful and were uncertain as to what extent the increases in living standards were a kind of temporary phase before the wage increases were withdrawn and the state reverted to Stalinism. In Újpest "the influence of old, bad experiences still has a big impact on people, fluctuations in earnings, even the slightest falls in wages that are pretty frequent cause disquiet, discontent and distrust among the workers".¹⁵⁶ The reconstruction of socialism after 1956 and its limits in Hungary's industrial communities bore the imprint of both socialism's decay and its outright collapse in those areas before and during the 1956 Revolution. Though in the short and medium-term this reconstruction paved the way for the consolidation of socialist rule in Hungary, its ambiguous nature would come back to haunt the regime

during its eventual and final collapse in the 1980s.

¹ - “A bányászok nehéz munkájukhoz méltó bért kapnak”, *Komárom Megyei Hírlap* (27th November, 1956), p.1

² - Országos Szechenyi Könyvtár, Kézirattár (National Szechenyi Library, Manuscripts Collection, hereafter OSZK Kt.), 1956-os gyűtemény, Komárom-Esztergom megye (1956 Collections, Komárom-Esztergom county, hereafter 412.VIIf.), 7d. – Tatabánya Városi Tanács VB. Tárgy: Az 1956.okt.23.-i és követő ellenforradalmi események leírása. Hiv.rsz: T.260/1957.; on the strike and its impact see OSZK Kt. 412.VIIf.6d. – Komárom Megyei Tanács VB 1957; Beszámoló az 1957 május hó 16-i tanácsülésre, a végrehajtóbizottság munkájáról, pp.2-3; on the nature of the strike in the mining enterprises see OSZK Kt. 412.VIIf.1d. – Komárom Megyei Biróság, Elnökségi iratok 1958; Az Esztergomi Megyei Biróság Elnökétől. Esztergom, Kossuth Lajos u.6.I.em.Tel:212. 1958.El.IX.22.szám. Tárgy: 1958. évi április havi jelentés, pp.1-3

³ - “Tatabánya, 1956. december 11. 13 óra 27 perc. Komárom megyei rendőrkapitány jelentése”, in Erzsébet Kajári, (ed.) *Rendőrségi Napi Jelentések: 1956. október 23. – December 12. Első kötet*, (Budapest: Az 1956-os Intézet, 1996), pp.478-9

⁴ - “Kik és miért félnek a tatabányai karhatalomtól?”, *Komárom Megyei Hírlap* (22nd December, 1956), p.3

⁵ - For the official presentation of the events of 1956 and how they were represented in official propaganda see the five volumes of the so-called “white book”, *Ellenforradalmi erők a magyar októberi eseményekben. I-IV kötet*, (Budapest: A Magyar Népköztársaság Minisztertanácsa Tájékoztatási Hivatala – Zrinyi Nyomda, 1957), and *Nagy Imre és bűntársai ellenforradalmi összeküvése*, (Budapest: A Magyar Népköztársaság Minisztertanácsa Tájékoztatási Hivatala – Zrinyi Nyomda, 1958)

⁶ - For representations of the local “myth” of the “counter-revolution” in propaganda, see *Az ellenforradalom Komárom megyei eseményeiből*, (Tatabánya: MSZMP Komárom megyei Intézőbizottsága, 1957); see the series of articles in the county party newspaper – the first of which

was “Hogyan Történt? Az ellenforradalom tatabányai napjaiból”, *Komárom Megyei Hírlap* (26th January, 1957), p.4; on how the particular local construction of this “myth” shaped the post-revolutionary political trials see the indictments and/or verdicts in the two most important of the political trials that concerned the events in the city – OSZK Kt., 1956-os gyűjtemény, Győri Megyei Biróság Népbirósági Tanácsanak anyaga (1956 Collection, Material of the Győr Peoples’ Court, hereafter 1956-os gy., Gy.NB.) 1127/1957, 1d.; Győr Sopronmegyei Ügyészség, Győr. 1957.Bül.372 szám. Vádirat népi demokratikus államrend megdöntésére irányuló szervezkedés vezetésének büntette miatt dr. Klébert Márton és társai ellen indított bűnügyben; OSZK Kt. 412.VIIIf.4d. – Győri Népbiróság B.0027/1957/16 – Mazalin György és társai; A Magyar Népköztársaság Legfelsőbb Birósága népbirósági tanácsa. Nbf.I.5198/1958/31.szám

⁷ - “Újra az Élen! Ismét elsők a tatabányai XI-es aknaiak”, *Komárom Megyei Hírlap* (26th January, 1957), p.3

⁸ - OSZK Kt.412.VIIIf.2d.- Esztergom Megyei Biróság – 429/1957; B.429/1957/5 szám. Jegyzőkönyv készült a Nép.d.áll.rend.megdönt.ir.mozg.való részv.btte. miatt Kovács Imre és társai ellen indított bűnügyben az Esztergomi Megyei Biróság Tatabánya-án biróságnál 1957 évi szeptember hó 2 napján tartott zárt tárgyalásról, p.13

⁹ - “Ha nincs szén – veszélyben Tatabánya élelmiszerellátása”, *Komárom Megyei Hírlap* (15th December, 1956), p.1

¹⁰ - Komárom-Esztergom Megyei Önkormányzat Levéltára (Archive of the Government of Komárom-Esztergom County, hereafter KEMÖL), Az MSZMP Tatabánya Városi Bizottságának iratai (Papers of the Tatabánya City Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, hereafter XXXV.2f.)3/1957/8ö.e., pp.7-15

¹¹ - “A tatabányai bányászok válasza: a sztrajkra, a munkanélküliségre”, *Komárom Megyei Hírlap* (6th January, 1957), p.3

¹² - KEMÖL XXXV.2f.2/2ö.e., p.28

¹³ - On wages see “A szakmány bérezésről”, *Komárom Megyei Hírlap* (6th January, 1957), p.2

¹⁴ - KEMÖL XXXV.2f.3/1958/17ö.e., p.2

¹⁵ - KEMÖL Az MSZMP Komárom Megyei Bizottságának iratai (Papers of the Komárom County Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.1f.)3/1957/23ö.e., pp.4-5

¹⁶ - The phrase is borrowed from Johanna Granville, *The First Domino: International Decision Making during the Hungarian Crisis of 1956*, foreword by Raymond L. Garthoff (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004); See also Csaba Békés, (ed.) *Az 1956-os magyar forradalom helye a szovjet kommunista rendszer összeomlásában*, (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1993), and Gregorz Ekiert, *The State Against Society: Political Crises and their Aftermath in East Central Europe*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996)

¹⁷ - János M. Rainer, "A rendszerváltás és ötvenhat", in András Bozóki, (ed.), *A rendszerváltás forgatókönyve: Kerekasztal-tárgyalások 1989-ben. 7 kötet. Alkotmányos Forradalom. Tanulmányok*, (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2000), pp. 651-58

¹⁸ - There is a growing historical literature in Hungary on those patterns of governance – for two conflicting approaches which concentrate on different decades and draw different conclusion about Kádár's regime see János M. Rainer, (ed.), "*Hatvanas Évek*" *Magyarországon: Tanulmányok*, (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2004), and Károly Szerencsés, & István Simon, (eds.), *Azok a Kádári "Szép" Napok: Dokumentumok a hetvenes évek történetéből*, (Budapest: Kairosz Kiadó, 2004). For studies and collections that concentrate on aspects of Kádár's rule, see Tibor Huszár, (ed.), *Kedves Jó Kádár Elvtárs! Válogatás Kádár János Levelezéséből, 1954-1989*, (Budapest: Osiris, 2002); Melinda Kalmár, *Ennivaló és hozomány: A kora kádárizmus ideológia*, (Budapest: Magvető, 1998); Zsuzsanna Varga, *Politika, paraszti érdekérvényesítés és szövetkezetek Magyarországon, 1956-1967*, (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2001)

¹⁹ - This notion is adapted from the author's introduction to János M. Rainer, *Ötvenhat Után*, (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2003)

²⁰ - I make this case in Mark Pittaway, "The Politics of Legitimacy and Hungary's Postwar Transition", *Contemporary European History*, 13, 4 (2004); 453-75

²¹ - Győr-Moson-Sopron Megye Győri Levéltár (Győr Branch of the Győr-Moson-Sopron County Archive, hereafter Gy.MSM.Gy.L.), Győr-Moson megye és Győr thj. város főispánja 1945-1950, Általános iratok (Papers of the Lord-Lieutenant of Győr-Moson County and of the City of Győr 1945-1950, General Papers, hereafter XXIf.1b.) 1d.; Győr-Moson megye és Győr thj. város főispánjától. 75/5.főisp.1945.sz. Tárgy: Szeptember havi tájékoztató jelentés, p.1

²² - Zala Megyei Levéltár (Zala County Archive, hereafter ZML), Az MDP Zala Megyei Bizottságának iratai (Papers of the Zala County Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.57f.)1/70 ö.e., pp.26-31

²³ - GyMSMGy.L., Az MDP Győr-Moson-Sopron Megyei Bizottság, Mezőgazdasági Osztály iratai (Papers of the Agricultural Department of the Győr-Moson-Sopron County Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party, hereafter Xf.402/2/Mezőgazdaság)/8ö.e.; M.D.P. Járási Bizottság Mosonmagyaróvár, Sallai Imre ut 3 sz, Jelentés. Mosonmagyaróvár, 1950. augusztus 9-én., p.1

²⁴ - For the actions of such radio stations and their interaction with domestic opinion, see Mark Pittaway, "The Education of Dissent: The Reception of the Voice of Free Hungary, 1951-6", *Cold War History*, 4, 1 (2003): 97-116

²⁵ - See the documents in ZML, Az MSZMP Zala Megyei Bizottságának iratai (Papers of the Zala County Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.1f.)1957/9ö.e.

²⁶ - Fejér Megyei Levéltár (Fejér County Archive, hereafter FML), Az MSZMP Fejér Megyei Bizottságának iratai (Papers of the Fejér County Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.19f.)/1957/14ö.e., p.59

²⁷ - For a discussion of this phenomenon in general terms, which reveals parallels with the climate inside Hungary after 1956, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery*, translated by Jefferson Chase, (Granta Books, London, 2003)

²⁸ - Budapest Főváros Levéltára (Archives of the City of Budapest,

hereafter BFL), Az MSZMP Budapesti Bizottságának iratai (Papers of the Budapest Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.1f.)/app./1958/138ö.e., pp.289-95

²⁹ - For the generation of this settlement in rural areas see Varga, *Politika, paraszti érdekérvényesítés és szövetkezetek*; the issue of the acceptance of the regime among conservative members of the middle class is addressed best in János M. Rainer, "Submerging or Clinging On Again? József Antall, Father and Son, in Hungary after 1956", *Contemporary European History*, 14, 1 (2005): 65-105

³⁰ - Magyar Országos Levéltár (Hungarian National Archive, hereafter MOL), A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt Központi Bizottságának iratai (Papers of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, hereafter M-KS-288f.)21/1958/20ö.e., pp.252-3; MOL M-KS-288f.21/1958/23 ö.e., p.502; ZML XXXV.1f.1958/12 ö.e.; Feljegyzés a Zalaegerszegi Ruhagyár pártszervezetének agitációs munkájáról, pp.25-6; BFL XXXV.1f.1958/42ö.e., pp.49-52

³¹ - MOL M-KS-288f.5/23ö.e./1957.április 23., p.92

³² - MOL M-KS-288f.5/96ö.e., p.3

³³ - For a good example of these cultural assumptions manifesting themselves in internal discussions see MOL M-KS-288f.21/1958/20ö.e., pp.1-8

³⁴ - I outline this argument in the following articles: Mark Pittaway, "Az állami ellenőrzés társadalmi korlátainak újraértékelése: az ipari dolgozók és a szocialista diktatúra Magyarországon, 1948-1953" in Sándor Horváth, László Pethő & Eszter Zsófia Tóth (eds.) *Munkástörténet – Munkásantropológia*, (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2003), pp. 71-82; Mark Pittaway, "The Reproduction of Hierarchy: Skill, Working-Class Culture and the State in Early Socialist Hungary", *The Journal of Modern History*, 74, 4 (2002): 737-69; Mark Pittaway, "The Social Limits of State Control: Time, the Industrial Wage Relation and Social Identity in Stalinist Hungary, 1948-1953", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 12, 3 (1999): 271-301

³⁵ - For the Plovdiv events see R.J. Crampton, *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria*, (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.176; on the revolt in Plzeň the best available account is

still Otto Ulc "Pilsen: the unknown revolt", *Problems of Communism*, 14, 3 (1965): 46-9; for a summary of the 1953 events in the GDR see Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR, 1949-1989*, (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp.177-87.

³⁶ - BFL, Az MDP Budapesti Bizottságának iratai (Papers of the Budapest Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.95f.)2/215ö.e., pp.54-5

³⁷ - For the political background the best account is provided in János M. Rainer, *Nagy Imre: Politikai életrajz. Első kötet 1896-1953*, (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1996), pp.489-542

³⁸ - For some examples see, Politikatörténeti és Szakszervezeti Levéltár (Archive of Political History and the Trade Unions, hereafter PtSzL), A Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa iratai (Papers of the Central Council of Trade Unions, hereafter XII.2f.)7/33d./1953; Feljegyzés a kormányprogrammal kapcsolatos üzemi tapasztalatokról, p.1; ZML XXXV.57f.2/Agitprop/15 ö.e.; Jelentés Nagy Imre országgyűlési beszéde utáni megnyilvánulásokról, p.1

³⁹ - For some examples see "Fordítsunk nagyobb gondot a dolgozók kéréseire", *Futószalag* (4th July, 1953), p.2; "Tűrhetetlen körülmények között dolgoznak a vigonyfonoda tépő dolgozói", *Pamut Újság* (9th July, 1953), p.3

⁴⁰ - Miklós Vásárhelyi, "Az első megghiúsított reformkísérlet", *Medvetánc*, 2-3 (1988): 149-205

⁴¹ - Open Society Archives (OSA), Records of the Radio Free Europe Research Institute, Hungarian Unit (300-40); Item No. 08699/53, p.1

⁴² - For an excellent insight into this "rearguard" action in anti-communist western Hungary, see Gy.MSMGy.L.X.402f.2/Mezőgazdaság/20ö.e.; Magyar Dolgozók Pártja Sopron Járási Bizottsága, Magyar Dolgozók Pártja Megyei Pártbizottsága Mezőg.Osztály Bognár Elvtársnak, Sopron, 1953.augusztus.11; for a useful account of official harassment of individual landholders, see OSA 300/40; Item No. 10105/54, pp.1-7

⁴³ - No reliable figures are available, but for an indication which is likely to understate the true effects of this phenomenon see MOL, A Magyar Dolgozók Pártja Központi Vezetőségének iratai (Papers of the Central Leadership of the Hungarian Workers' Party, hereafter M-KS-276f.)65/251ö.e., p.147

⁴⁴ - Gy.MSMGy.L.X.402f.2/Mezőgazdaság/24ö.e.; A Győri Textilművek patronálási csoport jelentése a páli "Sarló Kalapács" TSZCS-ben tett látogatásról, 1953.VII.7, p.1

⁴⁵ - BFL XXXV.95f.2/215ö.e., p.139

⁴⁶ - On the implementation of protective legislation in 1953, see Mark Pittaway, "Industrial Workers, Socialist Industrialisation and the State in Hungary, 1948-1958" (PhD thesis: University of Liverpool, 1998), p.276; MOL M-KS-276f.94/593ö.e., pp.1-4

⁴⁷ - MOL M-KS-276f.94/827ö.e., pp.319-20

⁴⁸ - OSA 300/40; Item No. 8083/54, p.12

49 - PtSzL XII.2f.7/4d./1953; Jelentés a kormányprogramm utáni bérhelyzetről, p.4; PtSzL XII.2f.7/30d./1953; Levél az Élelmiszeripari Minsztérium Munkaügyi- és Bérfőosztály Vezetőtől a Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa Munkabér-osztálynak, 1953. október 8., p.4

⁵⁰ - MOL M-KS-276f.94/743ö.e., pp.83-9

⁵¹ - For some of the specific wage measures aimed at the skilled and experienced, see PtSzL XII.2f.7/28d./1953; Minisztertanács Bértitkársága Javaslat az 1954. évben végrehajtandó bérügyi intézkedésekre

⁵² - MOL M-KS-276f.94/743ö.e., p.58

⁵³ - PtSzL, Bányaiipari Dolgozók Szakszervezetének iratai (Papers of Mineworkers' Union, hereafter XII.30f.)745d./1954; Bányaiipari Dolgozók Szakszervezete, Szénbányászati Tröszt Bizottság, Tatabánya. Jelentés Bányaiipari Dolgozók Szakszervezeti szénbányászati tröszt bizottságának 1953.évi IV.negyedévi jelentése, p.4

⁵⁴ - See the documents in BFL XXXV.95f.4/62ö.e.

⁵⁵ - FML, Az MDP Dunai Vasmű építkezés és Dunapentele/Sztálinváros/ Városi Bizottságának iratai (Paper of the Danube Steel Works' Construction Site and Dunapentele/Sztálinváros

City Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party, hereafter 17f.)2/PTO/22ö.e.; Kivonat II. A K.V. márciusi határozatával kapcsolatos hangulatról beszámoló, pp.5-7; BFL XXXV.95f.2/215ö.e., p.139

⁵⁶ - Gy.MSMGy.L., Az MDP Győr Városi Bizottságának iratai (Papers of the Győr City Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party, hereafter X.405f.)5/117ö.e.; Jegyzőkönyv felvétel 1956. augusztus 21-én az Öntöde és Kovácsológyárban megtartott Párt-Csucsbizottsági értekezletén, pp.2-3

⁵⁷ - MOL M-KS-276f.94/829ö.e., pp.90-2

⁵⁸ - PtSzL XII.30f.922d./1955; Jelentés a bérezés egyszerűsítésének, és összevonásának levitele, annak eredményei és hibái

⁵⁹ - This is clear from the article "Teljesíthetők-e bányauzemeinkben a normák?", *Harc a Szénért: Tatabánya Város Pártbizottságának Lapja*, (4th November, 1956), p.3

⁶⁰ - BFL, Az MDP Budapest IV. Kerületi Bizottságának iratai (Papers of the Budapest IVth District Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.176f.)2/158ö.e., p.32

⁶¹ - FML XXXV.17f.2/8ö.e.; A rendkívüli taggyűlésen felvetett kérdések, pp.1-10

⁶² - BFL XXXV.176f.2/154ö.e., p.275

⁶³ - BFL XXXV.176f.2/154ö.e., p.188

⁶⁴ - BFL XXXV.176f.2/154ö.e., p.274

⁶⁵ - MOL M-KS-276f.66/23ö.e., pp.42-3

⁶⁶ - MOL M-KS-276f.66/23ö.e., p.63

⁶⁷ - BFL XXXV.176f.2/149ö.e., p.216; BFL XXXV.176f.2/149ö.e., pp.7-8

⁶⁸ - BFL XXXV.176f.2/147ö.e., p.16

⁶⁹ - ZML, Az MDP Letenye Járási Bizottságának iratai (Papers of the Letenye District Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.61f.)1/42ö.e.; Lovászi üzem helyzetéről feljegyzések és tájékoztató, pp.1-2; ZML XXXV.61f.1/42ö.e.; Nagyaktiva ülésen készült feljegyzések, p.1

⁷⁰ - BFL XXXV.176f.2/149ö.e., p.4

⁷¹ - “Régi harcos szemmel látom”, *Futószalag* (22nd September, 1956), p.3

⁷² - OSZK 412.VIIf.7d. – Komárom Megyei Tanács – Titkárság; Városi Tanács VB. Elnökétől, Oroszlány. 775/1957. Tárgy: Az ellenforradalmi események leírása, pp.1-2

⁷³ - For some useful accounts of the Revolution in the east of the country, see Attila Szokolczai & László A. Varga (eds.), *A vidék forradalma, 1956. I kötet*, (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet – Budapest Főváros Levéltára, 2003)

⁷⁴ - Tibor Filep, *Debrecen, 1956: Forradalom, nemzeti ellenállás, megtorlás*, (Debrecen: Csokonai Kiadó, 2000); István Gazdag (ed.), *1956 Dokumentumai Hajdú-Biharban: Az 1956-os forradalom Hajdú-Bihar megyei történetének válogatott dokumentumai* (Debrecen: Az 1956-os Intézet Hajdú-Bihar Megyei Kutató-Csoportja, 1993), pp.29-49; Attila Szokolczai, “Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén megye”, in Szokolczai & Varga (eds.), *A vidék forradalma, 1956.*, pp. 121-35; Csaba Farkas, “Csongrád megye”, in *ibid.*, pp. 201-32

⁷⁵ - For the former, see János M. Rainer, “Helyi Politikai Szerveződés 1956-ban – Az Újpesti Példa”, in Zsuzsanna Bencsik, & Gábor Kresalek, (eds.), *Az Ostromtól a Forradalomig: adalékok Budapest múltjáról*, (Budapest: Budapest Főváros Levéltára, 1990), pp. 101-112; for the latter see KEMÖL, XXXV.2f.3/1958/23ö.e., pp.4-9

⁷⁶ - For two provincial examples, see Erzsébet Csomor, *1956 Zalaegerszegen* (Zalaegerszeg: Millecentenáriumi Közalapítvány, 2001), pp. 25-33; “Győr-Sopron megyei Ügyészség, 1957 Tük. 0019 szám. Feljegyzés”, in József Bana, (ed.) *Győr 1956 III. Munkástanácsvezetők per a Győri Megyei Biróság előtt, 1957-1958*, (Győr: Győr Megyei Jogú Város Önkormányzata, 2002), pp. 5-6

⁷⁷ - For one example from Nagykanizsa, see ZML, *Az 1956-os Magyar Forradalom és Szabadságharc gyűjtemény (1956 Revolution and Struggle for Freedom Collection, hereafter XXXII.15f.)*1d.; Zalamegyei Ügyészség Zalaegerszeg. 1957. Bül.59/3 szám. Izgatás büntette miatt Gáti József nagykanizsai lakos elleni bűnügyben a nyomzati iratokat az alább vádirat benyújtásával teszem át., pp.1-2

⁷⁸ - See, Frigyes Kahler et al. (eds.), *Sortúzek 1956*, 2nd ed. (Budapest & Lakitelek: Igazságügyi Minisztérium – Antológia Kiadó, 1993)

⁷⁹ - An excellent example of the confused ways in which revolutionary councils were elected and the way in which they reflected the preferences of the crowd is provided by events in Tatabánya, see OSZK Kt. 1956-os Gy., Gy.NB.1127/1957, 1d.; Győri megyei bíróság népbirósági tanácsa. Nb.1122/1957.3.sz. Jegyzőkönyv készült a népi demokratikus államrend megdöntésére irányuló szervezkedés vezetésének büntette miatt Dr Klébert Márton és társa ellen indított bűnügyben a győri megyei bíróság népbirósági tanácsa előtt 1957. október 26-napján megtartott nyilvános tárgyalásról, pp.2-3

⁸⁰ - Csomor, *1956 Zalaegerszegen*, pp.25-8

⁸¹ - Adapted from “Halottak – Mosonmagyaróvár Anyakönyvi Hivatal”, reprinted in Kahler et al. (eds.), *Sortúzek 1956*, pp.61-66

⁸² - Az 1956-os Magyar Forradalom Történetének Dokumentációs és Kutatóintézete, Oral History Archívium (Oral History Archive of the 1956 Institute, hereafter 1956-os Intézet, OHA) 449, p.5

⁸³ - For some of these see Sándor Horváth, *A kapu és a határ: mindennapi Sztálinváros*, (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 2004), pp. 172-85

⁸⁴ - OSZK Kt., 1956-os Gy. Budapest Fővárosi Bíróság Népbirósági Tanácsanak anyaga, Kósa Pál és társai (Peoples’ Court Council of the Budapest City Court, Pál Kósa and associates, hereafter Bp.NB. 4491/74), 3d./4; Budapest Rendőrfőkapitányság Politikai Nyomozó Osztály, Vizsgáló Osztály. Jegyzőkönyv Kollár József kihallgatásáról. Budapest, 1957. augusztus 1, p.1

⁸⁵ - “Hogyan történt? Az ellenforradalom tatabányai napjaiból”, *Komárom Megyei Hírlap*, (26th January, 1957), p.4

⁸⁶ - ZML, XXXII.15f.1d./B.322/1957; Zalamegyei Ügyészség Zalaegerszeg. 1957. Bül.59/3 szám. Izgatás büntette miatt Gáti József nagykanizsai lakos elleni bűnügyben a nyomzati iratokat az alább vádirat benyújtásával teszem át., p.1

⁸⁷ - OSZK Kt., 1956-os Gy. Bp.NB. 4491/74, 3d./8; Budapest Fővárosi Bíróság Népbirósági Tanácsa NB.II.8017/1958. LXXXVIII Jegyzőkönyv készült a szervezkedés és egyéb bűncselekmények miatt

Kósa Pál és 32 társa ellenindított büntető ügyben a Budapesti Fővárosi Bíróság Népbirósági Tanácsánál 1959. február 9-én megtartott zárt tárgyalásról, p.3

⁸⁸ - 1956-os Intézet, OHA 417, p.17; OSZK Kt.412.VIIf.1d.-Komárom Megyei Bíróság-Elnökségi iratok 1958; Az Esztergom Megyei Bíróság Elnökétől, Esztergom, Kossuth Lajos u.5.sz.Tel:212. 1958.El.IX.B.27.sz. Tárgy: 1958.évi május havi jelentés, pp.2-3

⁸⁹ - 1956-os Intézet, OHA 449, p.9

⁹⁰ - BFL, Az MSZMP Budapest IV. Kerületi Bizottságának iratai (Papers of the Budapest IV District Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.9f.)1957/15ö.e., p.102; OSZK Kt. 1956-os gy., Bp.NB. 4491/74, 1d./8; Bp.Főkap.Pol.Nyom.Osztály Vizsg.alo.57 nov 6, Bp., pp.1-2

⁹¹ - OSZK Kt., 1956-os Gy. Bp.NB. 4491/74, 1d./6; Budapesti Rendőrfőkapitányság Politikai Nyomozó Osztály, Vizsgálati Alosztály. Jegyzőkönyv Lészai/Lothringer/Béla őrizetes kihallgatásáról. Budapest, 1957. augusztus 23., p.1

⁹² - These are reprinted as "The "Sixteen Points" Prepared by Hungarian Students, October 22-23, 1956", in Csaba Békés, Malcom Byrne & János M. Rainer, (eds.) *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents*, (Budapest & New York: Central European University Press, 2002), pp. 188-90

⁹³ - BFL, XXXV.9f.1957/15ö.e., p.102

⁹⁴ - OSZK Kt., 1956-os Gy. Bp.NB. 4491/74, 1d./6; Budapesti Rendőrfőkapitányság Politikai Nyomozó Osztály, Vizsgálati Alosztály. Jegyzőkönyv Lészai/Lothringer/Béla őrizetes kihallgatásáról. Budapest, 1957. augusztus 23., p.1

⁹⁵ - BFL, XXXV.9f.1957/15ö.e., p.102

⁹⁶ - OSZK Kt., 1956-os Gy., Bp.NB. 4491/74, 2d./6; Budapesti Rendőrfőkapitányság Politikai Nyomozó Osztály VI/7 csop. Jegyzőkönyv Bpest, 1957.VI.24. Tóth Gábor gyanúsított kihallgatásáról, p.2

⁹⁷ - OSZK Kt., 1956-os Gy., Bp.NB. 4491/74, 2d./3; A Budapesti Fővárosi Bíróság Népbirósági Tanácsa. T.NB.8017/1958/III Jegyzőkönyv készült a szervezkedés és egyéb bűncselekmények miatt

Kósa Pál és 32 társa ellenindított büntető ügyben a Budapesti Fővárosi Biróság Népbirósági Tanácsánál 1958. április 30-án megtartott zárt tárgyalásról, p.4

⁹⁸ - ZML, XXXII.15f.3d./B.695/1958; Zalamegyei Ügyészség Zalaegerszeg. B.10.050/1958/3 szám. Megyei Biróságnak, Zalaegerszeg. A népi demokratikus államrend megdöntésére irányuló szervezkedés büntette miatt Villányi József pilisszentlászlói lakos és társai ellen indított bűnügyben a keletkezett nyomzati iratokat a következő vádirat kíséretében teszem át, pp.1-2

⁹⁹ - “Éjszakai jelentések Kanizáról”, reprinted in, Erzsébet Csomor & Imre Kapiller, (eds.), *'56 Zalaban: A forradalom eseményeinek Zala megyei dokumentumai 1956-1958*, (Zalaegerszeg: Zalai Gyűjtemény 40, 1996), p.56

¹⁰⁰ - OSZK Kt. 1956-os Gy., Gy.NB.1127/1957, 1d.; Győr Sopronmegyei Ügyészség, Győr, 1957. Bül. 372 szám. Vádirat népi demokratikus államrend megdöntésére irányuló szervezkedés vezetésének büntette miatt dr. Klébert Márton és társai ellen indított bűnügyben, pp.1-2

¹⁰¹ - OSZK Kt. 412/VII f.2d.-Esztergom Megyei Biróság-429/1957-Kovács Imre és társai; B.429/1957/5 szám. Jegyzőkönyv készült a Nép.d.áll.rend.megdönt.ir.mozg.való részv.btte. miatt Kovács Imre és társai ellen indított bűnügyben az Esztergomi Megyei Biróság Tatabány-án biróságnál 1957 szeptember hó 2 napján tartott zárt tárgyalásról, p.3

¹⁰² - BFL, XXXV.9f.1957/15ö.e., p.102

¹⁰³ - Pittaway, “Industrial Workers, Socialist Industrialisation and the State in Hungary”, pp.347-8

¹⁰⁴ - PtSzL, Az 1956-os gyűjtemény (1956 Collection, hereafter IX.290f.)37ö.e., p.57

¹⁰⁵ - For the deeds of the worker's council in its first three days of operation see Dobricia Cosic, *7 nap Budapesten 1956. október 23-30*, (Budapest: Bethlen Gábor Könyvkiadó, 1989), pp. 80-2; Bill Lomax, (ed.), *Worker's Councils in 1956*, translated by Bill Lomax & Julian Schöpflin, (New York: Columbia University Press, New York 1990), pp.15-7

¹⁰⁶ - PtSzL, IX.290f.39ö.e., pp.1-2

¹⁰⁷ - “The Workers Council of the Ganz Wagon and Machine Factory”, in Lomax, (ed.), *Worker's Councils in 1956*, p.51

¹⁰⁸ - PtSzL, IX.290f.37ö.e., p.95&p.107

¹⁰⁹ - OSZK Kt. 1956-os Gy., Bp.NB.4491/74,3d./8; Budapesti Fővárosi Biróság Népbirósági Tanácsa NB.II.8017/1958.szám. L. Jegyzőkönyv készült a szervezkedés és egyéb bűncselekmények miatt Kósa Pál és 29 társa ellenindított büntető ügyben a Budapesti Fővárosi Biróság Népbirósági Tanácsánál 1958. október 13-án megtartott zárt tárgyalásról, p.11

¹¹⁰ - OSZK Kt., 1956-os Gy., Bp.NB.4491/74,2d./6; B.M. Budapesti Rendőrfőkapitányság Pol.Nyom.Oszt.Vizsg.Alosztálya. Jegyzőkönyv Sohonyai János gyanúsított kihallgatásáról. Budapest, 1957. augusztus 15-én, p.4

¹¹¹ - OSZK Kt. 1956-os Gy., Bp.NB.4491/74,3d./5; Budapesti Rendőrfőkapitányság Politikai Nyomozó Alosztály Vizsgálati Alosztály. Jegyzőkönyv, Budapest, 1957. június 10-én, p.3

¹¹² - PtSzL, IX.290f./52ö.e., pp.5-20

¹¹³ - ZML, XXXII.15f.2d./B.833/1957; A zalaegerszegi megyei bíróság. B.833/1957.6.szám. Jegyzőkönyv készült a népi demokratikus államrend megdöntésére irányuló szervezkedés és egyéb bűntette miatt Mecséri József ellen indított bűnügyben a zalaegerszegi megyei bíróságnál Zalaegerszegen 1958 január 14-én megtartott nyilvános tárgyalásról, pp.1-6

¹¹⁴ - Columbia University Libraries, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Bakhmeteff Archive (hereafter CUL RB&ML, BAR), Hungarian Refugees Project (hereafter CURPH), Box 16., Interview No. 524, pp. 5-6

¹¹⁵ - OSZK Kt., 412/VIII.7d.-Komárom Megyei Tanács, Titkárság; Várgesztes községi Tanács V.B. Az 1956. évi október 23.-utáni események megörökítése, pp.1-7

¹¹⁶ - ZML, XXXII.15f.2d./B.781/1957; Zalamegyei Ügyészség Zalaegerszeg. 1957.Bül.189.szám. Vádirat. Népidemokratikus államrend megdöntésére irányuló bűntette miatt Papp Imre és társai ellen indított bűnügyben, pp.3-4

¹¹⁷ - OSZK Kt., 412/VIIIf.7d.- Komárom Megyei Tanács, Titkárság; Vértesszöllős községi tanács V.B.től. 572/1957.szám. Tárgy: 1957.október 23-I és azt követő ellenforradalmi cselekmény leírása, p.1

¹¹⁸ - ZML, XXXII.15f.2d./B.1003/1957; A zalaegerszegi megyei bíróság. B.1003/1957-6.szám. A Népköztársaság Névében! A zalaegerszegi megyei bíróság Zalaegerszegen 1958. január 28 és 29 napján nem nyilvánosan megtartott tagyaláson meghozta a következő ítéletet, p.5

¹¹⁹ - ZML, XXXII.15f.2d./B.780/1957; A zalaegerszegi megyei bíróság. B.780/1957/6.szám. A Népköztársaság Névében! A zalaegerszegi megyei bíróság Nagykanizsán 1957. november 11-19-én megtartott nyilvános tagyalás alapján meghozta a következő ítéletet, p.7

¹²⁰ - OSZK Kt., 412.VIIIf.2d.-Esztergom Megyei Bíróság-429/1957-Kovács Imre és társai; B.429/1957/5 szám. Jegyzőkönyv készült a Népd.áll.rend.megdönt.ir.mozg.való részv.btte miatt Kovács Imre és társai ellen indított bűnügyben a Esztergomi Megyei Bíróság Tatabányán bíróságnál 1957 évi szeptember hó 2 napján tartott zárt tárgyalásról, p.3

¹²¹ - MOL M-KS-288f.21/1958/22ö.e., p.241

¹²² - BFL, XXXV.1f.1958/46ö.e., p.44

¹²³ - 1956-os Intézet, OHA 484, p.44

¹²⁴ - 1956-os Intézet, OHA 449, p.21

¹²⁵ - László Eörsi *Ferencváros 1956: A kerület fegyveres csoportjai*, (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1997); László Eörsi *A Tűzoltó Utcai Fegyveres Csoport a Forradalomban*, (Budapest: Századvég Kiadó-1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1993); László Eörsi, *Corvinisták 1956: A VIII kerület fegyveres csoportjai*, (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2001)

¹²⁶ - Tibor Drucker "A felszabadult Csepel", in, Jenő Adamovits et al., (eds.), *Csepel Története*, (Budapest: Csepel Vas- és Fémművek Pártbizottsága, 1965), pp. 476-7

¹²⁷ - András B. Hegedüs et al. (ed.) *1956 Kézikönyve. Megtorlás és Emlékezés*, (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1996), pp. 303-5

¹²⁸ - OSZK Kt. 1956-os Gy., Gy.NB.1127/1957,2d.; B.M. Komárom megyei Rendőrfőkapitányság Politikai Osztály, Vizsgálati Alosztály,

Jegyzőkönyv, dr. Klebert Márton kihallgatásáról. Tatabánya, 1957.aug.3, pp.2-3

¹²⁹ - FML, Az MSZMP Dunaújvárosi Bizottságának iratai (Papers of the Dunaújváros City Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.22f.)1957/4/a ö.e.; Október 23-tól November 7-ig, p.41

¹³⁰ - PtSzL, IX.290f./38ö.e., pp.10-2

¹³¹ - BFL, XXXV.9f.1957/15ö.e., p.104

¹³² - PtSzL, IX.290f./31ö.e., p.5

¹³³ - "The First Decree of the Kádár Government concerning the Workers' Councils", Lomax, (ed.), *Worker's Councils in 1956*, p.97

¹³⁴ - Rainer, "Helyi Politikai Szerveződés 1956-ban", pp.107

¹³⁵ - PtSzL, IX.290f./31ö.e., pp.5-8; Balázs Nagy "Budapest 1956: The Central Workers' Council", in Lomax (ed.), *Eyewitness in Hungary*, (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1980), pp.165-81; and those of Miklós Sebestyén, Ferenc Tőke and Sándor Rácz reprinted in István Kemény & Bill Lomax (eds.) *Magyar munkástanácsok 1956-ban*, (Paris: Magyar Füzetek, 1986), pp.160-7, pp.167-89 & pp.217-39

¹³⁶ - BFL, XXXV.1f.1957/29ö.e., pp.24-6; PtSzL, IX.290f./31ö.e., pp.138-43

¹³⁷ - PtSzL, IX.290f./31ö.e., pp.172-84

¹³⁸ - For the final elimination of the Greater Budapest Central Workers' Council see Bill Lomax, *Hungary 1956*, (London: Allison & Busby, 1976), pp.165-9; BFL, XXXV.1f.1957/29ö.e., pp.24-85

¹³⁹ - Kajári (ed.) *Rendőrségi Napi Jelentések. Első kötet*, pp.383-4, 415, 432, 467, 478-9, 505; MOL M-KS-288f.25/1957/7ö.e., p.135

¹⁴⁰ - FML, XXXV.19f.1957/14ö.e.; B.M. Fejérmegyei Rendőrfőkapitányság Politikai Nyomozó Főosztálya Feljegyzés, p.2; MOL M-KS-288f.25/1957/7ö.e., p.75; MOL M-KS-288f.25/1957/8ö.e., p.152; Lomax, *Hungary 1956*, pp.168-9

¹⁴¹ - BFL, XXXV.1f.1957/42ö.e., p.121

¹⁴² - BFL, XXXV.1f.1956-7/41ö.e., p.160; BFL, XXXV.1f.1956-7/41ö.e., p.170; BFL, XXXV.1f.1956-7/41ö.e., p.23

¹⁴³ - BFL, XXXV.1f.1957/43ö.e., pp.16-7

¹⁴⁴ - FML, Az MSZMP Fejér Megyei Bizottságának iratai (Papers of the Fejér County Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, hereafter XXXV.9f.)/1957/14ö.e.; B.M. Fejérmegyei Rendőrfőkapitányság Politikai Nyomozó osztálya, p.2

¹⁴⁵ - BFL, XXXV.1f.1957/45ö.e., p.243

¹⁴⁶ - BFL, XXXV.1f.1957/46ö.e., p.46

¹⁴⁷ - BFL, XXXV.1f.1958/41ö.e., pp.28-9

¹⁴⁸ - BFL, XXXV.1f.1958/134ö.e., p.372

¹⁴⁹ - ZML, XXXV.1f.1958/12 ö.e.; A tapasztalatok összefoglalása, p.12

¹⁵⁰ - ZML, XXXV.1f.1958/12 ö.e.; Feljegyzés a Zalaegerszegi Ruhagyár pártszervezetének agitációs munkájáról, pp.5-6

¹⁵¹ - BFL, XXXV.1f.1958/134ö.e., p.29

¹⁵² - MOL M-KS-288f.23/1957/34ö.e., p.34

¹⁵³ - MOL M-KS-288f.21/1958/20ö.e., pp.252-3

¹⁵⁴ - ZML, XXXV. 1f.1958/12 ö.e.; Feljegyzés a Zalaegerszegi Ruhagyár pártszervezetének agitációs munkájáról, pp.25-6

¹⁵⁵ - BFL, XXXV.1f.1958/42ö.e., pp.49-52

¹⁵⁶ - MOL M-KS-288f.21/1958/20ö.e., p.250