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INTELLECUTAL LIFE AND THE FIRST CRISIS OF STATE SOCIALISM IN EAST CENTRAL EUROPE, 1953-1956

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Preface

This book includes the articles which were originally published in the theme issue of Contemporary European History, Vol. 6, Part 3 (November 1997). We wished to reissue this particular collection of essays because it can rightly be seen as one of the very first fruits of our endeavours, commenced five years ago, to establish and consolidate the study of Eastern and East Central Europe at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim. Our thanks are due to the Cambridge University Press for the generosity with which they granted the permission and even in other ways assisted us to produce this book.

György Péteri

Trondheim – Dragvoll, November 2001.

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Abstract

The Development of Imre Nagy as a Politician and a Thinker

Imre Nagy was first of all a politician. His way of thinking, mentality and the whole of his life were essentially different from what was typical of leading Communist Party functionaries. One explanation for this is to be found in his intellectual inclinations. The article follows Nagy's life from the early interwar period on. It identifies his openness to and willingness to explore avenues of development alien to Communist orthodoxy as one of the most important characteristics of Nagy's politics and intellect. This is shown in three consecutive periods: during the era of popular democratic transition (1945–9), rectification (1953–5) and opposition (1955–6). The article ends with a discussion of Nagy's political testament, written in Snagov, Romania, in 1957. Although this was a statement in his defence, written by the ex-Prime Minister while preparing for his political trial, it also represents a Communist reformer's interpretation of the 1956 revolution and a synoptic intellectual self-portrait.

Possessed: Imre Lakatos's Road to 1956

This paper examines the political career of Imre Lakatos during his years in Hungary. At the time of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 he fled to England, where he became one of the world's foremost philosophers of mathematics and science. A protégé of Karl Popper, he maintained an interest in politics and gained a reputation as an outspoken defender of the 'Open Society' and a fierce opponent of student radicalism, particularly during the so-called 'Troubles' at the London School of Economics. Few in his adopted home knew, however, of his previous incarnation as a demonic Communist.

New Course Economics: The Field of Economic Research in Hungary After Stalin, 1953–65

This article focuses on the origins of state-socialist Hungary's 'reform economics'. Two major transformations gave rise to a radical re-orientation of the field of

academic economics in the New Course era following Stalin's death: on the one hand, a shift took place in the epistemological regime of economics from class-relativism to naive empiricism, springing from an increased awareness of the political power of its dependence on social-scientific expertise and knowledge. Naive empiricism and a more pronounced professional attitude connected with it provided, on the other hand, the young Communist intellectuals of the field with a feasible way out of the deep political and moral crisis into which their previous party-soldier ethos and identity had brought them. Their opposition to the Stalinist political and academic regime was expressed and fuelled by a revival of some of the most central intellectual and political attitudes characterising interwar Hungary's movement of sociographers.

Ulbricht and the Intellectuals

By examining their experience on an East Central European background, this article attempts a reassessment of East German intellectuals' relative passivity in the months after Khrushchev's 1956 secret speech. It departs from explanations that stress these intellectuals' devotion to 'antifascism', the strength of the Party apparatus, or the peculiar position of the split nation, and identifies instead the SED's consistent policies of intelligentsia formation as the main source of East German intellectuals' distinctive behaviour. From 1946 onwards, the Ulbricht regime, with strong Soviet patronage, demonstrated unwavering commitment to creating loyal élites. It was the one leadership in the region which, rather than inheriting, made its own intelligentsia.

Intellectuals and Mass Movements. Ideologies and Political Programmes in Poland in 1956

Poland in 1956 saw a profound crisis of the political and social system created during the Stalinist period. The decomposition of the system after Stalin's death resulted in, and was at the same time accelerated by, a great political mobilisation and participation. The aim of this article is to investigate this *social* dimension of the 1956 crisis. In the first part, the author reconstructs the origins, dynamics and political and ideological orientation of mass movements. Subsequently, he focuses on political roles played by intellectuals, mostly on the political and ideological programmes, which they formulated in 1956.

The Politics of Artistic Identity. The Czech Art World in the 1950s and 1960s

The article analyses changes in the organisational life of Czech artists and the discourses surrounding art and artists in the years between the Communist putsch of 1948 and the Prague Spring. The main focus is on the 1950s. The author invokes James Scott's methodology in seeking hidden expressions of resistance, arguing that

private acts of resistance among artists emerged as public protest and an impetus for change when circumstance permitted.

Extraits

Imre Nagy: l'évolution d'un homme politique et d'un intellectuel

Imre Nagy fut d'abord et surtout un homme politique. Dans sa pensée, sa mentalité, sa vie tout entière, il fut tout le contraire de ce qu'on attendait d'un fonctionnaire important du parti Communiste. On peut en chercher la raison dans ses inclinations intellectuelles. Cet article suit la vie de Nagy dès le début de l'entre-deux-guerres. Le fait que Nagy acceptait sans difficulté d'explorer des avenues de développement tout à fait étrangères à la pensée communiste orthodoxe est identifié comme l'une des caractéristique les plus importantes de sa politique et de son évolution intellectuelle. L'auteur relève cette caractéristique à travers trois étapes consécutives: la transition vers la démocratie populaire (1945–9); le péroide de la rectification (1953–5); et celle de l'opposition (1955–6). L'article est complété par une considération du testament politique de l'ex premier ministre, écrit à Snagov en Roumanie en 1957. Tout en étant une défense préparée par Nagy pour son procès politique, ce testament nous offre en même temps une interprétation de la révolution de 1956, vue par un réformateur communiste, et l'autoportrait synoptique d'un intellectuel.

Le possédé: Imre Lakatos en route pour 1956

Cette contribution analyse la carrière politique d'Imre Lakatos pendant son séjour en Hongrie. En 1956, fuyant la révolution hongroise, il s'installa en Angleterre, d'où sa renommée comme philosophe des mathématiques et de la science s'étendit à travers le monde entier. Comme protégé de Karl Popper, il ne cessa de s'intéresser à la politique et fut connu comme un franc défendeur de la 'société ouverte' et un adversaire impitoyable du mouvement radical parmi les étudiants, sourtout au moment de la 'crise' qui secoua l'Ecole des Sciences Economiques de Londres. Mais peu nombreux étaient ceux qui, dans son pays d'adoption, savaient que dans sa première incarnation il avait été le plus démoniaque des communistes.

La nouvelle direction des sciences économiques: les recherches économiques en Hongrie après la mort de Staline, 1953–65

Cet article étudie les origines des 'sciences économique réformées' dans la Hongrie du socialisme d'état. Pendant l'époque de la 'nouvelle direction' qui a suivi la mort de Staline, deux transformations majeures ont provoqué une réorientation dramatique du champ académique des sciences économiques. D'un côté, un changement dans le régime épistomologique de ce champ d'études a remplacé le relativisme de

classe par l'empirisme naïf: changement motivé, en réalité, par le fait que le pouvoir politique en venait à reconnaître le besoin qu'il avait du savoir – et du savoir-faire – des sciences sociales. De l'autre côté, l'empirisme naïf, et l'attitude plus professionnaliste qui en découlait, offraient aux jeunes communistes intellectuels, actifs dans ce domaine, une sortie acceptable de la profonde crise politique et morale où les avait plongés leur première identité éthique comme 'soldats du parti'. Pour exprimer et mourrir leur opposition au régime politique et académique de Staline, ils puisaient dans le fonds d'attitudes intellectuelies et politiques qui avaient le plus fortement marqué le mouvement sociographe de la Hongrie avant la deuxième guerre mondiale.

Ulbricht et les intellectuels

Cet article vise à porter un nouveau jugement sur la passivité relative des intellectuels est-allemands dans les mois qui suivirent le discours secret de Khrushchev en 1956, en remettant leurs expériences dans le contexte de la partie orientale de l'Europe centrale. La conduite très exceptionnelle de ces intellectuels ne peut être expliquée ni par leur l''antifascisme' passionnée, ni par la force coercitive du Parti, ni par la situation particulière de l'Allemagne divisée en deux. Elle étrait due au fait que la SED formait ses élites intellectuelles sur la base d'une politique solidement conçue. En effet, dès 1946 le régime d'Ulbricht, fortement appuyé par les Soviétiques, s'était résolument engagé à produire des élites fidèles au Parti. Il fut en effet le seul régime de la région qui, au lieu d'hériter ses élites intellectuelles, les a créées à sa propre image.

Intellectuels et mouvements de masse, les idéologies et les programmes politiques en Pologne, 1956

En 1956 la Pologne vécut une crise profonde dans le système social et politique crée pendant la période staliniste. La décadence de ce système après la mort de Staline provoqua une mobilisation et une participation politiques très intenses qui, à leur tour, contribuèrent à accélerer cette décadence. C'est cette dimension *sociale* de la crise de 1956 que l'auteur se propose d'étudier. Dans une première partie il reconstruit les origines des mouvements de masse, leur dynamique et leur orientation politique et idéologique. Par la suite il se penche sur le rôle politique des intellectuels, et avant tout sur les programmes politiques et idéologiques qu'ils formulèrent en 1956.

La politisation de l'identité artistique: les beaux-arts en Tchécoslovaquie 1950–1970

Cet article analyse l'évolution de la vie organisationnelle des artistes tchèques, et le discours de l'art et de l'artiste, entre le putsch communiste de 1948 et le Printemps de Prague, et sourtout pendant les années 1950. L'auteur invoque la méthodologie

de James Scott pour déceler l'expression discrète d'une résistance cachée, et suggère que des actes privés de résistance de la part des artistes ont débouché sur la protestation publique, donnant, aux moments propices, des coups de pounce au changement.

Kurzfassungen

Imre Nagys Entwicklung als Politiker und Denker

Imre Nagy war in erster Linie Politiker. Seine Art zu Denken, seine Mentalität und sein ganzes Leben waren in hohem Maße untypisch für einen führenden Funktionär der Kommunistischen Partei. Eine Erklärung hierfür kann in seinen intellektuellen Neigungen gefunden werden. Der Aufsatz verfolgt Nagys Leben von der Zwischenkriegszeit an und erkennt seine Offenheit und Bereitschaft, Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten zu erkunden, die der kommunistischen Orthodoxie fremd waren, als eine der charakteristischen Eigenschaften seiner Politik und seines Verstandes. Verdeutlicht wird dies an drei Phasen: während der Ära des volksdemokratischen Übergangs (1945–9), derjenigen des 'Neuen Kurses' (1953–5) und der Oppositionsphase (1955–6). Der Aufsatz schließt mit einer Diskussion von Nagys politischem Testament, das er 1957 im rumänischen Snagov schrieb. Obgleich es sich dabei um eine Verteidigungsschrift handelte, kann es auch als eine Interpretation der Revolution von 1956 und als intellektuelles Selbstporträt eines kommunistischen Reformers gelesen werden.

Ein Besessener: Imre Lakatos' Weg bis 1956

Der Aufsatz untersucht die politische Karriere von Imre Lakatos während seiner Jahre in Ungarn. Während der Ungarischen Revolution von 1956 floh Lakatos nach England, wo er einer der herausragendsten Philosophen der Mathematik und Naturwissenschaft wurde. Als Schützling Karl Popper behielt er ein Interesse an politischen Dingen und erwarb sich den Ref eines freimütigen Verteidigers der 'Offenen Gesellschaft' sowie eines scharfen Gegners von studentischem Radikalismus, insbesondere während der sogenannten 'Unruhen' an der London School of Economics. Wenige in seiner neuen Heimat jedoch wußten von seiner früheren Existenz als dämonischer Kommunist.

Die Volkswirtschaftslehre des 'Neuen Kurses': Wirtschaftsforschung in Ungarn nach Stalin, 1953–65

Der Artikel behandelt die Ursprünge der 'Reformwirtschaft' im staatssozialistischen Ungarn. Zwei bedeutende Vorgänge beförderten die radikale Neuorientierung im Bereich der Volkswirtschaftslehre während des 'Neuen Kurses' nach Stalins Tod:

Zum einen verlagerte sich das erkenntnistheoretische Interessen von den Klassenverhältnissen hin zu einem naiven Empirismus, der dem wachsenden Bewußtsein entsprang, daß die politische Macht von sozialwissenschaftlicher Expertise abhängig war. Naiver Empirismus und eine damit verbundene, ausgeprägt professionelle Haltung boten den jungen kommunistischen Intellektuellen zum anderen einen gangbaren Ausweg aus der tiefen politischen und moralischen Krise, in die sie ihre bisheriges Identität und das Ethos als Parteisoldaten geführt hatte. Ihre Opposition zum stalinistischen Regime in Politik und Wissenschaft fand ihren Ausdruck in und wurde zugleich gespeist von einer Wiederaufnahme einiger zentraler intellektueller und politischer Haltungen, welche die Bewegung der ungarischen Soziographie in der Zwischenkriegszeit gekennzeichnet hatten.

Ulbricht und die Intellektuellen

Der Artikel gibt eine neue Antwort auf die Frage, warum sich die ostdeutschen Intellektuellen in den Monaten nach Chruschtschows geheimer Rede von 1956 vergleichsweise passiv verhielten. Er sucht sie vor dem Hintergrund ihrer ost- und mitteleuropaeischen Erfahrungen. Erklärungen, welche die Hingabe an den Antifaschismus, die Stärke des Parteiapparates oder die besondere Lage in einer gespaltenen Nation betonen, erscheinen unbefriedigend. Stattdessen erkennt der Artikel die Hauptursache für das andere Verhalten der ostdeutschen Intellektuellen in der konsequenten Politik der SED, sich eine loyale Intelligenz heranzuziehen. Von 1946 an legte das Ulbricht-Regime mit starker sowjetischer Unterstützung in dieser Hinsicht eine unerschütterliche Haltung an den Tag. Es war die einzige Führung in der Region, die sich ihre Intelligenz selbst schuf, anstatt eine ererbte zu übernehmen.

Intellektuelle und Massenbewegungen: Ideologien und politische Programme in Polen im Jahre 1956

Polen erlebte 1956 eine tiefe Krise des politischen und sozialen Systems, das während der stalinistischen Ära geschaffen worden war. Eine Beträchtliche politische Mobilisierung und Partizipation folgte auf und beschleunigte zugleich den verfall dieses Systems nach Stalins Tod. Der Artikel untersucht besonders die soziale Dimension der Krise. Im ersten Teil werden die Ursprünge, die Dynamik und die politisch-ideologische Ausrichtung der Massenbewegungen rekonstruiert. Der anschließende Teil befaßt sich mit der politischen Rolle der Intellektuellen, indem er die 1956 aufgestellten Programme untersucht.

Die politische Seite künstlerischer Identität. Die tschechische Kunstwelt der fünfziger und sechziger Jahre

Der Artikel analysiert den Wandel in der Organisation tschechischer Künstler und die Debatten um Kunst und Künstlerdasein in den Jahren vom kommunistischen

Putsch 1948 bis zum Prager Frühling 1968, wobei der Schwerpunkt auf den fünfziger Jahren liegt. Der autor zieht die Methode von James Scott heran, indem er nach versteckten Formen des Widerstands sucht und argumentiert, daß private Akte des Widerstands unter Künstlern dann als Öffentliche Proteste hervortraten und einen Anstoss zum Wandel gaben, wenn die Umstände dies erlaubten.

Introduction. Intellectual Life and the First Crisis of State Socialism in East Central Europe, 1953–6

GYÖRGY PÉTERI

The Hungarian revolution of 1956 was a crucial event in the history of state socialism in Eastern and East-central Europe. Its ramifications reached well beyond not only the geographical boundaries of Hungary but also the chronological limits of late autumn and early winter 1956. Indeed, it was the culmination of the crisis of state socialism in Eastern Europe, following upon Stalin's death and resulting from the antagonistic conflict between the ever broader popular desire and demands for sweeping economic, social and political reforms and a short-sighted, hesitant nomenklatura (or class of functionaries) showing little if any willingness to compromise even with the modest revisionism gaining adherents among their own ranks. The crisis of 1953–6 brought to the political agenda a whole array of vast problems of economic, social and political modernisation that the Stalinist strategy of transformation, prevalent throughout the region from 1948–9 onwards, had been unable and/or unwilling to face successfully and could only exacerbate. The Stalinist modernisation project pursued a large-scale programme of industrialisation without due regard to social needs, economic rationality or longer-term social and economic feasibility. The apparatus of central economic planning executed gigantic development projects employing hundreds of thousands of new industrial workers for whom not even the minimum of urban infrastructures had been provided and whose efforts produced goods for which there existed neither needs nor markets. The industrialisation efforts laid claim to an increasing part of the agricultural workforce, while the agricultural population, radically reduced in numbers and harassed by centrally administered violent collectivisation campaigns and merciless taxation, had to cope with shortages of the most elementary food supplies.

The region's intellectual life had been exposed to demands of ideological purity, political expediency and alleged socio-economic utility. Whole academic fields/disciplines were purged from the old 'class-alien' intellectuals and replaced by new, young, inexperienced and uneducated but loyal party-soldiers. In the first years of the triumphant Stalinist revolution from above, even literature had annual plans enlisting the themes to be treated in the output of writers. There was hardly any area of social-political life that went untouched in the days of triumphant Stalinism and subsequently avoided the breakdown and crisis experienced around the mid-1950s,

and no social-political groupings during these years could escape being profoundly affected by the experience acquired and the choices made through the post-Stalinian 'new course' era to the anti-Stalinist revolution of late 1956. Indeed, one may say that the experience of those years had been formative for several national state-socialist regimes in East-central Europe and that all of them had been considerably affected in their general political style and make-up for the rest of their life-span.

Historical research within and without the region itself, especially since the collapse of communist rule, has made a great deal of progress in exploring especially the *political* dimensions of the period under discussion. In Hungary, the publications of the Institute on the 1956 Revolution and of the Institute of Political History constitute valuable contributions.[1] Important works saw the light of day during the 1980s on the economic history and the history of economic ideas of the 1950s. A major piece on the historical anthropology of Czech artistic life in the 1950s has recently been completed in the Netherlands.[2] Three papers in Hans Henning Hahn and Heinrich Olschowsky's book, *Das Jahr 1956 in Ostmitteleuropa*, discuss various aspects of the artistic life of Poland and the DDR.[3]

The workshop to which the articles in this theme issue were originally submitted was organised to provide a forum for the most recent results and findings of international research into some as yet unexplored social and political dimensions of the changes in intellectual life brought about (and brought to light) by the crisis and revolt(s) of 1953–6 in East-central Europe.[4] The political and social dynamics of

[1] To take only the latest important items in what is a long series of highly valuable publications, we should mention here János M. Ranier, *Nagy Imre. Politikai életrajz* [Imre Nagy: A Political Biography], I: *1896–1953* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1996); Éva Standeisky, *Az írók és a hatalom, 1956–1963* [The Writers and the Power, 1956–1963], (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1996); or the three-volume handbook of the 1956 revolution: András B. Hegedüs, Péter Kende, György Litván, (eds.), *1956 kézikönyve*, I: *Kronológia*; II: *Bibliográfia*; III: *Megtorlás és emlékezés* [Repression and remembering], (Budapest: 1956–os Intézet, 1996). In the context of the present discussion, the most important item published in the series of the Institute of Political History is Zoltán Ripp, *Belgrád és Moszkva között. A jugoszláv kapcsolat és a Nagy Imre-kérdés (1956. november–1959. február)* [Between Belgrade and Moscow: Relations with Yugoslavia and the Imre Nagy Question], (Budapest: Politikatörténeti Alapítvány, 1994, 'Politikatörténeti Füzetek', V.)

[2] Maruška Svašek, *Styles, Struggles, and Careers: An Ethnography of the Czech Art World, 1948–1992* (Academisch Proefschrift; Amsterdam: Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1996).

[3] Cf. Aleksander Wojciechowski's, Heinrich Olschowsky's and Jan Prokop's papers in *Das Jahr 1956 in Ostmitteleuropa*, ed. Hans Henning Hahn und Heinrich Olschowsky (Berlin: Akademia Verlag, 1996).

[4] The workshop entitled '1956 and the Intellectuals', the first of what is planned as a series of Trondheim Seminars on the Intellectual Life of Eastern and East Central Europe, was held between 17 and 21 August 1996. Participants were as follows: Lee Congdon, John Connelly, Krystyna Kersten, Pawel Machcewicz, György Péteri, János M. Rainer, Éva Standeisky and Maruška Svašek. The participants' thanks are due to Professors Kathleen Burk of University College London and Peter Pastor of Montclair State University for the generous intellectual assistance they rendered us by acting as rapporteurs to our seminar. We are also indebted to the Faculty of Arts of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology and to the Royal Air Force Academy of Norway for the support and hospitality which was so crucial for the success of our seminar. The assistance of research students Erik Ingebrigtsen, and Aleksandra Witczak and of Professor Gudmund Stang should be credited here, too, as it constituted the solid foundation upon which smooth organisation and a most conducive and pleasant social atmosphere depended.

intellectual life, academic professions (disciplines and/or research communities) and various artistic fields were our central concerns. In certain cases, as in the case of the DDR, it is the conspicuous lack of a longer-term impact of the intellectual foment of 1956 that demands explanation and which is one of the main tasks undertaken in John Connelly's paper. Throughout the Soviet bloc, the period of post-Stalinian thaw witnessed the emergence of a wide gap between the political discourses (aspirations and objectives) prevalent among the mass movements taking to the streets and the anti-Stalinist (but Marxist and communist) intellectuals: this is ably demonstrated in Pawel Machcewicz's paper on the Polish case, while János Rainer's biographical essay on Imre Nagy provides a highly sensitive analysis of the values and attitudes that isolated communist anti-Stalinism from popular revolt. The efforts of the state-socialist regimes to establish and maintain far-reaching controls over intellectual/cultural life collided inevitably with the increasing needs for trained expertise in a large number of areas connected to the economic modernisation project and with the high level of interventionist ambitions which characterised all major policy areas. The tolerance of and/or efforts to promote professional development, manifest in many policy areas of the post-Stalinian thaw, brought by necessity to the agenda a whole array of problems considered as highly sensitive and inconvenient by the *nomenklatura*. Professionalism as well as artistic autonomy imply a particular type of societal organisation within which *trained expertise* is the central value and *selection and reward by merit assessed by similarly educated experts* is the rule for recruitment to and advancement in occupational fields/hierarchies. Indeed, the distinction between 'critics' and 'experts' (between critical *intellectuals* and the *intelligentsia* consisting of well-educated professionals and experts) has been blurred in several countries and intellectual fields in our period. As is shown in the paper on Hungarian economics, for the young communist intellectuals revolting against the Stalinist regime, professionalisation (the conscious cultivation of a new identity as professional academics) was a major strategy pursued in order to emancipate themselves from the role of party-soldier and to enable themselves to 'provide a critical, transforming challenge to the cultural assumptions and political powers' of high-Stalinist society.[5] In other cultural/intellectual fields (as Maruška Svašek has shown in her paper on the Czech art world), the establishment of a 'hidden discourse', a second (partly underground) artistic field, seems to have been the dominant strategy which, in the short run, provided refuge for forms of artistic expression that were officially oppressed but which, in a longer perspective, could result in effectively transforming the official or public discourse of artistic life itself.

In contrast to the autonomous artist or professional academic, the ideal of the *party-soldier intellectual* defined loyalty and political-ideological reliability as the

[5] For an interesting discussion of the conceptual distinction between *intellectuals* providing a 'critical, transforming challenge' to prevailing cultural assumptions and political power, and an *intelligentsia* providing 'a legitimating, technical support for the cultural and political systems that define and dominate our society', see Lloyd Kramer, 'Habermas, Foucault, and the Legacy of Enlightenment Intellectuals', in Leon Fink, Stephen T. Leonard and Donald M. Reid (eds), *Intellectuals and Public Life. Between Radicalism and Reform* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1996), 29–50.

central value, and implied the presence of a politically controlled *cadres administration* as the way of recruitment and promotion even (or, especially) in occupations of high complexity and demanding educational prerequisites. The clash between these diametrically opposite cultures and modes of societal organisation may be claimed to have been the major issue around which the conflicts and negotiations between the *nomenklatura* and the practitioners of various cultural/academic fields developed in 1953–6. One of the most intriguing questions in this regard is how it came that certain groups even within the 'new' party-intellectuals adopted professionalist strategies in the new era with demands for autonomy, freedom of intellectual inquiry and artistic expression, in strong contrast to their own former party-soldier identity and credo. As János Rainer's paper demonstrates, in Imre Nagy's case the transformation of the party-soldier (and high functionary) into an autonomous intellectual was not a feasible option, and yet this did not prevent Nagy from going a long way during the autumn of 1956 to accept and satisfy the demands of the revolution. Important questions pertinent to the changing agenda and aesthetic criteria of arts in the post-Stalinian thaw are raised and discussed in Maruška Svašek's paper. After the upheavals of 1918–19 and 1944–8, the revolution of 1956 and the terror that followed encouraged a third major wave of intellectual emigration to an already existing Hungarian intellectual diaspora – among them a number of outstanding or prominent scholars and artists, such as the philosopher Imre Lakatos or the composer György Ligeti. To what extent and in what manner had their experience before and during the developments of 1956 shaped their intellectual/artistic trajectory in the emigration? This is one of the issues raised and discussed in Lee Congdon's essay on Imre Lakatos.

The essays collected in the present theme issue are offered to the readers as a contribution and encouragement towards further comparative study of various intellectual/cultural fields in the countries of state socialist East-central Europe.

The Development of Imre Nagy as a Politician and a Thinker

JÁNOS M. RAINER

Imre Nagy, Prime Minister during the Hungarian revolution of 1956, was above all a politician. In his frame of mind, his mentality and his actions, he largely conformed to the archetype of a 'functionary' that typified leading figures in the Communist movement at the time. The two main features of this mentality were belief in the infallibility of the Communist Party, and belief in the role, mission and vocation of the Party and its functionaries to redeem the world, according to András Hegedüs (member of the Hungarian Politburo 1951–6, and Prime Minister 1955–6 and a dissident sociologist in the 1960s).[1] Another important trait of functionaries in East-central Europe was to see themselves as local representatives of a worldwide Soviet empire, not just of the Party. Although the life and personality of Nagy resembled this pattern, it departed from it in a number of ways that became dramatically manifest, most of all in his final years. One explanation for this departure lies in the 'intellectual attributes' or leanings of Nagy as a leading Party functionary. This side of his character prompted him to undertake an intellectual appraisal of political problems on several occasions in his life. In the period leading up to the Hungarian revolution, it made him the leading figure in an expressly intellectual movement: the opposition among the Party intelligentsia. This study is an attempt to trace the specific intellectual path taken by Nagy as a politician.[2]

The concept of an intellectual used in this study is not a statistical one. The definition applied here does not equate intellectuals with members of the intelligentsia who have attained a certain level of education, such as a university degree. What I mean by intellectuals is those who have contributed trans-contextual, socially accepted values that are capable of orientating and regulating others' behaviour. During the period when Nagy was active, there appeared a group known as the

[1] András Hegedüs, 'A functionárius' [The Functionary], *Századvég* [*End of the Century*], No. 6–7 (1988), 123–32. There is, of course, a large body of writing on the functionary's frame of mind, including for example Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* and Milovan Djilas's *The New Class*. The problem is summarised in János Kornai, *The Socialist System. The Political Economy of Communism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[2] On Nagy, see Peter Unwin, *The Voice in the Wilderness. Imre Nagy and the Hungarian Revolution* (London/Sydney: MacDonald, 1991); Tibor Méray, *Thirteen Days That Shook the Kremlin* (New York: Praeger, 1959); János M. Rainer, *Nagy Imre. Politikai életrajz*, I. *1896–1953* [*Imre Nagy. Political Biography*, I: *1896–1953*] (Budapest, 1956-os Intézet, 1996).

Party intelligentsia. The values they advocated were not endorsed by the vast majority of society, although authority (the Party) rewarded them with intelligentsia status and the material advantages that bestowed. The Party intelligentsia provided the body of political and other experts behind the leadership, and acted as an intermediary with the public, especially in the mass media and what was known as political education. This stratum of the Communist élite became significant in numbers after the Communists took power. It outlived the classical Stalinist system, although its numerical proportion steadily fell. Various enclaves persisted until the change of system began in 1989.

During the crisis of classical Stalinism, the Party intelligentsia acted like a catalyst within the various movements in society that were pressing for reform and democratisation. Its members were transmuted into true intellectuals by a process of revision that usually originated in personal examination. This self-criticism went on to engender social and political criticism. The process first occurred in Hungary in 1953–6, when Imre Nagy was one of the foremost political figures (Prime Minister 1953–5 and a leading opposition figure 1955–6) and an explicit critic of Stalinism.

This study begins by looking at the intellectual attributes apparent in the early stage of Nagy's political career, from the early 1920s to 1945 (Section I). It then examines a specific feature of his political and his intellectual character – his 'exploratory' activity in the period between 1945 and 1956 (II). Here I distinguish three consecutive phases, marked by 'popular democratic transition' (1945–9, II.1), 'rectification' (1953–5, II.2) and opposition (1955–6, III.3). The final section of the study deals with some central problems presented by the political 'testament' that Nagy wrote at Snagov, Romania, in 1957 (III). Although this is a statement in his defence, written by the ex-Prime Minister while preparing for his political trial, it also represents a Communist reformer's interpretation of the 1956 revolution and a synoptic intellectual self-portrait.

I

Nagy, born in 1896, did not have a university degree. In fact he did not even matriculate, because he was called up into the army in 1915. He joined the Bolshevik movement in 1918 while a prisoner of war in Siberia, and served as a low-ranking functionary at the end of the Civil War. A few articles by Nagy have survived from that period, written for Hungarian-language prisoner-of-war papers. So have one or two lectures he delivered. In someone whose education had ended with an apprenticeship, they show some evidence of intellectual affinities. By the time Nagy committed himself wholeheartedly to the Communist movement, after his return to Hungary, these affinities had developed almost into a conscious choice. He served with success as a Party official in the south-western town of Kaposvár, but when the Hungarian Party of Communists (KMP) offered him a post as district organiser at the end of the 1920s, he turned it down, explaining that he wanted to deal mainly with Hungary's agrarian problems. The agrarian question was central to Hungarian society and politics because of the relative importance of the large estates

and the large size of the peasant population compared with the area of cultivable land. The KMP suffered throughout its history from a shortage of adequately qualified agricultural politicians and specialists. Although Nagy only became a middle-ranking Party official in the 1920s, he embarked on a kind of intellectual specialisation as an expert on Hungary's agrarian question. From the end of the decade onwards, he wrote several studies on the economic problems of Hungarian agriculture and on the position of the peasantry.

By the time of the KMP's internal disputes in 1928–9, Imre Nagy was writing political papers in which he took a position similar to that of György Lukács in his well-known Blum Theses. The gist was that, 'in the case of a revolution', the dictatorship of the proletariat would be preceded in Hungary by a 'transitional stage' which remained unspecified in many respects. The transition would have to carry out many 'bourgeois democratic' tasks (such as democratic land reform and the provision of civil liberties) before the switch to socialism could take place. This question of transition became the other decisive, fundamental political and theoretical issue for Nagy. The advocates of a 'more democratic' transition were defeated in that debate. Nagy, by then the KMP's leading authority on the agrarian question, was sharply criticised for right-wing leanings at the Party's first congress, held near Moscow in 1930, and dismissed from his Party post. In the spring of the same year, he joined the scientific staff at the Comintern's International Agrarian Institute in Moscow.

In practice, this institute acted as a 'background' body for the Comintern, dealing mainly with comparative 'research' into international agrarian policy, in other words with the peasant policies of Communist parties, rather than with the agricultural sciences in the normal sense. This entailed examining two areas: the agricultural situation in each country (mainly through statistics) and the stratification, living standards and main social and political problems of the peasantry, the various political and representative organisations among them and so on. This is where the various Communist parties' agrarian theses, programmes, plans of action, pamphlets and on some occasions even leaflets on the peasantry and agricultural subjects were drafted or assessed. Nagy's role as a party intellectual was interrupted by the great purge of the mid-1930s. This left him in financial straits, prolonged because he lost his job and failed to find another for several years. He was expelled from the Party and only readmitted three years later. He was under arrest for several days in 1938, was the subject of extensive investigation and so on. When his circumstances were normalised again, he worked for a while as a full-time contributor to the Hungarian Communist periodical *Új Hang* (New Voice).

The studies Nagy wrote around that time were as political in their motivation as his earlier pieces. Their aim was to establish a Communist agrarian policy for the future. However, they were not simply collections of political arguments gleaned from the 'classics', like the contributions of many others. Basing himself on the available economic and statistical literature, he was engaged in the larger-scale historical project of writing a work about the economic development of Hungarian

capitalism, with the focus on agriculture, of course. He broadened his horizons further at the end of the 1930s, centring his investigations on the interrelationship between industrialisation and agricultural development.

II

At the end of 1944, when the Communist Party returned to Hungary in the wake of the Red Army and obtained a share of power, Imre Nagy was appointed minister of agriculture in the provisional government. For a Party intellectual (and a middle-ranking functionary – assistant editor on Radio Moscow's Hungarian service), this marked a sudden promotion into the leading circle. One factor behind his rise was that the leadership of the Hungarian Communist Party (MKP) realised that it was of vital importance to their prospects of remaining in office and obtaining real power to find a correct solution to the question of land reform. The post was a reward not to Nagy, the writer of thorough, ideologically correct studies, but to the agricultural-policy expert, able to devise plans for Hungarian land redistribution in an expert, rapid, succinct, politically flawless way that was open to professional interpretation.

Nagy's career after 1945 can be seen as a long and far from even process of adopting a critical stance that gradually became stronger, broader and more radical. After a decade and a half in exile, Nagy was familiar at first hand with the Soviet model. The kind of alternative model he sought would not be divorced from the Soviet Union's international teleological objectives. He wanted to fashion a new version of the Soviet model, basing it on a critique that had long remained unstated. I distinguish in this search for an alternative three stages that were successive (if not directly so), so that the intellectual and political features, ideas and practical measures of each followed on from the previous one.

1. Nagy was not alone after 1945 in asking how the countries under Soviet occupation might follow a different path to 'socialism' from the Soviet model, and how long this was going to take. Others to address the issue were György Lukács and Jenő Varga, Wladyslaw Gomulka, Georgi Dimitrov and even József Révai. For a time it was a subject of debate in the Soviet Union itself.[3] These 'path-seekers' sought to account theoretically for the ways in which the so-called people's democratic systems of post-war Central and Eastern Europe differed from the Soviet type. One initial assumption was that the model, the Soviet scenario for the 'transition' to socialism, was ambivalent: the New Economic Policy of the 1920s had been superimposed on a Bolshevik, revolutionary model of a war economy (war communism). The concepts of 'people's democracy' or 'new democracy' (Nagy often used the term 'democratic ownership') were also derived from Soviet-type 'socialism' as their ultimate goal. However, it was plainly stated (for instance by Nagy, during the establishment of peasant co-operatives in 1947–9) that socialism

[3] See William O. McCagg, Jr, *Stalin Embattled, 1943–1948* (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1978), and Rainer, *Nagy Imre*, 377–439.

would only be attained in the distant future. The second starting point for the exploration was that international conditions had changed since 1917. Here less heed was paid to the existence and role of the Soviet Union than to the changes undergone by capitalism, and its 'democratisation'. Cogent arguments for this included the Communist participation in several post-war coalition governments in Western democracies, the state welfare legislation introduced there and the general rise of state intervention in the economy, including some elements of economic planning. The third starting point was that Central and Eastern Europe displayed a 'twofold' distinction from the Soviet Union. On the one hand, it was argued that the region resembled the West more closely than did Russia, and had more developed economic and social relations. (Nagy identified as factors that would hamper collective farming the peasantry's developed sense of private property and the almost total breakdown of earlier, communal forms of cultivation.) The comparison was being made here with the pre-revolutionary Russia of old, but the reverse argument was also advanced. There remained in the economic and social structure of Central and Eastern Europe important anachronistic ('feudal') features, which meant that progress could only be gradual. (Nagy argued that the task for a few years after democratic land reform should be to consolidate 'democratic' ownership relations, not to carry out a radical transformation of them.) This implied a comparison with an ostensibly more developed Soviet society. The conclusion on either side was that the new people's democracy was a special case, travelling on a different course of transition from the Soviet one. This transition qualified as a revolution, but thanks to the 'liberation' by the Soviet Union, it was possible to omit, or at least limit, the elements of violence normally associated with revolution. The abruptness and exhaustiveness of a revolution could be avoided. The 'path-seekers' saw equalising tendencies in society, rather than social and political polarisation. (An example was Nagy's theory about the 'middle-peasantryfication' of the Hungarian village.) Among the factors ensuring stability during the transition, they saw political coalitions (albeit communist-dominated and even pseudo-coalitions), as an adjunct to the commitment of the vanguard and to some extent as a replacement for it.

The 'path-seekers' certainly criticised the Stalinist system, although they were not always open about it. There was an element of criticism in their idea that the Soviet model could not be applied in Hungary (or Poland, Czechoslovakia and so on), or not in an unchanged form. Although they did not explicitly question the imperial power politics of the post-war Soviet Union, criticism of that was implied by their assumption that there were various national models.

While Stalin, for tactical reasons, was still emphasising the independence of Communist leaderships in the future satellite countries and the importance of the 'people's democratic' transition, almost every Communist leadership retained a more or less sentient 'path-seeking' trend. The political profile of the small group committed to 'people's democratic transition' became clearer when Stalin's tactical criteria changed. Thereafter the 'path-seekers' revealed themselves most frequently through internal debates in the party, after the event. This makes them all appear

with hindsight to have been 'political dreamers', and 'politically naive' for trying to base a theory on what for Stalin had been a tactical ruse in great-power politics. Furthermore, they had to argue in a fashion that would not cast upon them suspicions of heretical innovation ('revisionism'). This meant that they had to apply Soviet thinking, terminology and techniques, and deny any kinship with the ideas of those outside Marxism-Leninism, even those who were loyal or 'fellow-travellers' in their thinking.

During the MKP debate on economic-policy principles at the end of 1947, Nagy still took quite a comprehensive economic approach to finding an alternative. As time went by, the search gradually narrowed. By 1948/9, he was only attempting to outline alternatives in a few areas of Hungarian agriculture. He recommended that the co-operatives be organised in a slower, more deliberate, non-violent way, and he opposed the elimination of the richer peasantry (kulaks). He debated at length, but in the end was defeated. The 'loneliness' of the path-seeker is clearly shown in Nagy's case: it did not even occur to him to gather a faction around him. He maintained his views for some time after Moscow had firmly terminated the path-seeking period and experiments of this kind in the international Communist movement. Ultimately, Nagy still emerged at that time as a 'party-minded' path-seeker. He acquiesced in his defeat in a disciplined way, followed the Bolshevik ritual, exercised self-criticism and finally withdrew from his position.

2. The next stage in the search for alternatives came with the correctives and reform of 1953. Nagy had three main objectives. The first was to rectify mistakes made in 1948–53 in the field of economic and social policy. He drew up an economic policy strategy that conformed more closely to Hungarian traditions, giving preference to light industry and agriculture instead of heavy industry and arms manufacturing. A greater share of GDP was devoted to consumption than before. He declared an amnesty for the internees and deportees. He brought forced collectivisation to an end, and even made it possible for peasants to withdraw from collective farms. Nagy's second objective was to create a more democratic political structure that would match the new economic policy and be capable of giving expression to specific interests. He cautiously raised the idea of reviving the political parties dissolved after the take-over, within the so-called Popular Front movement. He worked for democracy within the Communist Party and for some degree of freedom to express open criticism in the press. Finally, Nagy was concerned to work out in a scientific fashion the course of gradual progress in the future. For instance, a long-term development programme for Hungarian agriculture appeared at the end of 1953. In the following year, work began on a new programme for the whole system of economic policy and economic management. (The phrase 'economic mechanism', coined at that time, gained wide currency and favour in the 1960s.) This was not completed, but the first of the Hungarian reform concepts, later implemented after 1956, dates from Nagy's term as Prime Minister. He probably considered the third of these tasks to be of prime importance, and to be the one best suited to him.

Nagy looked back on his period as Prime Minister in a series of essays he wrote

during 1955 and 1956. This personal appraisal after the event throws light on the underlying ideas in the second stage of 'path-seeking', although he took pains to conform minutely to the party terminology of the time while writing in his own defence after his fall.[4] Nagy identified the crisis that developed in the summer of 1953 as the initial impetus behind his actions. That is what convinced the Soviet leadership and the more realistic of those running Hungary (primarily himself) of the need for change. The question was what to change and to what extent. The crisis was construed in various ways by the main figures involved in it. To Nagy it vindicated the path-seeking of 1945–9. His answer was a return to the latent alternative of the so-called transition and, more specifically, to the 1947–8 phase of the transition, when the Communists had been dominant without holding a hegemony. This was the kind of situation he tried to approach during his first period in office. It lay behind his desire to restore small-scale peasant farming, give relatively more freedom in public life and the press and limited scope for autonomous action, and restore the post-1947 pseudo-coalition when parliamentarianism was not yet a complete sham, so as to scale down the war on society.

Moscow's starting point in 1953 was less clear, based as it was on improvisations by the strong men in the 'collective leadership'. Busy squabbling over Stalin's inheritance, their motivation was imperial stabilisation rather than concern for the system. A classical Stalinist system of institutions had been built up in Hungary at lightning speed, especially in the economy. This and the political mentality it rapidly produced led to an exaggerated perception of corrective measures. They became blown up, as it were, into a reform. It was no use Nagy arguing logically that, if haste had caused a stage of development to be left out, they should return to the previous course, to the point of departure. Compared with the Rákosi system and the classical Soviet model, the changes did amount to more than a corrective designed simply to make the system functional again. A comprehensive reappraisal of economic policy was followed, for example, by the first outline plan for 'reform of the mechanism'. This in many ways anticipated the notions of a 'socialist market economy' that reached fruition in the 1960s. To that extent, Nagy, in the autumn of 1954, can be called a reformer of classical Stalinism, but he would hardly have considered himself to be that. The task he envisaged was not one of changing the existing situation but of returning to another course of development, abandoned in about 1947–8. However, that did not deter his enemies at home, headed by Rákosi, from removing him from the office of Prime Minister in March 1955, with assistance from Moscow, and banishing him from the political scene altogether.

3. The course presented in the second stage was in effect an attempt to return to the first stage, to the 'people's democratic' course that Nagy saw as having been interrupted in 1947. The two defeats both illustrated an underlying feature of the Soviet model: that it was primarily concerned with an empire, not with some kind of communist or socialist system. When Hungary first entered the sphere of interest of that empire, consolidation, acceptance and legitimation of the 'acquisitions' more

[4] Imre Nagy, *On Communism: In Defense of the New Course* (New York: Praeger, 1957).

or less demanded that there should be a slower, more cautious transformation that took account of local characteristics and the interests of other, larger frames of integration. There was a fortunate moment when the path-seeking by those well acquainted with the original Soviet model coincided with the Soviet Union's imperial interests. As soon as that moment passed, path-seeking became futile, superfluous and dangerous. There are no sources available to show what change occurred in the relative importance attached after Stalin's death by the still changing top Soviet leadership to rationalisation of the empire and further external consolidation on the one hand, and a possible internal reappraisal of the model on the other. However, the imperial criterion remained the basic one at every critical juncture for Hungary (the turn of 1954/5 and October 1956).

The third stage in Nagy's path-seeking was an attempt to respond to this recognition. Initially, the studies he wrote as an internal exile in 1955–6 added little to the internal 'reforms' planned in 1953–4. His advocacy of a return to the situation of 1947–8 was re-expressed in the slogan of a return to 'the new phase of June 1953'. He was still stressing this on the evening of 23 October 1956, when he addressed a crowd numbering hundreds of thousands in the square outside Parliament in Budapest, as the curtain went up on the revolution. Although he did not turn the matter into a plan of political action, the lessons of the earlier searches for alternatives led him to realise the need to confront the classical Soviet model in its entirety. Nagy's study on the moral and ethical aspects of Hungarian public life is a passionate criticism of the dictatorial system. As late as the autumn of 1957, when he was imprisoned, he underlined how 'Stalinism' was the 'trend of Marxism-Leninism' to which he was opposed.[5] The new factor in the third stage of the search for alternatives was the basis of national independence, set against imperial policy. Nagy had expressed this, in theory, in an analysis of foreign policy written at the beginning of 1956, in which he advanced as objectives 'active', Yugoslav-style neutrality and a position outside the bloc.[6] Practical steps followed during the Hungarian revolution, with the withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and declaration of Hungarian neutrality.

After two essentially similar stages, Nagy in the third stage took his ideas further in essential respects. There were three main factors at work. First, his removal from the circle of power had distanced him from events and the sealed world of the Party leadership. The break with Bolshevik ritual proved even more important. At the end of 1954, Nagy had rejected the idea of the Soviet Union acting as an arbitrator, and then refused to practise self-criticism. This move took him closer than ever before to the stance of an intellectual. His gesture of refusing to exercise self-criticism ended the political and personal isolation he had suffered throughout his

[5] Magyar Országos Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives], XX–5–h. Legfelsöbb Bíróság Népbírósági Tanács [Supreme Court People's Judicial Council]. No. V–150.000, Nagy Imre és társai pere [Trial of Imre and Associates]. Vizsgálati iratok 1. köt [Investigation Documents, Vol. 1]. Nagy Imre 1957 ápr. 22–ki kihallgatása [Interrogation of Imre Nagy on 22 April 1957].

[6] Nagy, 'The Five Principles of International Relations and the Question of Our Foreign Policy', in *On Communism*, 225–43.

life. His example provided orientation, by supplying the supporters of the reform aborted in 1955 with a central figure and political representative. Meanwhile the Party opposition around him, members of the reforming Communist intelligentsia (writers, journalists, politicians victimised under the Rákosi regime, agronomists, economists and so on), were altering the complexion and politics of Nagy.[7] For the first time in his life, he found himself to some extent in a reflective environment, involved in discourse of an intellectual character. Basically and initially, he shared the Party opposition's long-range ideas, and went on to debate several points with them. This radicalised Nagy, although he did not follow them down the path of disillusionment with Communism and critical revision until later, at a subsequent stage. Nonetheless, he did not see these people simply as the political team of the future, the cadres who would reinstate the policy of reform. Many of them became his personal friends as well. The year 1956 showed politically that Nagy was capable of moving further forward in his political decisions. The intellectual lessons he drew from this and the way he brought his career to a culmination are considered in the next section.

III

So far the destiny and career of Nagy as a thinker, taking at least partly an intellectual view of political questions, had been inseparable from his life as a practical politician. After the defeat of the Hungarian revolution on 4 November 1956, he had no further chance of affecting real political activity. On being interned at Snagov, Romania, at the end of November, he continued with the only task still open to him – summarising his views on the Hungarian revolution in a series of political notes. Though incomplete and unpublished, this political testament is a work of great importance, centred around a political analysis of the Hungarian revolution of 1956.[8]

Nagy's underlying dilemma is the unbridgeable gap between his concept of reform and the revolution as deed. Although the plan of reform encompassed the idea of democratising the political structure and the question of national independence, the revolution raised the former in a radical form, as a call for a democratic, multi-party system and free elections, and the latter as an immediate demand. At the beginning of his analysis, Nagy blames this intensification of the situation on the narrow-mindedness of the Hungarian and Soviet Party leaderships. They had taken this popular movement to be a 'counter-revolution' and tried to crush it by force of arms:

Out of this situation . . . arose demands characteristic of general national resistance evoked

[7] György Litván, 'A Nagy Imre-csoport politikája' [The Politics of the Imre Nagy Group], in Péter Baló and András B. Hegedüs, (eds.), *1956-ról a rendszerváltás küszöbén* [On 1956, on the Eve of the Change of System] (Budapest: Széchenyi Szakkollégium/1956-os Intézet); György Péteri, 'New Course Economics: The Field of Economic Research in Hungary after Stalin', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 6, no. 3 (1997), xxx.

[8] Imre Nagy's daughter and heir has refused to allow publication.

by armed Soviet intervention: withdrawal of Soviet troops, repudiation of the Warsaw Treaty, declaration of neutrality, and attainment of internal democracy . . . with the inclusion of other democratic and socialist forces and parties than the [Communist] MDP.[9]

If the 'revolutionary democratic' concept had applied from the start, 'it would have been possible to stop at the platform of June 1953, and unnecessary to return to the platform of the 1945–6 period'.[10]

We saw clearly, then as now, that the course of democratic development to which we were committed was a compromise, but one that was thoroughly healthy and correct, in the midst of Hungarian events, so that we might have saved most of the people's democratic system, socialist relations and socialist achievements. . . .[11]

In fact the demands advanced during the revolution, as Nagy well knew, dated from before the attempt to suppress the movement by force. Only through a one-sided analysis was it possible to blame the appearance of the demands on the intervention of the secret policy (ÁVH) or the Soviets – on the application of a 'concept of counter-revolution'. Later on in his treatise, in the midst of a more detailed treatment, he himself inclines towards a different approach:

. . . the demands that constituted the progressive content of the revolutionary uprising, the national independence war, and tied in with defence of socialist achievements and the demand for extending socialist democracy [*demokratizmus*], had been rooted deeply for many years in the broadest masses of people, in every stratum of the nation.[12]

Nagy discusses at several points the origin of the Party opposition and the struggles it waged. He called it a 'vast and united movement comprehending the whole people, under the leadership of Communists' who were campaigning for a return to the June programme. The Party opposition dissociated itself emphatically from Gerő 's type of Stalinists and from János Kádár and his group, pragmatic opponents of Rákosi. The latter, Nagy wrote, 'were members of the opposition for as long as that did not endanger the power positions held by the Rákosi-Gerő clique'.[13] In July 1956, after Rákosi's dismissal, the resolution of the Central Committee [*Központi Vezetőség*] 'was the platform on which "unity" of political principle arose between Gerő 's Stalinists and Kádár's neo-Stalinist "opposition". Neither Gerő nor Kádár wanted to go further than that. It was on this platform that they prepared to act against the opposition party members and the likewise opposing masses of the people.'[14]

Clearly, Nagy also knew that the 'unity' between the Party opposition and the masses opposing the system as a whole was relative. This was plain from his own experiences in October. The Party opposition had only been able to represent all opponents while society was still denied any other form of political expression.

[9] Magyar Köztársaság Legfelsöbb Bíróság Irattára [Archive of the Supreme Court of the Hungarian Republic], Imre Nagy, *Gondolatok, emlékezések* [*Ideas, Recollections*], ms, Snagov, 1957 (hereafter *Gondolatok*), 1.
[10] *Ibid.*, 2.
[11] *Ibid.*, 14.
[12] *Ibid.*, 50–1.
[13] *Ibid.*, 57.
[14] *Ibid.*

Nagy blamed the breakdown of this unity on the obstinacy of the Stalinists, who 'saw the struggle against the opposition as their main task, not the creation of political conditions for development. Thereby they prevented the opposition from taking charge of the movement in good time and ensuring democratic opportunities for development . . .'.[15] The radical mass movement that began to form several weeks before the revolution resulted from the erosive, legitimacy-reducing activity of the Hungarian Party opposition. Neither Nagy nor the vast majority of the Party opposition agreed with certain objectives of this mass movement.[16]

One of the most painful dilemmas Nagy faced while isolated in Romania was the experience in October of the breakdown of the national unity in which he had believed. The only way he could resolve this dilemma was to divorce the Party opposition from the Party, and to invest it, as the opposition, with a common denominator with the mass movement on the decisive issue. The lessons of 1956 left him prepared to take that decisive step, from which he had shrunk hitherto, on a basis of 'my party, right or wrong'. The Party and the masses together, he now wrote,

> came out against a party leadership that was . . . anti-Marxist, anti-Leninist, a clique that imposed dictatorship on the party, split the membership from the leadership, turned against the people, imposed a reign of terror, committed masses of illegal acts, betrayed the fundamental interests and independence of the country, etc., in a word, that was a traitor. . . . To act against a leadership and a party of this kind is a virtue, not a crime. . . . This party was an instrument for imposing a regime of terror on the people, based on a dictatorship by one person or a clique. This party, along with this system, was inevitably due to collapse. So the question of the party could never have been resolved simply by altering the personal composition of the leadership. The fault was in the system, in the operation of the party, in the selection and composition of its cadres and their behaviour towards the working people, and in the relationship to the state, not just in the leadership and its methods.[17]

Nowhere in his notes does Nagy provide a definition of the events of October 1956 to which he could adhere throughout. However, he clearly saw the effort to win national independence as a paramount feature. The expression used most frequently is 'revolution of national liberation'. The absence of national independence comes to include democratic aspirations and demands, since the most salient

[15] *Ibid.*, 46.

[16] To take a typical example, one of the speakers in the teachers' debate held on 12 October 1956 by the Petőfi Circle, the forum of the party opposition, was a representative of the March 15 Circle, formed in the Law Faculty of Budapest's Loránd Eötvös University a few days previously. He put forward the law students' demands. These included making the Hungarian national day, 15 March (anniversary of the 1848 democratic revolution against the Habsburgs), a public holiday (this had been abolished by the Communists in 1950), abolishing compulsory Russian tuition in schools, public trial of Mihály Karkas, and so on. Gábor Tánczos, secretary of the Petöfi Circle, himself active in the party opposition, called the speaker to order on the grounds that the Petöfi Circle was not in the habit of making demands. See András B. Hegedüs, and János M. Rainer (eds): *A Petőfi Kör vitái – hiteles jegyzőkönyvek alapjan*, VI: *Pedagógusvita* [*The Debates of the Petőfi Circle – Based on Authentic Minutes*, 6: *Teachers' Debate*] (Budapest: Múzsák/1956-os Intézet, 1992), 126–7. No less typical was Nagy's opinion of the Technical University's 16 Points, on the eve of 23 October: 'I was aware of the young people's demands. There were some, one or two demands with which I did not agree in that wording', *Gondolatok*, 109.

[17] *Ibid.*, 55–8.

aspect of the introduction of the anti-democratic system had been that it was based on an alien, Soviet pattern:

> People will only accept even socialism if it guarantees or provides national independence, sovereignty, and equality of rights. The core of Hungary's tragedy lies in the fact that socialism and the idea of national independence became opposed. The underlying object of the Hungarian uprising was to seek and find a way to end that antagonism and create the required unity and complete harmony between them.[18]

This definition relegates criticism of the system and the directions of change to a secondary position. In another attempt to define the situation, they are thrown into sharp relief. This was

> the first time in Hungarian history that a war of liberation, fought for national independence, self-determination, sovereignty and equal rights, had been led by the working class. . . . It was an attribute of this battle for independence that the working class was able to reply on the unity of the whole nation. This national unity embraced all classes and strata in society, and all political trends, from communists via democrats to right-wing reactionary tendencies.[19]

However, the final half-sentence shows that Nagy recognised the divergence within this national unity, apparent in the revolutionary objectives. The concept of unity being expounded here would have been weakened if he had introduced political divisions into the equation: 'The working class, standing on the basis of people's democracy and socialist achievements, led the struggle for national independence. This was the other specific feature of the events in Hungary.' The third feature arose simply from the opposing sides. The revolution 'bore the character of a struggle between the Hungarian people, which had risen to fight for independence and the armed forces of the Soviet Union. The Hungarian working class, as the main force behind the struggle for Hungarian independence, found itself in armed conflict with the Soviet armed forces – undoubtedly a tragic situation.'[20]

The other important characteristic of the revolution was defined by Nagy in terms of an even older concept: the so-called people's democratic transition to socialism. It was clear in 1947–9, and even in 1953–4, that Nagy ascribed strategic relevance to this fundamentally tactical concept, devised to meet the situation after fascism and the Second World War. He made efforts, punctuated by varying interludes of 'concealment' and latency, to return to this concept on every occasion he thought favourable for doing so. Here he seems to have transcended this as well:

> Undoubtedly, if the Hungarian revolution had won . . . if the revolution had gained its social and national objectives, a new course of transition from capitalism to socialism would have emerged, a new type of democratic development towards socialism, which would have shown essential differences from the people's democracies of today, quite uniform in type, and the concepts – socialism, democracy, independence, sovereignty and so on – the entire socialist terminology, which Stalinism robbed of its real meaning, would regain its original, true Marxist content and substance.[21]

[18] *Ibid.*, 54.
[19] *Ibid.*, 33.
[20] *Ibid.*
[21] *Ibid.*, 53.

Nagy mentions two other essential features of this new transition, apart from national independence. He refers several times to the initiation of a multi-party system, in its polemical context and in the parts where he analyses the political history of the revolution, as an inevitable, essential compromise, which the party reached with the insurgent people. In calmer moments, he underlines the necessity of this in principle:

[The] people's democracy, in form and content, has become a replica of the one-party system of the Soviet state, in other words it has lost its popular democratic character, as the system of state and society in the transitional stage. In other words, we have skipped a transitional stage of development. . . . Is it possible to have socialist democracy in a one-party system? Probably it is. The historical experiences here are none too convincing. The decay of party and socialist democracy in the Soviet Union, the grave deformities in the economic basis of society and in the legal, political, moral and other superstructures, and the similar indications in Hungary provide evidence against, rather than for democracy in a one-party system. . . . I believe the democratic foundations of society, in which we work towards socialism, will prove safer and firmer in the presence of a multi-party system of state and society.[22]

Nagy dismisses local, self-managing, spontaneous organisations run by direct democracy as 'particularist' and 'provincial' initiatives. This judgement ties in with the fact that the spontaneous organisations during the revolution had been much more radical than Nagy's government and put political pressure upon it. On the other hand, he also draws attention to 'the spontaneous revolutionary activity of the broad popular masses, parallel with the disintegration of the old bureaucratic structure of state administration, which brought into being new, truly popular and democratic administrative organizations that performed the tasks of the collapsed council authorities'.[23] He discerned the same democratic, anti-bureaucratic function being performed by the workers' councils:

The persistent struggle of the working class that developed around the workers' councils represented an effort by the working class to ensure itself institutionally, through the workers' councils, real state power and the exercise of this in the running of the state and the building of socialism, that it might really be the possessor of power, not just on paper or in bombastic phrases, and that this power should not be exercised instead by a clique or the bureaucratic apparatus of such, in the name of the working class.[24]

The role of the Soviet Party leadership in the development of the crisis remained a sore point with Nagy, even in Snagov. For Nagy, the Soviet leadership had meant both the policy-makers of an oppressive great power quite unconcerned with the fate of Hungary and, at the same time, a kind of ultimate court of appeal, susceptible to the arguments of sense and justice as well as the pledge and hope for a humanist renewal of the international Communist movement, especially after the Twentieth Congress. This confidence, already riddled with ambiguities, had been shaken to its foundations by the events of 4 November 1956. Only his indignation over the personal faults and crimes of the Rákosi–Gerő group and of János Kádár

[22] *Ibid.*, 62–6.
[23] *Ibid.*, 63.
[24] *Ibid.*, 76.

was stronger than Imre Nagy's disillusionment with the Soviets. Nagy had neither the time nor the opportunity to conduct the kind of historical analysis that might have covered the whole of Soviet socialism and its introduction into East-central Europe.

Nagy makes several allusions in his notes to the Soviet intervention in the Hungarian revolution, condemning it each time. However, there are signs of a shift of opinion as he tries to account for the intervention. Early on in his notes he indicates two aspects: the Stalinist methods that return and survive in spite of the Twentieth Congress, and Russia's aspirations as a great power (without any ideological attribution).

As [the Soviet party leadership] analyses and characterizes the events in Hungary and Poland . . . and insofar as it recoils from exposing its mistakes . . . not setting aside the great-power chauvinism apparent under the pretext of socialism, thereby ending its own ideological and political monopoly, thereby placing, actually and forthwith, not just on paper and belatedly, the relations between the socialist countries on a footing of the five well-known basic principles,[25] and thereby preventing the events in Hungary from serving to excuse a return to Stalinist methods . . . that shows that the tragic events in Hungary do not mark the conclusion of one catastrophic stage in the destiny of socialism, and will usher in a series of similar, perhaps even graver national and international tragedies.[26]

Nagy also described the formation of the Warsaw Pact as a means of realising the same policy, arguing that it was 'nothing other than a means of pursuing Soviet chauvinist, great-power endeavours . . . the imposition of Soviet military dictatorship on the participating countries'.[27]

As for the concluding idea in the first of the two quotations, it certainly proved prophetic in the light of subsequent events. The idea really expresses an urgent desire, based on the conviction that a great power and a small country really could co-exist according to the 'five basic principles', on the basis of a socialism cleansed of Stalinism and 'taken at face value'. However, Imre Nagy also realised that if one points not only to Stalinism but to what was actually the driving force behind Soviet policy, the interests of a great power victorious in war and expanding continually for decades, this desire becomes at most a fruitless 'incantation'. For what kind of ideological change or 'enlightenment' could alter an endeavour with deep historical roots? Here, as elsewhere, Nagy's line of argument is characteristically contradictory, and the way he handles the problem is characteristic as well. Since it would have placed his main conceptual reference points at risk to think the matter right through, Nagy simply converts great-power chauvinism into a component of Stalinism, subordinate to it, and thereafter refers simply to Stalinism. He leaves no doubt about his own position, yet leaves open the theoretical possibility that the

[25] Nagy refers to the five principles adopted by the Bandung Conference of African and Asian countries. The purpose of the conference, hosted by President Sukarno of Indonesia, was to form a non-aligned bloc against the imperialism of the superpowers. The five principles adopted were: non-aggression, respect for sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, equality and peaceful coexistence.

[26] *Gondolatok*, 17.

[27] *Ibid.*, 19.

'proletarian internationalism' so often mentioned by him may prevail on the basis of some abstract insight.

The notes leave room for the conclusion that Nagy, at the end of his life, reached the furthest point in his search for a course based on criticism of Stalinism, but retreated by comparison with what he had done in October 1956. Nagy, as he prepared for his political trial, sought to interpret his human, intellectual and political path as a coherent whole. If he constructed his defence simply on his choices during the 1956 revolution, he would be building it on a short episode in his life. What he tried to do in his notes was literally to reconstruct the decisive event in his life, the 1956 revolution, in such a way that the values which clashed in it should be reconciled in their final perspective. That would mean that the people and he had wanted the same thing – Hungarian socialism with a human face, free of violent compulsion. It is easy for an analyst today (and not just because of extra knowledge) to assert that these values did not converge in October 1956, that society wanted something different, something more, that such a socialism was inconceivable even then, and so on. The historical significance of Imre Nagy lies not primarily in his intellectual quests for a path but in his practical deeds during the revolution, and in his loyalty to these right up to his death. For him to remain loyal, however, he could not place the events beyond the frame of a lifetime, even if the unity of values and decisions that gave security and peace lived only inside himself.

This search for a path was an integral part of Nagy's moral apology, even though it was only a historical curiosity in other respects, because it provided the basis for his inner sense of justice and endowed his moral decisions with the immediacy of experience. This authenticated Imre Nagy even in the eyes of people indifferent or opposed to Soviet and all other kinds of communism. Finally, there was the stubborn faith that arose out of the inner tensions of the search, out of his political and intellectual dilemmas, for this faith supplied the coherence of behaviour at the end of his political and intellectual career, which was at the same time the end of his life, on 16 June 1958.

Possessed: Imre Lakatos' Road to 1956

LEE CONGDON

Of those Hungarian intellectuals who fled abroad after the 1956 revolution, the maverick philosopher Imre Lakatos achieved the greatest prominence. In 1959, nearly three years after he reached England's shores and two years before he completed his doctorate at Cambridge, he began a brilliant teaching career at the London School of Economics and Political Science. 'A lecture by Lakatos was always an occasion,' his colleague John Watkins has recalled, 'the room crowded, the atmosphere electric, and from time to time a gale of laughter.'[1]

Because of the time Lakatos devoted to class preparation, he did not immediately revise his thesis for publication, but in 1963/4 he permitted part of it – entitled 'Proofs and Refutations' – to appear in *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Sciences*.[2] The title and argument of that seminal work owed much to Lakatos' LSE colleague, Karl Popper;[3] indeed, the Hungarian intended to show that Popper's 'fallibilism' – his insistence that science, rightly understood, was fallible and hence ever subject to revision – applied to mathematics as well and thus that dogmatism could not look to it as the basis for a wider epistemological certainty.

For Lakatos, the discrediting of dogmatism was not a purely academic exercise, for in his youth he had bartered his soul for Communism's dogmatic promise to bring heaven to earth. Only when the Communist Hungary he had helped create proved to be more of an *inferno* than a *paradiso* did he seek to exorcise his demons by contending against political fanaticism. True, he attempted to carry out his self-assigned mission indirectly, as a philosopher of mathematics and science, but in part that was because he had concluded that 'the analogy between political ideologies and scientific theories is . . . more far-reaching than is commonly realised'.[4] A valid

[1] John Watkins, 'Lakatos, Imre', *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Biographical Supplement, Vol. XVIII (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 402.

[2] In 1976, two years after his death, two of his students edited a book-length version of the extended essay as *Proofs and Refutations: The Logic of Mathematical Discovery*, ed. John Worrall and Elie Zahar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

[3] Popper wrote a letter of congratulation in August 1964. 'I love this paper of yours, and I have recommended it to many people the world over. It is a flawless piece of art, and the greatest advent in the philosophy of mathematics since the great logical discoveries around 1930–32.' Cited in John Watkins, 'Karl Popper: A Memoir', *The American Scholar* (Spring 1997), 212.

[4] Lakatos, *Proofs and Refutations*, 49n.

scientific theory might therefore pave the way for a more sober political ideology. The story behind that mission, and the brief but remarkable career that it inspired, is itself a cautionary tale, but one that Lakatos himself chose not to tell.

The Demonic Revolutionary

Born Imre Lipsitz in Debrecen on 9 November 1922, Lakatos experienced an early sorrow when his father Jacob, a wine merchant whose 'forefathers were intellectuals, most of them Rabbis, bankers and scientists',[5] left the family home. As a consequence, he and his mother moved in with his uncle. In 1944, as war continued to rage, young Lipsitz graduated from the local university, where he studied mathematics, physics and philosophy; by then he had contracted a 'Marxist marriage' – a shared dedication to the class struggle[6] – with Éva Révész. As a Jew, even one who had converted to the 'Hungarian religion' of Calvinism,[7] he knew that his life was in danger, especially after October 1944, when the Germans removed Regent Miklós Horthy and installed Ferenc Szálasi, the fanatical 'Arrow Cross'[8] leader who imposed a Nazi-style regime on the country. Indeed, his mother, uncle and grandmother were soon to perish in the Holocaust.[9]

Fortunately for Révész and Lakatos – the Magyar name he had newly adopted – their tutor in Marxism, Gábor Vajda, located safe houses in and around Nagyvárad (Oradea in Romania), a city the Germans had presented to Hungary as part of the Second Vienna Award (1940). Révész lodged with a family in the city, while Lakatos lived at the home of the historian (and Communist) Dániel Csatári in a nearby village. As a cover, he carried identification papers belonging to the brother of a comrade in a Marxist study group he had organised in the belief that Marxism was the true science of society and Communism the mortal enemy of anti-Semitic Nazism.[10]

No one was more relieved than Lakatos when the Red Army liberated Budapest in the spring of 1945, and before the year ended he moved to the war-ravaged capital, where the drama of national renewal would be staged. The joy he experienced upon discovering that his father had managed to survive was tempered only by the pain of separation from Révész, with whom he had had one of many quarrels. By 1947, however, the temperamental lovers had become reconciled and married.

By then Lakatos had begun to play an active role in the Soviet plot to seize

[5] Jacob Lipsitz to Imre Lakatos, 9 June 1971, Imre Lakatos Papers, File 13/268, British Library of Political and Economic Science (thereafter BLPES), London, UK. I am grateful to Professor John Worrall for granting me permission to quote from the Imre Lakatos Papers.

[6] See Mária Zimán-Izsák, *Betűsírkő Évának* (Verbal Monument to Éva) (Israel, 1989), 44.

[7] Although a majority of Hungarians were Roman Catholic, Catholicism was viewed as the religion of the Austrian Habsburgs.

[8] The Arrow Cross was a fascist and anti-Semitic movement.

[9] Interview with Gábor Vajda conducted by Alex Bandy, AP correspondent in Budapest, Budapest, 1992. I am grateful to Mr Bandy for the series of interviews he conducted on my behalf.

[10] Gábor Vajda to Michael F. Hallett, 25 Nov. 1980, Imre Lakatos Papers, File 11.2 (g), BLPES.

power in Hungary, and in the process of doing so he manifested to others a soul in thrall to evil. 'He calculated everything, in his eyes everyone was a means,' the sociologist István Márkus has recalled.[11] According to the literary historian and *quondam* Stalinist Sándor Lukácsy, he 'gained immediate recognition as an intellectual of demonic character'. The widow of the famous psychologist Ferenc Mérei described him as 'diabolically clever, a genius'. The editor and ex-Communist Gábor Mihályi spoke of his 'dictatorial temperament' and the historian and Kádárist cultural politician Béla Köpeczi called him 'a fanatical Communist who believed the end justified the means'.[12]

Köpeczi did not exaggerate. Several people who knew the young Lakatos have reported that quite often, in the heat of argument, he would cite someone his opponent was certain to accept as an authority. To others, however, he would later confide that he had simply fabricated the supporting opinion. Nor, according to Mrs Mérei, did he scruple at searching Professor Árpád Szabó's wastepaper basket 'for anything that might be incriminating'.[13]

Far more damning, however, was the leading role he had played in the 1944 suicide of nineteen-year-old Éva Izsák. A Communist and a Jewess, the young woman was engaged in underground Party work in Szatmár when she met one Béla Nádler. Concerned that she might be arrested and consigned to the ghetto, Nádler suggested that she go to Nagyvárad to seek anonymity. She arrived in that city in April 1944, carrying the papers of Mária Ari, a gentile friend. Once there, she joined the Marxist study group of which Lakatos, Révész, Csatári, Zoltán Rácz, Ödön Wetternek, Levente (called 'Nyuszi', or 'Bunny') Soós and Alfonz Weisz were members. Like everyone else, Izsák fell under the hypnotic spell of Lakatos and Révész.

Although she was a loyal comrade, Izsák presented a problem. There seemed no safe place to lodge her and her arrest could imperil the rest. Initially she stayed with Nádler, but soon moved in with relatives of Alfonz Weisz. In May she took up residence in Wetternek's family home, even though his father belonged to the pro-Nazi Volksbund. She remained there until August, when she moved in with Weisz, by then her lover, at his uncle's place. The uncle, however, was a member of the Arrow Cross and she was in constant danger of being exposed.

Where could she hide? That was the question that preoccupied the other members of the group. It was Lakatos who arrived at a solution: Izsák must commit suicide.[14] Terrified, the young woman pleaded with him to think of some other solution. He, however, remained adamant and called for a vote; all, including

[11] István Márkus interview. Conducted by László Kardos in 1989. Oral History Archive of the Institute on 1956 (Budapest), ccxvii. 185.

[12] Alex Bandy, interviews with Sándor Lukácsy, Mrs Ferenc Mérei, Gábor Mihályi and Béla Köpeczi, Budapest 1992.

[13] Alex Bandy, interview with Mrs Ferenc Mérei. Szabó is an internationally known philologist and historian of Greek mathematics – and a former Communist. He dedicated the English edition of his book, *The Beginnings of Greek Mathematics*, 1978, 'to the memory of my friend Imre Lakatos'.

[14] Testimony of Weisz and Wetternek to the Nagyvárad political police, 1945. See Zimán-Izsák, *Betűsírkő Évának*, 34, 55.

Weisz, signalled their approval of the diabolical plan. Turning to Izsák, Lakatos launched into a lecture to the effect that correct theory, once having been arrived at, had always to be translated into practice.[15]

Thus instructed, Izsák accepted the sentence of death and on that very day went with Levente Soós to Debrecen because those who had passed judgement feared that, if her body were discovered in Nagyvárad, her picture might appear in newspapers and be recognised by someone who could lead the police to them. Once in Debrecen, the two 'comrades' walked into a wood and selected a secluded area where Soós handed Izsák cyanide mixed with water. She swallowed the deadly draught and quickly expired.[16] The deed done, Éva Révész appropriated the sacrificed girl's winter coat.

The portrait that emerges from the above record is that of a brilliant but possessed intellectual – a character lifted from the pages of a Dostoevsky novel. It is therefore not surprising that, after returning to Budapest, Lakatos joined the circle that had formed around another Dostoevskian figure – Georg Lukács. Home again after long years of exile, Lukács had accepted a professorship – tendered on the strength of his pre-Marxist writings – in aesthetics and the philosophy of culture at the University of Budapest. At 60, he was a legend within and outside the Communist movement, and Lakatos had read his major works, very much including the relentlessly dialectical *History and Class Consciousness*.[17] So, too, had other members of the Lukács circle, such as the philosopher József Szigeti and the literary historian István Király.

At the time that Lakatos was active in the circle, Lukács was propagating the official Party line, according to which Hungary should establish a 'people's democracy' in preparation for a future dictatorship of the proletariat. Such a democracy would transcend a merely 'formal democracy' that despite free elections denied the masses any real power. More precisely, Lukács understood a people's democracy to be identical with the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry that he had called for in his controversial 'Blum Theses' of the late 1920s.[18] However paradoxical it might seem, he had then insisted that the proletariat and peasantry had to engage in a struggle against the bourgeoisie in order to complete the latter's Jacobin tasks. That was necessary because the bourgeoisie had betrayed its own best self, succumbing to reaction and, eventually, to fascism.

Keenly aware that the Party wished to make common cause with the left wing of Hungarian populism (which spoke for the peasantry), rather than with Hungarian

[15] *Ibid.*, 42.

[16] *Ibid.*, 37.

[17] See Imre Lakatos, 'Modern fizika, modern társadalom' (Modern Physics, Modern Society), Imre Lakatos Papers, File 1.8, 356n., BLPES; and István Szerdahelyi, *Lukács György* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988), 194. To a large extent, Lakatos always remained a dialectician.

[18] See my 'From "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" to the Blum Theses', in Judith Marcus and Zoltán Tarr, eds, *Georg Lukács: Theory, Culture, and Politics* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 169–79.

liberalism, Lakatos echoed Lukács in a review he wrote of a book by Imre Csécsy, editor of *Századunk* (*Our Century*), the interwar voice of Hungarian Left-liberalism, and devoted follower of Oszkár Jászi, a leader of the Reform Generation that came of age around the turn of the century. Precisely because Csécsy championed Jászi's bourgeois (or *citoyen*) radicalism, Lakatos charged, he failed to understand that a truly progressive bourgeoisie could complete its historical task – the establishment of a people's democracy – only by recognising the leading role of the working class.

In part, at least, that was because Csécsy could not grasp the fact that the people's democracy, like the Jacobin government before it, would resort to violence only in order to end violence forever. If, like Thomas Mann (whom Lukács much admired), Csécsy were ever to overcome his fear of carrying political democracy forward to economic democracy, he would first have 'to see in the Soviet Union not a "darkness at noon", but rather the great victory of the citoyen, the dawn of true human freedom, the pillar of peace and democracy'.[19]

Csécsy did reject violence as a means to political ends, but when he founded the Radical Party in March 1945 he viewed it as a home for sincere, if non-Marxist, socialists.[20] Knowing that a party consisting primarily of intellectuals could have little prospect of success at the polls, Csécsy hoped that it might at least influence public opinion through its publications, the weekly *Haladás* (*Progress*) and the more theoretical *Huszadik Század* (*Twentieth Century*). Because Jászi had edited the original *Huszadik Század*, an influential journal of sociology and politics that appeared from 1900 to 1919, Csécsy invited him to contribute something to the resurrected journal.

Jászi entitled his essay '*Huszadik Század*: Then and Now' and was careful not to make any critical reference to the Soviet Union. He did, however, dismiss the materialistic view of the world and stress the crucial importance, in a nuclear age, of a religiously based system of ethics.[21] The essay let loose a storm of controversy in Hungarian intellectual circles, particularly those controlled by the Communists. Miklós Gimes – later a martyr of the 1956 revolution – attacked Jászi and *Huszadik Század* in the pages of the Party daily *Szabad Nép* (*Free People*) and Lakatos weighed in with a critique in *Forum*, a theoretical review over which Lukács exerted a decisive influence.

Lakatos repeated his insistence that a 'consistent' bourgeois transformation could be brought about only if the working class, in conjunction with the peasantry, took the lead – a fact, he wrote, that members of the *Huszadik Század* circle preferred to ignore. For that reason they had been unable to mount any serious resistance to fascism, which Lakatos, toeing the Party line, characterised as the bourgeoisie's

[19] Imre Lakatos, 'Citoyen és munkásosztály' (*Citoyen* and Working Class), *Valóság*, Vol. 2, no. 6–9 (1946), 88. In England, Lakatos became a friend of Arthur Koestler, Hungarian-born author of the famous anti-Communist novel *Darkness at Noon*.

[20] János F. Varga, 'A Magyar Radikális Párt újjáalakulása 1945-ben' (The Re-establishment of the Hungarian Radical Party in 1945), *Történelmi Szemle*, Vol. 18, no. 1 (1975), 98–9.

[21] See Oszkár Jászi, *Jászi Oszkár publicisztikája* (Oszkár Jászi's Publicism), ed. György Litván and János F. Varga (Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1982), 453–8.

desperate attempt to hold the rising proletariat in check. Nationally, it was the working class that led the fight against fascism; internationally, it was the Soviet Union, which some in the United States and England mistakenly judged to be no more than another variety of (unprogressive) dictatorship.[22]

Lakatos indicted Jászi for the same thought crime, placing in evidence the warning in the latter's article against old *and new* dogmas. 'In plain language,' he wrote, '[this translates] struggle against reaction and bolshevism.' Little good could come from a journal that promoted such a view, and Lakatos could therefore only applaud the Party's decision to proscribe *Huszadik Század* and the Radical Party in 1949.

By, then, however, Lakatos had broken with Lukács, in part because he thought him insufficiently militant but also because he had had a falling out with Szigeti, at that time the master's most prominent disciple. The issue was more personal than theoretical in nature. Lakatos' marriage to Éva Révész had been every bit as rocky as their earlier life together, and matters came to a head late in 1947 when Szigeti alienated her affections.[23] Divorce soon followed and Révész and Szigeti married. Lakatos then joined István Király, who differed with Lukács on some literary matters, in open rebellion. 'Late in 1947,' Király later recalled, 'in the Opera coffeehouse, [Lakatos, Árpád Szabó, and I] arranged a meeting of the *Valóság* [*Reality*] Circle and entered the lists against Lukács's ideology.'[24]

Unlike Király, however, Lakatos evinced little interest in literary questions. In 1947–8 he dedicated himself, at the Party's bidding, to destroying the prestigious Eötvös College, a teachers' training institute established in 1895 and named for József Eötvös, the nineteenth-century political thinker and liberal reformer. Patterned after the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, Eötvös College sought to support the education of a pedagogical élite, particular preference being given to those who, for financial reasons, might not otherwise be able to pursue advanced studies. Through its portals passed some of Hungary's most distinguished educators and cultural luminaries.

The Communists targeted Eötvös College not only because it was avowedly élitist but because, with its tradition of intellectual freedom, it would not willingly transform itself into an agency of political indoctrination. For that purpose, the more recently established Györffy College – named for the ethnographer István Györffy – was better suited. That College opened its doors in 1940 and catered to students of peasant origin. From the first, a solid phalanx of left-wing students, closely connected to the then illegal Communist Party, exerted a controlling influence.[25] And with good reason according to András Hegedüs, who was one of the activists: 'There was a communist core, rather militant, violent in its outward

[22] Imre Lakatos, *Huszadik Század*, (Twentieth-century), *Forum*, Vol. 2 (1947), 316–18.

[23] Alex Bandy, interviews with Gábor Vajda and with József Szigeti, Budapest, 1997.

[24] István Király, 'A múltról a mának: Beszélgetés (From the Past to the Present: Conversation)', *Kritika*, No. 4 (1981), 7; Szerdahelyi, *Lukács György*, 210–11.

[25] András Hegedüs, *A történelem és a hatalom igézetében: Életrajzi elemzések* (Under the Spell of History and Power: Biographical Analyses) (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1988), 46.

form; to a certain degree – it must be said – it terrorized the College members.'[26] After being forced to shut down during the German occupation, the College reopened at the end of the war and began to train a political cadre.

Just as the post-war Communist Party set out to destroy its principal opponent, the Smallholders' Party, so it resolved to co-opt or close Györffy College's chief rival, Eötvös College. Party leaders assigned the work of subversion to Lakatos, who had written in *Valóság* that 'the Marxists' field of action has until recently been confined to the workers' organisations, but now it is spreading explosively throughout the entire country, and thus to the universities and the scientific institutes.'[27] Having concerned himself with the reform of higher education at both the Ministry of Education and the Party Centre, he was an ideal choice to lead the Communist 'faction' that some Eötvös Collegians had already organised. To have him admitted to the College, the Party's cultural enforcer József Révai brought pressure to bear on Dezső Keresztury, the distinguished man of letters who had accepted the position of director in 1945. 'The Communist Party,' Keresztury testified in 1992, 'forced him [Lakatos] on me when he applied to join the college.'[28]

Keresztury tried to discourage Lakatos by reminding him that he was several years older than most entering students, but to no avail. The resolute Communist had no intention of withdrawing his application, and in the end Keresztury, who clearly felt the pressure, overrode his own objections. The die was now cast, for as he later observed, 'Imre Lakatos' entry marked the beginning of the College's end. More precisely, he was the emblem of ruin, the instrument of greater powers.'[29]

A fundamentally decent and trusting man, Keresztury was no match for Lakatos, whom Collegians referred to as 'Mephistopheles' and a 'slinking wolf'.[30] Indeed, in the vain hope of warding off trouble, he bent over backwards to treat the Communists as honorable and legitimate actors in the drama then unfolding in post-war Hungary. He did not hesitate, for example, to invite Lukács and Révai to deliver lectures at the College. He was willing, too, to inject more politics into the curriculum, without of course going as far as Révai, who insisted that Hungarian colleges, led by Györffy and the newly (1946) organised Népi Kollégiumok Országos Szövetsége (NÉKOSZ; National Association of People's Colleges), should educate 'unyielding democrats' to aid in the building of socialism.[31]

Lakatos and the Communists interpreted Keresztury's conciliatory gestures, both

[26] András Hegedüs, *Élet egy eszme árnyékában* (Life in the Shadow of an Idea) (Budapest: Bethlen Gábor Könyvkiadó, 1989), 47. At the time of the 1956 revolution, Hegedüs was the Stalinist Prime Minister of Hungary. Later still he became a sociologist and a leading dissident.

[27] Imre Lakatos, 'Molnár Erik: Dialektika' (Erik Molnár: Dialectics), *Valóság*, Vol. 2 (1946), 77.

[28] Alex Bandy, interview with Dezső Keresztury, Budapest 1992; see also Dezső Keresztury, 'Emlékezés az Eötvös Collegium utolsó éveire' (Recollections of Eötvös College's Last Years), *Valóság* Vol. 32, no. 3 (1989), 67.

[29] Keresztury, 'Emlékezés', 67.

[30] András Fodor, *A Kollégium: Napló, 1947–1950* (The College: Diary, 1947–1950) (Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1991), 186, 343.

[31] Keresztury, 'Emlékezés', 67.

as director of Eötvös College and as Minister of Education, as signs of weakness. They therefore prepared to step up their campaign. In the February 1947 issue of *Valóság*, Lakatos published an essay bearing the ominous title 'Eötvös College – Györffy College (Eötvös College in the Balance)'. In it he deplored the alleged lack of 'friendly collaboration' between the Eötvös and Györffy Colleges and placed the blame squarely on the former. The principal obstacle, as he saw it, was Eötvös College's apolitical tradition, which, he maintained, led its members to retire into wartime isolation. Their much ballyhooed 'critical spirit' never prompted them to *do* anything to preserve Hungary's independence. That was not surprising, according to Lakatos, because for the mainly bourgeois Collegians, the critical spirit had been a weapon in the class struggle against the feudal aristocracy; only very hesitantly could it be used against the fascists, who were, after all, bourgeois enemies of the working class.[32]

The contemporary Eötvös College, Lakatos continued, showed an insufficient awareness of the great social and political transformation then in progress. Its reactionary members viewed a people's democracy with suspicion and failed to notice that the social and natural sciences had replaced literature and the arts as the most relevant studies. Just as regrettable, they still wished to remain in their ivory tower while 'the vanguard of the young is discovering the road to democracy, to public action'.[33] Naturally enough, those in the vanguard turned with hopeful eyes towards Györffy College, which was educating an intelligentsia comprised of the children of workers and poor peasants and innocent of bourgeois ideology. It was not too late, Lakatos averred, for Eötvös College to collaborate in that historic educational effort, but time was running out.

Lakatos left little doubt that the greatest obstacle to Eötvös College's reorientation was Dezső Keresztury, whose national heroes were conservative liberals such as István Széchenyi, the father of Hungarian Nationalism, and Ferenc Deák, architect of the 1867 *Ausgleich* (Compromise) with Austria.[34] Accordingly, he failed to appreciate the far greater contributions of political radicals such as Lajos Kossuth, Sándor Petőfi and Endre Ady.[35] From such a director, Lakatos concluded, one could scarcely expect any move in the direction of transforming Eötvös College into a 'bastion of the people's democracy'. Unless he began to exhibit the talent for innovation that some of his predecessors possessed, he might well be the College's *last* director.[36]

Because of his distaste for his accuser and mounting personal fear, Keresztury did not reply to Lakatos' article. That was left to a group of Eötvös Collegians,

[32] Imre Lakatos, 'Eötvös Collegium – Györffy Kollégium (Az Eötvös Collegium a mérlegen)' (Eötvös College – Györffy College [Eötvös College in the Balance]), *Valóság*, Vol. 3 (1947), 280–91.

[33] *Ibid.*, 296.

[34] As a result of the *Ausgleich*, Hungary gained virtual home rule in exchange for continued allegiance to the Habsburg monarchy.

[35] Kossuth led Hungary during the 1848–9 War of Independence against Austria; Petőfi was a Romantic poet and Jacobin revolutionary who died fighting in the same war; Ady was a great poet and political radical of the fin de siècle.

[36] Lakatos, 'Eötvös Collegium – Györffy Kollégium', 311.

themselves members of the Communist faction. Rather naively, they set about to refute Lakatos' charges one by one. It was simply not true, they wrote rather defensively, that Eötvös Collegians did nothing for Hungary's freedom; students and faculty members had joined the national resistance and some had even taken up arms against the Germans. It was not true that Keresztury had agitated against the people's democracy and disparaged Ady. Furthermore, the College had recently added courses in the social sciences. The students concluded by insisting that they were fully aware that times were changing and that a new society was in the process of being constructed. Like that of their predecessors, their task was to grasp social reality 'with a love of learning, in the direction of progress, for the people!'.[37]

Unfortunately for the Collegians, the 'debate' was not about ideas but about power, and by 1948 it was men like Lakatos and Révai who possessed it. Both tightened the screws until Keresztury, exhausted and bereft of hope, surrendered his post to the infinitely more obliging Tibor Lutter – on whom, nevertheless, Lakatos also informed. By then it scarcely mattered, however, because in 1950 Révai disbanded both the College and the NÉKOSZ – the latter having in the interval become 'Titoist'. Keresztury never forgave Lakatos. 'He subverted the College,' the former director said in 1992, 'and managed to bring about its demise.'[38]

For his efforts, Lakatos was rewarded with a scholarship to study in Moscow, where, according to Sándor Lukácsy (his only friend at Eötvös College), he continued his duplicitous ways. Lukácsy's wife, already in Moscow on a scholarship, had written a letter to her husband in which, along with fulsome praise for the homeland of the Revolution, she complained of rats in her dormitory. Lukácsy showed the letter to Lakatos who, when he arrived in the Soviet capital, denounced his friend's wife for slandering the USSR.[39]

If Lakatos believed that such service to the cause would provide him with immunity, he was mistaken. The Soviet police arrested him after a Romanian Communist denounced him for his role in Éva Izsák's death. Lakatos blamed his brief detention on the fact that he had raised certain 'uncomfortable questions',[40] but according to an official document from the files of the Party's Central Control Committee (an internal watchdog), he was summoned home 'because of his murky past and incorrect attitude'.[41]

In Budapest, more trouble awaited Lakatos. On 20 April 1950, the Central

[37] Eötvös Collegium ifjúsága, 'Válasz Lakatos Imre cikkére' (Reply to Imre Lakatos' Article), *Valóság*, Vol. 3 (1947), 312–22.

[38] Alex Bandy, interview with Dezső Keresztury.

[39] Alex Bandy, interview with Sándor Lukácsy.

[40] Alex Bandy, interviews with Gábor Vajda and with Árpád Szabó, Budapest, 1992.

[41] The document – which can be found in the section of the Hungarian National Archives reserved for documents relating to the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party – contains the minutes of the Committee's disciplinary hearing concerning charges brought by the Romanian Communist Party and stemming from Lakatos' and Levente Soós' involvement in Éva Izsák's suicide. Access to such documents is, except in very special cases, restricted for 30 years from the time of the subject's death. This document was obtained by Mária Zimán-Izsák and given to Dr Jancis Long, a psychologist who is also doing research on Lakatos. Dr Long kindly allowed me to review it.

Control Committee expelled him from the Party. On the same day, the Hungarian secret policy (ÁVH; Állam Védelmi Hatóság [State Security Authority]) took him into custody for engaging in 'political activity against the state'.[42] That at least was one way to put it. György Lázár (b. Leó Lám), who headed Communist dictator Mátyás Rákosi's governmental secretariat, once gave Lukács' student Ágnes Heller a different reason. He and Lakatos, Heller has recalled, 'became convinced that Révai was an imperialist agent and was derailing things, and they worked on denouncing him'.[43]

This rings truer because Lakatos and Révai were known to argue, sometimes heatedly.[44] Moreover, in a series of interviews conducted by the Oral History Archive of the Budapest Institute on 1956, the retired editor Zoltán Zsámboki lent support to Lázár's testimony. While in the Soviet Union, he recalled, Lakatos 'collected the various deviations of József Révai [ie, he copied passages from Révai's works that betrayed contradictory views – a result of trying to follow the ever-shifting Party line]. He ended up with a mass of material. When he returned to Hungary, he asked a Soviet officer on the flight to get his notes through customs – which he did. Then he compiled the stuff and wrote the Party Centre a memorandum entitled "Révai's Crimes". That evening they came for him.'[45]

After briefly detaining him in the 'screening' camp at Kistarcsa, just outside the capital, the authorities transferred Lakatos to the newly opened, but officially non-existent, forced labour camp at Recsk. Located in the Mátra Mountains north-east of Budapest, Recsk could accommodate – if that is the word – about 1,300 prisoners, all of whom quarried stone when they were not constructing roads. Those who failed to meet the assigned quota of work were put on half rations – half of a starvation diet of soup, ersatz coffee and bread, supplemented by insects, mushrooms and roots.[46] Inmates found it difficult to preserve their health and were subjected to routine brutality. Lakatos' father was deeply disturbed by his son's account of life in the camp. 'Dear Imre,' he wrote from Australia in 1957, 'the history of your four years imprisonment has produced on me a deep impression, the miseries you went through show that they have had the intention to kill you. My imagination has not gone so far as to think of those horrible cruelties you had to suffer.'[47]

[42] John Maier, 'Vienna Report', No. 6, 4–5 Dec. 1956, 24. Rockefeller Archive Center, N. Tarrytown, NY.

[43] Alex Bandy, interview with Ágnes Heller, Budapest, 1997.

[44] Alex Bandy, interview with Miklós Szabolcsi, Budapest, 1997. József Szigeti, who had no reason to lie in this regard, has testified that 'Révai hated Lakatos'. Alex Bandy, interview with József Szigeti. Then, too, Lakatos had reason to believe that Révai was heading for a fall. The atmosphere within the Party was Byzantine.

[45] Zoltán Zsámboki interview, conducted by András Kovács in 1987–8. Oral History Archive of the Institute on 1956 (Budapest), Vol. 3, 130.

[46] Alex Bandy, 'Inmates Revisit Hungary's Gulag Hell', *Budapest Week*, Vol. 6, no. 31 (1996), 3.

[47] Jacob Lipsitz's letter to Lakatos, 26 April 1957, Imre Lakatos Papers, File 13/265, BLPES; Lakatos does not seem to have retained a copy of his letter to his father. But see George Faludy, *My Happy Days in Hell*, trans. Kathleen Szasz (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1962), 333–469, and Alex Bandy, 'A néma tábor' (The Silent Camp), unpublished paper.

Nevertheless, the will of Lakatos and other inmates to survive and to preserve something of a normal life remained strong. One former prisoner has given us an account of some fugitive moments of relaxation.

Every evening, exhausted after the daily work, we gathered together on someone's straw mattress and listened to a lecture on one or another chapter from Hungarian or world literature, the atomic world, the wonders of the starry skies, mathematics, the profundities of philosophy.[48]

It appears highly unlikely that Lakatos delivered any of the impromptu lectures, for as one fellow prisoner has testified, he 'kept to himself'.[49] He must, however, have been eager to keep his mind alive, for he offered to instruct Pál Jónás, another prisoner, in the Hebrew language.[50] At any rate, he remained in Recsk until the government closed the camp in 1953, following the death of Stalin and the appointment of Imre Nagy as Hungarian Prime Minister. Thanks to the 'New Course' that Nagy charted, he was released and permitted to return to Budapest, though without work his prospects were dim.[51] Perhaps that accounts for his readiness to report to the security police concerning his activities and personal contacts.

There appears to be no doubt that, willingly or not, Lakatos compromised friends and acquaintances. Even Gábor Vajda and his wife, who liked him, have said that he 'admitted to us he had informed the ÁVH about his contacts', though they added that 'none of the people involved were arrested. We do not know what he told the ÁVH, but it could not have been denunciatory because they would have been arrested or summoned.'[52] The Vajdas did not know, however, that in 1956 Lakatos confessed to Ferenc Mérei that he had reported on his comings and goings.

The fact is that Recsk had not induced Lakatos to break his pact with the devil. Pál Jónás remembers that he boasted of having studied in Moscow and the Vajdas recalled that 'for about half a year he was still trying to justify the Party line and even his internment, saying that "The Party must have had some good reason for doing what it did" even though he believed himself to have been innocent. Then he changed.'[53] In 1954, the mathematician Alfréd Rényi secured a job for him as a librarian and translator at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Mathematical Research. That afforded him access to a library containing 'indexed' books, including some by Karl Popper, which opened his eyes to a political outlook that was non-Marxist and yet scientific.[54]

[48] Zoltán Sztáray, 'A recski kényszermunkatábor' (The Forced Labour Camp at Recsk), *Új Látóhatár*, Vol. 32, no. 3–4 (1981), 382.

[49] Alex Bandy, interview with Tivadar Pártay, Budapest, 1992.

[50] Telephone interview with Professor Paul Jonas (Pál Jónás), 10 Sept. 1996. Gábor Vajda told Alex Bandy (1997) that, as a young man, Lakatos organised a small 'Hebrew language and literature study circle'; perhaps at the time he was studying Hebrew at the University of Debrecen.

[51] Gábor Vajda remembers that Lakatos had a photograph of Nagy in his office at the LSE. My interview with Vajda, Budapest, 1996.

[52] Alex Bandy, interview with Gábor Vajda and his wife.

[53] Telephone interview with Professor Paul Jonas, and Alex Bandy, interview with the Vajdas. There is some reason to believe that Lakatos co-operated with the ÁVH while he was at Recsk.

[54] 'Professor Imre Lakatos', *The Times*, 6 Feb. 1974, 16.

Because he was beginning to rethink everything, Lakatos took an active interest in the Petőfi Circle, which had been organised in 1954 under the aegis of the Party-backed Association of Working Youth. The Circle sponsored a few cultural debates in 1955 without occasioning much of a stir, but, as one of its founders, András B. Hegedűs (not to be confused with the Stalinist politician András Hegedüs), later recalled, the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, at which Khrushchev denounced Stalin, 'liberated the movement of the young Budapest intelligentsia'.[55] Indeed, where once the Circle attracted a mere handful of people, it began to draw hundreds and eventually thousands.

The growing numbers attested to the longing of Hungarians of all ages to hear and participate in open debates on every aspect of the country's public life. Beginning in the spring of 1956, the Petőfi Circle sponsored important debates on the economy and the historical profession. In June it followed those up with a discussion of 'The Twentieth Congress and the Problems of Marxist Philosophy', at which Lukács, who had been a non-person since 1949, was readmitted to public life. His own dogmatism notwithstanding, the famous theorist had come to symbolise an anti-Stalinist and hence more intellectually respectable version of Marxism.

As important as the philosophical discussion was, however, it paled in comparison with the press and literary debate of 27 June. On that evening more than 6,000 people crowded into the large, two-story Officers' House of the People's Army to hear eighteen speeches, including a scathing attack on Stalinist cultural policies by Lukács's friend, the Communist writer Tibor Déry.[56] Although Déry and the other speakers conducted the debate exclusively in Marxist terms, they did present a public challenge to Rákosi and the other Stalinist rulers.

By the time the Petőfi Circle held its debate on education and teacher training early in October, the Russians had removed Rákosi from power, even if they had replaced him with the equally despised Ernő Gerő. It was at that meeting that Lakatos delivered an impassioned speech that bore witness to his soul's freedom from bondage. The lamentable fact was, he boldly asserted, that the nation's libraries and secondhand book shops contained ever burgeoning 'restricted' sections. As an example, he said, he had happened upon a book in the Academy library that described Senator Joseph McCarthy's anti-Communist 'witchhunt' in the United States. But when he went to borrow it he was informed that it could not be circulated 'because the authors of the book . . . were not communists and on every fifteenth page or so there were reservations with respect to communism'.[57]

Nor was that the only impediment to serious scientific education in Communist

[55] András B. Hegedűs, 'Petőfi Kör – a reformmozgalom fóruma 1956-ban' (Petőfi Circle – the Forum of the Reform Movement in 1956), *Világosság*, Vol. 30, no. 1 (1989), 23.

[56] Tibor Déry, 'Déry Tibor felszólalása a Petőfi Kör vitáján' (Tibor Déry's Contribution to the Petőfi Circle Debate), *Világosság*, Vol. 30, no. 2 (1989), 132–7.

[57] Imre Lakatos, in András B. Hegedűs and János M. Rainer, eds, *A Petőfi Kör vitái* VI: *Pedagógusvita* (The Petőfi Circle Debates: The Pedagogues' Debate) (Budapest: Múzsák és 1956-os Intézet, 1992), 36.

Hungary. During the Stalinist years, Lakatos charged, any show of respect for facts was stigmatised as 'bourgeois objectivism'. Hence, while charlatans like T. D. Lysenko commanded respect, 'the sectarian dethroners of reason called the century's greatest scholars and scientists "bourgeois lackeys".' Moreover, 'they labelled as "bourgeois sciences" such important scientific schools and branches as genetics, cybernetics, econometrics, mathematical logic and mathematical statistics.'[58] The impending re-establishment of Eötvös College, which Lakatos, its gravedigger, now applauded, would be meaningless, he argued, unless something was done to rehabilitate independent thought, a scientific attitude of scepticism and a respect for dissent.

When revolution broke out less than a month after his Petőfi Circle speech, Lakatos sympathised with the rebels, and on 30 October he co-drafted a statement on behalf of the newly organised National Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Its crucial paragraphs read as follows:

> The National Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences takes its stand with true freedom of science. Only his own scientific conscience may guide the scholar. We demand that every scientific conviction be allowed to be freely expressed in written and oral form, in universities, in scientific institutes, and in other public forums; free from every power restraint and moral pressure. Without delay a general meeting of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences must be convened. This meeting will be competent to rehabilitate unjustly neglected and oppressed scholars and scientific trends, and to liberate Hungarian science from the shackles of Stalinism.[59]

On 25 November, three weeks after Soviet tanks rolled in to Budapest, Lakatos, his new wife Éva Pap, and his in-laws escaped abroad, principally because of his brother-in-law Gábor's suicide on 2 November.[60] (A student and Petőfi Circle activist, Gábor Pap had been confronted by two former friends whom he had once denounced to the police.) Lakatos had serious reservations about leaving,[61] even though he must have known that to remain was to hazard re-arrest. At any rate, having crossed the frontier, the party proceeded to Vienna. From there they moved on to Cambridge, where, with the aid of a Rockefeller fellowship, Lakatos began his doctoral studies under R. B. Braithwaite and T. J. Smiley.

'The Zhdanov of the Open Society'[62]

For approximately his first ten years in England, Lakatos held aloof from direct involvement in politics, though he engaged in rather light-hearted discussions with his Hampstead neighbour George Lichtheim, an authority on Marxism. But in the

[58] *Ibid.*, 36–7.
[59] Imre Lakatos Papers, File 1.10, BLPES.
[60] Lakatos to Vajda, 25 Nov. 1956, Imre Lakatos Papers, File 12.10, BLPES.
[61] My interview with Éva Pap, Budapest, 1996.
[62] Ernest Gellner, 'The Last Marxists', *Times Literary Supplement*, 23 Sept. 1994, 4. Gellner was one of Lakatos' colleagues at the LSE. Andrei Zhdanov was Stalin's cultural tsar in the years immediately following the Second World War. *The Open Society and Its Enemies* was the title of Karl Popper's principal work of political philosophy.

late 1960s, at the time of the student revolt – the so-called 'Troubles' – at the LSE, he discovered that he was 'still excitable politically'.[63] At the height of the disturbances he became so incensed that he penned an open letter to the School's director, Walter Adams.[64] In it he took issue with a recommendation that students help determine academic policy. Such an innovation would, he maintained, violate the important principle of academic autonomy, according to which academic policy was exclusively the responsibility of professors who had attained seniority.

> I came from a part of the world where this principle has never been completely implemented and where during the last 30–40 years it has been tragically eroded, first under Nazi and then under Stalinist pressure. As an undergraduate I witnessed the demands of Nazi students at my University to suppress 'Jewish-liberal-marxist influence' expressed in the syllabuses. I saw how they, in concord with outside political forces, tried for many years – not without some success – to influence appointments and have teachers sacked who resisted their bandwagon. Later I was a graduate student at Moscow University when resolutions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party determined syllabuses in genetics and sent the dissenters to death.

Lakatos did not mention his own role in the destruction of Eötvös College, but it was clearly uppermost in his mind as he warned that the student radicals, once they became members of the LSE Council or Senate, would employ what Rákosi had called 'salami tactics' – one slice of academic autonomy at a time until it disappeared entirely. What the radicals really wanted, Lakatos concluded from personal experience in Hungary, was not the right to criticise, a right that they should and did enjoy, but the winning of power which would enable them first to destroy universities as centres of learning and then, in their place, to create centres for the dissemination of social and political propaganda.

Initially, Lakatos was not optimistic about the cause he defended. 'They yield to Students' Power in a cowardly and unreasonable way,' he wrote to his father, 'and I am trying to turn the tide. I am very sceptical about the success.' But only two months later, in June 1968, he was able to report that his letter had nearly become official policy and was circulating in some 1,500 copies.[65] He could take some credit, therefore, when, in the autumn, the LSE academic board passed a motion that 'the responsibility on behalf of the School for the determination of matters involving general academic standards must rest, and be seen to rest, entirely with the academic staff of the School.'[66]

By that time, however, the LSE had entered a new and even more perilous time of troubles, and, early in 1969, Adams found himself obliged to close its doors. On 2 February, Lakatos wrote to his father. 'This is only a short note,' he began, 'to say that the LSE has become the centre of new vandalism in Britain. It is now closed

[63] Lakatos to Lipsitz, 23 Oct. 1968, Imre Lakatos Papers, File 13/266, BLPES.

[64] Imre Lakatos, *Mathematics, Science and Epistemology. Philosophical Papers*, Vol. 2, ed. John Worrall and Gregory Currie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 247–53.

[65] Lakatos to Lipsitz, 6 April, 27 June 1968, Imre Lakatos Papers, File 13/266, BLPES.

[66] Cited by John Worrall and Gregory Currie in Lakatos, *Mathematics, Science and Epistemology*, 253n.

down. The Parliament discussed for hours the LSE and for two weeks it has been in the headlines each day. It is all very depressing and we do not know whether the University will survive or not. This is a Fascist movement with Communist slogans and their first aim is to destroy the Universities as centres of learning and turn them into strongholds of a social revolution.'[67]

Determined to save the LSE from a fate similar to that which he had forced upon Eötvös College, Lakatos had, three days earlier, placed a motion before the School's academic board. It read as follows: 'This Board recognises that it is the confessed aim of certain revolutionary groups to transform the LSE, if necessary by force, from an institution of learning into a centre of social revolution; that they have made shrewd use of any pretext to disrupt scholarly and educational work and to destroy the confidence between staff and students; that the damage already inflicted on the LSE is catastrophic; and that the very survival of the LSE is now at stake. Therefore this Board calls upon its constitutional authorities to use any means open to them under the constitution of the School and the law of the land to restore LSE by sustained and determined efforts to its former status.'[68]

The LSE remained closed for twenty-five days, but Lakatos had every right to believe that he had helped stiffen the authorities' backbone. In the end they adopted strong measures, including the issuing of injunctions against thirteen student radicals. By November Lakatos could report to his father that the student revolt was over, but he added darkly that 'the government now tries to do to the universities all the harm that the students had intended: namely to turn universities into government policy-making agencies and consultative organs in their day-to-day problems and destroy them as centres of independent research. So this is the next political battle.'[69]

All along, in fact, that had been Lakatos' principal fear. In his open letter to Walter Adams he had warned that 'there are no arguments for Student Power that would not be arguments also for Government Power'.[70] And government power, he knew from experience, would be far more difficult to defend against. It was with that in mind that Lakatos peppered the letters he wrote during his last years with political commentary of the most bitter and combative sort – on the leftist direction of English policy, the degradation of the American press at the time of the Watergate scandal, the weakening of American will and the threat of Soviet aggression. Politics came more and more to occupy his thoughts – so much so that, in a 1972 letter to Boston University's Marx Wartofsky, he wrote that he had some work to complete in both the philosophy of mathematics and the philosophy of science. 'And then I still hope to have enough energy left for a spell of political philosophy.'[71]

Lakatos died suddenly on 2 February 1974, without having written his philo-

[67] Lakatos to Lipsitz, 2 Feb. 1969, Imre Lakatos Papers, File 13/266, BLPES.
[68] Imre Lakatos Papers, File 11/19.
[69] Lakatos to Lipsitz, 1 Nov. 1969, Imre Lakatos Papers, File 13/267, BLPES.
[70] Lakatos, *Mathematics, Science and Epistemology*, 249–50.
[71] Lakatos to Marx Wartofsky, 30 March 1972, Imre Lakatos Papers, File 12.1, item 12, BLPES.

sophy of politics. But we know that in formulating it he intended to adapt the methodology of research programmes that he had championed in the philosophy of science. A research programme, according to Lakatos, was a broad conceptual framework that claimed to be able to solve problems and predict novel facts. In so far as it made good on that claim, it established itself as a 'progressive' programme, as science at its most mature. A research programme that anticipated no novel facts or that lagged behind in explanatory and predictive power was, on the other hand, a 'degenerating' programme.

Marxism was, Lakatos insisted, just such a degenerating programme in politics, for in addition to *creating* problems it had never successfully predicted a novel fact. 'Never!' he wrote a year before his death. 'It has some famous unsuccessful predictions. It predicted the absolute impoverishment of the working class. It predicted that the first socialist revolution would take place in the industrially most developed society. It predicted that socialist societies would be free of revolutions. It predicted that there will be no conflict of interest between socialist countries.'[72]

Almost certainly, Lakatos would have selected an alternative Enlightenment research programme, one that he believed was mercifully free of dogma and hence capable of predicting novel facts and of solving political problems by 'piecemeal engineering':[73] the 'Open Society' liberalism of Karl Popper. That liberalism stood in sharp opposition to the Marxian socialism of his youth. Political ideologies of the latter sort, he wrote in a revealing note to *Proofs and Refutations*, 'which first may be debated (and perhaps accepted only under pressure) may turn into unquestioned background knowledge even in a single generation: the critics are forgotten (and perhaps executed) until a revolution vindicates their objections'.[74] He had in mind, of course, the Hungarian revolution.

[72] Imre Lakatos, *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes. Philosophical Papers*, Vol. 1, ed. John Worrall and Gregory Currie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 5–6.

[73] See Lakatos' use of this term with respect to the improvement of mathematical 'conjectures', *Proofs and Refutations*, 40.

[74] *Ibid.*, 49n.

New Course Economics: The Field of Economic Research in Hungary after Stalin, 1953–6

GYÖRGY PÉTERI

We definitely have to stop speculating about theories believed to be perfect and, instead of making deductions, we have to contribute to the construction of a positive general theory of socialism through studying economic reality.[1]

Introduction

The years between Stalin's death and the revolution of 1956 witnessed some of the most profound transformations in academic economics in the history of socialist Hungary. First of all, the economic-political aspirations of the post-Stalinian New Course brought about a thorough re-definition of the status and prestige of economic expertise and intelligence. The economic, political and social crisis of the early 1950s forced important sections of the Communist political élite to consider freeing the day-to-day political management of economic and social affairs from ideology and propaganda. Reliable statistical information, empirically founded social science expertise and intelligence readily and regularly accessible to the major policy-making bodies and individuals were now seen to be a matter of systemic survival.[2] This new attitude of the political élite towards the use and significance of social science knowledge created, between 1953 and 1956, a whole series of opportunities for politicians and for scholars themselves radically to reshape and restructure the field of economic research as a whole. The monopolists of political power provided for the establishment or re-establishment of important items of the institutional infrastructure of normal academic life resulting in a new set of committees of economics within the Academy of Sciences, in the resurrection of the *Közgazdasági Szemle*, the *Economic Review*, the only academic forum in print available to Hungarian economists, the publication of which was stopped in 1949, and in the establishment, in late 1954/early 1955, of a new academic research institute, the Institute of Economics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. These and other concessions made by the political powers were, of course, of great

[1] Péter Erdös, 'A tervgazdálkodás néhány elméleti kérdéséröl' (On some theoretical issues of the planned economy), *Közgazdasági Szemle*, Vol. 1 (1956).

[2] Cf. György Péteri, 'The Politics of Statistical Information and Economic Research in Communist Hungary 1949–56', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 2, no. 2 (1993).

significance. However, most important of all the changes initiated from above was certainly the re-definition of the epistemological regime prevailing in academic economics. In cognitive terms and in terms of the epistemological beliefs underlying the practices and institutions of policies over the domain of social sciences, the crisis of 1953–6 was a crisis of the radical class relativism of the high Stalinist era.

The Shift of the Epistemological Regime

The tendency characteristic of post-1953 developments as a whole was that class relativism was gradually losing the confidence and approval of political power itself. In leading bodies responsible for science policy, criticisms were voiced as to the dubious achievements of strictly class-based criteria applied to the recruitment to and promotion along academic careers.[3] Official assessments made to identify the reasons for economics' 'lagging behind general development' revealed mechanisms that drove away the best talents from academic careers and emphasised the devastating effects of such features as 'dogmatism', 'the cult of personality', 'scholasticism', the lack of free debate, the lack of intellectual courage and the prevalence of short-term political interests, all so typical of the Stalinist academic regime.[4]

The importance of top-level political initiatives in eliminating the main impediments to, and establishing the preconditions of, a revitalisation of economic research could hardly be over-estimated. The political will and resolution to introduce profound changes resided by necessity in positions where the specific sorts and necessary amount of experience confirming the untenability of the old regime had accumulated. Power, political courage, imagination and a sense of responsibility were all necessary, but not satisfactory, pre-conditions to being able to bring about such changes. To be really motivated, one also needed to be convinced of the urgent need for reliable expertise in central economic management and of the desperate situation prevailing in economic research ever since class-relativism took control of the field.

[3] A report, from April 1952, summarising the main achievements and problems of the first year of *aspirantúra* (the Soviet-type equivalent of the PhD), suggested that 'greater attention ought to be paid to talent and professional training at the [coming] entrance exams to *aspirantúra* courses. When it comes to extraordinary talents we should not bother that much about their social background. We have to win the talented youth to ourselves.' Minutes of the meeting of the Party Collegium of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 8 April 1952, 'strictly confidential', *MTA LT*, Papers of the President, 33/2.

[4] See, e.g. the two reports sent by Béla Fogarasi, Rector of the University of Economics, to István Friss, on 25 January 1954: Tamás Nagy and Imre László, 'A közgazdasági tudományos munka lemaradásának föbb okai, s e munka fellendítésének lehetöségei a Magyar Közgazdaságtudományi Egyetemen' (The main reasons for the backwardness of economic research and the possibilities of stimulating research activity at the University of Economics), 28 August 1953; and 'A tudományos munka fejlesztésének kérdései a Marx Károly Közgazdaságtudományi Egyetemen' (Problems of the development of scientific work at the Karl Marx University of Economics), by the University Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party, signed by Party Secretary János Illés, dated 19 Jan. 1954. Both documents are copies and held in *MKKE LT*, Papers of the Rector's Office, 4.doboz (1953/54), reg. nr.: 176/1953–54/R.

István Friss and the New Institute of Economics

In the light of these demands, István Friss was quite probably the person best qualified for the role of leading reformer of the academic regime of economics. As head of the economic policy section of the party's central committee, he ranked second only to Ernö Gerö in the hierarchy of the country's economic management. Between 1948 and 1954 he had to face day after day the grave problems resulting from economic policies informed by utopian projections and propagandistic maxims rather than by professional assessments based on a regular flow of intelligence. Simultaneously, he was also the chairman of the Standing (later Chief) Committee of Economics of the Academy and, as such, carried a great part of the responsibility for the field as a whole. Thus, he could not avoid becoming fully aware of the stagnation that had characterised the field ever since the Communist takeover.

Friss was certainly not a liberal reformer, especially not when it came to economic policies. The introduction of new course policies eventually cost him his position as section chief in the central committee, in October 1954. But the politics and intellect of Friss were much more complex and of a grander format than those of a 'normal Stalinist'. He was deeply aware of the crisis in state socialism experienced in the early 1950s, and he seems honestly to have believed that considerable improvements could be achieved in the efficiency of the system by placing the process of political decision-making upon scientific foundations. Indeed, to promote the development of those foundations was to become his life-time programme. Without dwelling on the merits and flaws of this programme, Friss has to be credited with a vital contribution to a change in the system of economic research during the period of thaw – a contribution that reached and radically changed the very core of academic culture: its epistemological beliefs.

The political intention to establish a new Institute of Economics had already been announced in early 1954. High-level party politicians considered the matter of such significance that they practically excluded the officials of the Academy from the preparatory work and from the major decisions concerning the Academy's new research institute. Late in July 1954, the leader of the central office of the Academy wrote to the administrative secretary of the IInd section: 'As to the Institute of Economics, the works of preparation ought to be started'.[5] From a 'strictly confidential' internal note we understand, however, that even as late as 4 November 1954, conditions seemed to the functionaries of the Academy to be pretty chaotic.[6] In the meantime, the design for the new Institute was developed by young Kálmán Szabó, under the careful guidance of István Friss and Andor Berei.

The proposal for establishing the institute was dated 5 November 1954, and was signed by Andor Berei (who had just left his position as head of the Section for Culture and Science in the Central Committee apparatus to take over the National

[5] Béla Molnár to Klára Fejér, 30 July 1954, *MTA LT, II. oszt.,* 183/4.

[6] Klára Fejér to President of the Academy, István Rusznyák, 4 Nov. 1954, *MTA LT, II.oszt.,* 1983/4.

Authority of Planning), István Friss and the President of the Academy, István Rusznyák. Together with proposals as to the director, deputy director and composition of the scientific council (the highest organ established to control the institute), the plan was discussed and approved by the Politburo of the Party's Central Committee on 10 November 1954.[7]

The plan emphasised that the Institute was to be established to boost economic *research* with the conditions of a socialist economy in the focus. The most important statement of the plan was the following:

> The character of the research methods [adopted by the Institute] is in accordance with the nature of economic research and with the tasks of the Institute of Economics. That is to say, [the Institute] is to study the concrete events of our economic development and the connections between them, and will draw its theoretical conclusions from them.

Although only in a summary, embryonic and not entirely explicit form, this was the first statement to declare *empiricism as the fundamental methodological norm* upon which the renewal of economic research was to rely. To demonstrate that empiricism was the new component coming to replace class relativism in the epistemological core of new course economics, it is necessary to take a look at the further development and exposition of the principle in the years following 1954.

Empiricism triumphant

Launched in January 1955 as a knowledge producer, the Institute's strong policy orientation was from the beginning just as obvious as its firm conviction that serious social scientific knowledge can only be produced by meticulous empirical study. As one of the very first reports to the superior organs at the Academy put it, 'When defining the topics to be dealt with, we have to consider that scientific research should start out from a profound and many-sided analysis of the [empirical] material at [its] disposal even if the goal is to establish correctly the tasks for the future (e.g. the tasks of the second five year plan).'[8]

It also persisted in consistently avoiding the discussion of abstract and general issues. Instead, the projects pursued by the scholars of the Institute had to address so-called 'partial problems', by which they meant temporally, spatially and institutionally delimited areas and questions. Their view was that only through the careful study of minute details of the 'particular' could one hope to comprehend the 'general laws' of the whole:

> We have to carry out a [great number of] many-sided research projects, based on the careful study of facts, which together will then make it possible for us to scientifically discover the

[7] Formally the plan for the institute was a joint product of the Academy and the Central Committee Section for Science and Culture. 'Javaslat Közgazdaságtudományi Intézet létesítésére, 1954', *MTA LT, II.oszt.,* 183/1, and documents pertaining to agenda no. 6 of the 10 Nov. 1954, meeting of the Politburo of the Hungarian Workers Party, in *PIA*.

[8] Beszámoló a MTA Közgazdaságtudományi Intézetének munkájáról' (Report on the work of the Institute of Economics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences), attached to the minutes of the managing board of the Academy's IInd section, 5 April 1955, *MTA LT, II.oszt.,* 2/5.

economic regularities and laws of the society building socialism. . . . The road to a scientific solution of this great task leads through partial research [projects][9]

A report written immediately after the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party forcefully restated this research strategy:

In our opinion most of our topics were correctly chosen. These projects have not aimed at directly solving the central problems of the economy, nor have they focussed on the study of the broadest questions. They have to disclose such partial connections as would together result in the understanding of greater regularities and laws explaining the movement of the whole economy. The bulk of the projects aimed at producing monographic studies of fundamental questions in delimited areas, because *only in this way one can best ensure that the research should really be based on the concrete analysis of facts and that the conclusions should really be drawn from the scientific study of facts and not from preconceived abstract doctrines*.[10]

The profundity of the change brought about by the adoption of naive empiricism is well indicated in the relation of new course economics to the economic tenets of Communist ideology. In fact, the strong emphasis laid upon the methodological norm which only approves theories 'proven from the facts' was directed first of all against the axiomatic assumptions with which the ruling political-economic ideology operated. Hence the express preference shown for working with well-defined, concrete and 'partial' research projects. Everything else belonged to the realm of 'speculative generalisations' with which the Institute did not wish to deal. Of course, the Institute was heavily criticised for its neglect of the 'fundamental, theoretical issues of socialist economy', but István Friss showed little willingness to compromise on this point.[11]

Significantly, the empiricist position had not only been confirmed but reached even greater maturity (in terms of a more explicit exposition) after the revolution of 1956. The first yearbook of the Institute, published in late 1957, carried a 'Preface' by the Director, István Friss. It is worth quoting this important document extensively. Friss gave a brief history of the establishment of the Institute, placing it in the background of the political-economic crisis of the Stalinist regime and the need for scientific expertise in economic management. Then, in connection with the original research programme of the Institute, he proceeded to say:

The principles adopted at that time have been serving as the guidelines of our research activities ever since. The principles themselves have not been invented or formulated by ourselves. These are the fundamental principles of all truly scientific research and, especially, of all Marxist, that is, materialist and dialectical research. We were compelled to restate them because of the unscientific methods widespread in economics. We have to declare war on all [sorts of] dogmatism. For years, the scientific work had been substituted for by quotations

[9] 'Feljegyzés a Közgazdaságtudományi Intézet munkájáról' (Note on the activities of the Institute of Economics), [Autumn 1955], *MTA LT, II.oszt.*, 182/7.

[10] Beszámoló a Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Közgazdaságtudományi Intézete munkájáról' (Report on the activities of the Institute of Economics), March 1956, attached to the minutes of the IInd section's managing board, 8 May 1956, *MTA LT, II.oszt.*, 3/3 (emphasis added).

[11] See, e.g. Friss' response to the Stalinist critique of the Institute's research practices failing to undertake the study of the fundamental, theoretical economic problems of socialism. Minutes of the Managing Board of the IInd section of the Academy, 8 May 1956, *MTA LT, II.oszt.*, 3/3, 60–2.

from Marx, Engels and to an even greater extent, from Lenin and Stalin – the quotations were explained and elaborated on. This dogmatism went hand in hand with scholasticism. *Instead of studying facts and processes, they attempted, by merely thinking, to reach from correct principles to new insights*. This, however, resulted mostly in arbitrary constructions. Besides, it became a fashion and it pretended to be science, to back up and justify, *post festum* and using scientific language, the measures and resolutions of the Party and government, again, with the help of quotations taken from Marx, Engels and, especially, from Lenin and Stalin. We have radically abandoned this pseudoscience. From the beginning, we have regarded it as our task to do research in the practice of our economy. *We strove conscientiously to gather facts, possibly all the facts relating to the various phenomena, and to study these [facts] exhaustively considering all their possible connections in order to be able to come to more and more exact inferences concerning the inherent connections, regularities, movements and conditions of development of the phenomena and processes*. We did our best to consider everything that had been written about the phenomena under study (or about phenomena related to them) by researchers (especially by Marxist researchers) before us. But *we have never regarded anyone's statements as sacred, [especially not] if they weren't confirmed by carefully made factual observations. In one word: to the best of our capabilities, we have worked scientifically*.[12]

Instead of a matter of the scholar's class affiliation, the cognitive value of knowledge-claims was now seen as a function of their empirical foundations: theoretical propositions had to be supported or proven by 'objective facts'. The epistemological beliefs characterising new course economics were the ideals of a naive empiricism rather than those of modern critical positivism. An indispensable *political pre-condition* for the new empiricist orientation, however, was the understanding that no institution of the existing socialist economic system could be made an exception from under the economist's critical scrutiny and such an understanding, of course, had to be sanctioned by the political power. Thus, when the team of Péter Erdös launched their project described as a 'research of the facts' with the 'working hypothesis' that maintained 'a radical reform of our methods of economic management is possible and necessary',[13] they exhibited just as much, or rather more, *political* as *intellectual* courage by targetting a central axiom of the economic ideology of high Stalinism (the one according to which the prevailing institutional order could not be reformed without dismantling socialism as a whole). A more general formula for this political pre-condition, combined with a statement in favour of careful 'inductive generalisations' proven by facts, as against speculative generalisations based on uncontrolled axiomatic assumptions, is found in Tamás Nagy's presentation of the Institute's activities:

The various forms and institutions of socialist economy, the methods of planned [economic] management are very young and, as yet, they cannot be regarded as fully developed. In many

[12] István Friss, 'Elöszó' (Preface), in *A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Közgazdaságtudományi Intézetének Évkönyve I. 1957* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1957), 7–8 (emphasis added). The manuscript of the book reached the printing office on 4 Nov. 1957. The empiricist core of the research programme was confirmed even in the Institute's report delivered only a month before the high-level disciplinary party investigation into the economists was concluded. (Cf. 'Jelentés' (Report), dated 3 Feb. 1958, *PIA*, 288.f, 33/1958/19.öe. The report was prepared for the investigation committee led by István Tömpe, themselves reporting to the Secretariat of Kádár's new Communist Party in March).

[13] Péter Erdös, 'A tervgazdálkodás néhány elméleti kérdéséröl' (On some theoretical issues of the planned economy), *Közgazdasági Szemle*, Vol. 1 (1956) 678.

cases it cannot be seen quite clearly which of the given, existing connections belong to the essence of the socialist economic system and are objective in this deeper sense of the word, and which of them have simply to do with the concrete form of the system's realisation, thus being only in a more superficial sense of the word objectively given. In such circumstances, a considerable part of the great generalisations has necessarily little content or is not proven enough, they are of speculative character and their validity is contingent. . . . In the given situation, it seems more justifiable for an economic research institute to deal first of all with the research of the facts, with the critical study of the prevailing conditions, than to devote itself to speculative generalisations on the basis of existing literature and a superficial knowledge of the facts.[14]

The central methodological norm was to proceed gradually from carefully observed facts to generalisations of ever broader validity – just as in the ideal science of the seventeenth-century Enlightenment: 'One had to start from indubitable factual propositions from which, by gradual valid induction, one could arrive at theories of ever higher order. The growth of knowledge was an accumulation of eternal truths: of facts and "inductive generalizations".'[15]

The relationship between the epistemology of new course economics and its almost 300-year-old source of inspiration (the physics of Galileo and Newton) was also manifest in the frequent use of analogies with the development of and references to the scientific norms and ideals of classical physics. György Péter, for example, acting as chairman of the discussion on János Kornai's dissertation for the degree of 'candidate of science', praised Kornai's work in the following manner:

I used to study physics, and we were told that in physics true science started with Galileo. [Everything] that was before him was speculation, inventing things. It was Galileo who, in physics, took to the yard-stick, the clock, the weight and started to measure things. And this is how the history of exact sciences started. Somehow, I am reminded of this by the objectivity exhibited in the dissertation, by the honest, unemotional way of dealing with things: this is so, that is so, [Kornai] places the phenomena under a microscope, he dissects them and describes what he sees.[16]

Just as class relativism was the very essence of Stalinist academic culture, with all its disastrous consequences for the social sciences (and some fields of the natural sciences, too), the adoption of naive empiricism constituted the most central and most important single development in the emergence of the set of intellectual, social and political phenomena that in Hungary later on came to be called 'reform economics'.

[14] Tamás Nagy, 'Az intézet munkája és közgazdaságtudományunk feladatai' (The activities of the Institute and the tasks of our economic science), *The 1957 Year Book of the Institute of Economics* (Budapest, 1957), 18. Professor Nagy was appointed chief for the 'General Theory Section' of the Institute.

[15] Imre Lakatos, 'Changes in the problem of inductive logic', in his *Mathematics, Science and Epistemology. Philosophical Papers*, Vol. 2, ed. J. Worrall and G. Currie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 131.

[16] Minutes of the public disputation of János Kornai's candidate of science dissertation, 24 Sept. 1956, 11. Even one of the opponents of the dissertation, Miklós Ajtai, used the early development of physics as an analogy in describing the state of the art prevailing in Hungary's newly born (or, rather, reborn) economics. Typescript of Ajtai's opposition dated 22 Sept. 1956, 9. I am indebted to Professor Kornai for having provided me with a copy of the unpublished typescript of the minutes and of the opinions of his opponents.

As against class relativism, the intellectual and political-ideological potential of this naive empiricist economics was enormous. It provided legitimate foundations for the separation of science (research) and politics (ideology and propaganda). The gulf between economics and political economy, an important feature of Hungarian economic thought throughout the Kádár era, was in fact rooted in that separation.[17] Remaining under the control of the agitprop apparatus of the Party (and the Chief Section for Marxism-Leninism of the Ministry of Education), the university departments of political economy came to be the 'citadels' of leftist dogmatism where the political, ideological service of the ruling Party was paramount in any scholarly intellectual interest and motivation. The sector as a whole had got stuck in the dead end of class relativism. Naive empiricism, on the other hand, promised to restore economics as 'science' by allowing it to be an 'uncompromising pursuit of truth'. In an article assessing the impact on economics of the Twentieth Congress, Friss suggested that economics was on its way to becoming again 'Marxist research which – as with all truly scientific methods – is characterised, among other things, by the premise that it knows of no authority in its search for truth'.[18]

Naive empiricism gave a beneficial push towards the secularisation (de-ideologisation) and re-professionalisation of the concept of competence. It made economics a *research* field, an academic *enterprise* where one could only excel by virtue of gathering and disclosing new facts and establishing and identifying unknown connections, regularities between them. All this, however, did not mean abandoning Marxism. On the contrary, the whole empiricist renewal was presented as a return to the genuine Marxist methods. As we have just seen, this was the light in which István Friss presented the Institute's norms concerning method. Kálmán Szabó's article, summing up the ills of economics and the suggested cure for them, also made use of the authority of the 'classics', stressing that 'as it is very well known, the classics of Marxism reached all their theoretical statements through processing an enormous amount of facts and experience organised systematically by research'.[19]

Only by restoring it as science, at least in the naive empiricist sense, could economics become a politically-socially useful intellectual endeavour. Empiricism was, in this connection, a delimited domain of freedom offered by the politically powerful to the economists, whose expertise was expected to underlie economic policies and institutional development, a domain of freedom that proved, most of the time, well protected from interference from the agitprop apparatus. In exchange, however, economics had to remain strongly policy- or 'practice'-orientated and free from the influence of 'bourgeois theories'. All the documents pertaining to the

[17] On the structure of the intellectual field of Hungarian academic economics see my 'Controlling the Field of Academic Economics in Hungary, 1953–1976', *Minerva*, Vol. 34, no. 4 (1996).

[18] István Friss, 'A müszaki fejlesztés és a közgazdaságtudományi kutatás feladatai' (Technological development and the tasks of economic research), *Közgazdasági Szemle*, Vol. 7–8 (1956), 786.

[19] Kálmán Szabó, 'A közgazdaságtudomány fellendítéséért' (For the revival of economic science), *Társadalmi Szemle*, Vol. 4 (1954), 55–6.

activities of the Friss Institute of Economics, the original proposals for the establishment of the Institute as well as their annual and longer-term research plans, strongly emphasised the orientation towards economic political practice, which was regarded as being just as important as the move from 'speculative generalisations' to empirical research. In the words of Péter Erdös, the central concern of economic research was 'to study what benevolent or harmful tendencies, regularities result from our economic institutions. We have to investigate what sort of *change* in our institutions would help most in actually exploiting the enormous potentialities springing from socialist ownership.'[20] This central *Problemstellung*, which in the 1980s was christened the 'economic mechanism paradigm',[21] proved to be attractive enough for that young generation of Communist scholars who, although increasingly keen to establish and preserve a greater degree of intellectual autonomy after their disillusionment and alienation from the Stalinist regime, still retained a great deal of their utopian attitude and *élan*.

The Significance of Anthropological Method

New course economics meant a new academic regime striking a happy medium between the ideological and the practical needs of the political authority in another respect. Due to its inability to cope with theoretical knowledge, naive empiricism as the methodological basis of new course economics helped postpone by about thirty years the re-integration of Hungarian economic thought into international scholarship. The aversion of new course economics to all sorts of abstract theorising was double-edged. It dismissed not only the 'speculative generalisations' of Stalinist economic ideology, but also all theoretical traditions of the history of economic thought. The 'theory' offered by Stalinist political economy consisted of a set of sterile ideological constructs, such as 'the fundamental economic law of socialism' or 'the law of distribution according to work'. The remainder, that is, 'bourgeois' economic thought, including neo-classical economics, was regarded as irrelevant when it came to socialist conditions and therefore it was considered to be a waste of time to pay attention to it. Even at the very peak of the new academic intelligentsia's revolt, that is, the series of discussions arranged by the Petöfi Circle, the re-integration of Hungarian economics into international scholarship was hardly alluded to. János Kornai was by far the most radical in this respect, as he was the only one who did at least raise the question 'Is it correct to call all the bourgeois

[20] Erdös Péter, 'A tervgazdálkodás néhány elméleti kérdéséröl' (On some theoretical issues of the planned economy), *Közgazdasági Szemle*, Vol. 1 (1956), 676.

[21] Cf. László Szamuely, 'Negyedszázados vita a szocialista gazdaság mechanizmusáról Magyarországon' (A quarter century debate on the mechanism of socialist economy in Hungary), editorial introduction to *A magyar közgazdasági gondolat fejlödése 1954–1978: A szocialista gazdaság mechanizmusának kutatása* (The development of Hungarian economic thought, 1954–1978: Research into the mechanism of socialist economy), (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1986), 9. For a critical assessment of the 'mechanism-paradigm', see Aladár Madarász, *Uj paradigma felé? (Egy fejezet a szocialista gazdaságelmélet történetéböl)* (Towards a new paradigm? A chapter from the history of socialist economic theory), manuscript (1984).

economists and [their] theories who came after Marx vulgar? Is our method applied in education stressing exclusively the deficiencies, limits and malevolent distortions [of bourgeois economics] correct? What [parts] of it could we use and how should we deal with them?, Tamás Nagy's answer was as follows:

> To call the whole of bourgeois economics vulgar is basically correct in the sense that the apology of capitalism is overwhelming in this [sort of] political economy. This must not be confused with the issue of whether it is correct to talk only of the mistakes of bourgeois economists. Our manner of dealing with their mistakes is vulgar, too. I cannot say what we could learn from them. For years now we have got out of the habit of seriously studying [the works of] bourgeois economists. What use to make [of them] is a hard problem. The mathematical school, for example, has done very good research into the interrelationships of demand and supply and prices.[22]

Indeed, the 'habit of seriously studying' what 'bourgeois economists' had to say had never been resumed during the reign of state socialism in Hungary. After 1964 it was taken off the list of 'criminal acts', but it was not sanctioned as 'normal conduct' on the part of an economist. Undergraduate students were offered only a Marxist assessment by Antal Mátyás,[23] but they had been neither expected nor encouraged to read the original works and to keep themselves informed of recent developments and discussions in Western economics. The same applied to the post-graduate level and to the research economists themselves.

A low theoretical profile, and especially the emphasis on the 'peculiarity of socialist conditions', allegedly frustrating anyone trying to apply the concepts and questions of Western economics, have been the contributions of naive empiricism to an increased political ideological feasibility of new course (or reform) economics in the conditions of state socialism. Indeed, the ideal scholar of this new economics was happily (and purposefully) ignorant of (or indifferent towards) theories. His efforts to achieve 'inductive generalisations' were hardly in need of being informed by any (necessarily 'preconceived') theoretical considerations. Within the framework of naive empiricism, theory as a 'body of substantive hypotheses', the validity of which is tested through comparing predictions with experience, does not make sense. Even theory as a language, i.e. as a logically complete and consistent set of tautologies serving to organise the empirical material,[24] was to come from the 'reality' observed and not from anywhere else.

New course economics therefore bore much more resemblance to economic

[22] 'A marxista politikai gazdaságtan idöszerü kérdéseiröl és a második ötéves terv irányelveirö' (On the present problems of Marxist political economy and the directives of the second five-year plan), Protocols of the debates arranged by the Petöfi Circle, 9 and 22 May 1956, in András B. Hegedüs and János M. Rainer (eds), *A Petöfi Kör vitái hiteles jegyzökönyvek alapján*, I: *Két közgazdasági vita* (Budapest: Kelenföld Kiadó-ELTE, 1989), 39, 57.

[23] Its first publication in book form came out in 1973. Antal Mátyás, *A modern polgári közgazdaságtan története* (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1973).

[24] I am deliberately using here the language of Milton Friedman's influential essay 'The Methodology of Positive Economics', which was published (without having been noticed in Eastern Europe) just about the time when new course policies were started; in Milton Friedman, *Essays in Positive Economics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), 3–43.

anthropology and historiography than to the common idea of economics prevailing at the time in the Western world. It was concerned first of all with fact-finding and correct description. It was primarily interpretive and was less interested in generalising. It understood its call on the basis of the historical novelty of the socialist economy – an economy the actors, institutions, typical events, facts and processes of which had hardly been given names. The first attempts to make the working of this New World intelligible, therefore, concentrated on the *language* of the practical economic life of socialism and, of course, on the *meanings* carried by it. That is to say, the leaning of new course economics towards economic anthropology was not only a function of its naive empiricist beliefs. It was partly a necessity springing from a 'reality' understood still to have been in a fluid state, apparently not yet mature and sufficiently crystallised to generate standardisable statistical data and thus to lend itself to studies of the formally more rigorous, hypothesis-testing sort. This is an indispensable part of the explanation why the economics of this revisionist revival gives almost the same impression as life sciences at the early 'morphological' stage of their development. The latter was described by Sir Frederick G. Hopkins, one of the founding fathers of biochemistry, as follows:

> In the history of all science which has dealt with living organisms a natural sequence may be traced. There is first the purely descriptive phase with the morphological studies which ultimately tempt efforts of classification. Then comes the study of function and the endeavour to correlate function with structure. Later the nature of the materials which support structure and form have received attention, and later still, the endeavour has been made to follow the dynamic molecular events which underlie all displays of active function.[25]

Indeed, the bulk of the efforts of new course economics hardly went beyond the attempt to provide a 'morphology' of socialist economic institutions.

From the nature of the subject matter and of the sources pertinent to it springs also the importance attached to personal observation – a feature so clearly pronounced by a report of the Friss Institute from early 1958:

> The raw material for us is the reality of economic life. Until recently, however, it has been hermetically closed to researchers. Here we are talking not only of statistical data, the great bulk of which was classified as secret and was inaccessible to economists, but also of *the direct observation of the reality behind the statistics: the activities, problems and plans of the leading organs and companies*. Well before the present very favourable practice of regular statistical publications started and when almost all data were secret, the leadership of our Institute had been able to secure, and indeed had secured, access for its members to the materials necessary for their projects. The professional prestige of our director and our section chiefs gave enough weight to the Institute to ensure that the leading organs and companies revealed for the research all that is not contained by statistics but is necessary for the economist to know in order to be able to reach correct inferences.[26]

When it comes to the method of anthropology, a case in point is the most celebrated and most characteristic work of the new course era, János Kornai's

[25] Sir Frederick Gowland Hopkins' presidential address at the anniversary meeting of the Royal Society in November 1934, *Proceedings of the Royal Society*, Vol. 148 (1955), 24–5. Quoted by J. D. Bernal, *The Social Function of Science* (London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd, 1939), 67.

[26] 'Jelentés' (Report), 3 Feb. 1958, *PIA* 288. f., 33/1958/19. öe., 8 (emphasis added).

Overcentralisation of Economic Administration.[27] David Granick was one of Kornai's contemporary Western readers and he made in his review of the English edition some acute observations on the methodology embodied in the book: 'The approach is basically a fact-finding one, and *Kornai's view of the problems is that of the administrators with whom he talked* – rather than that of most *academic* Marxist economists [emphasis added].'[28]

'Participant observation', i.e. generating relevant data concerning a culture by watching it from a 'native point of view', is the basic research method applied by anthropologists in their field-work. The style of thought, the approach, the methods represented by Kornai's book constituted for a long time to come the model for a great part of economic research in Kádárist Hungary. In 1980, upon the publication of the *Economics of Shortage*, I heard in Budapest several economists of various generations maintaining that *Overcentralisation* had been Kornai's best work. A new edition of the book has recently been published in Hungary with a new preface by the author. Kornai admits there that, compared with the knowledge of a contemporary PhD student of economics at any Anglo-Saxon university, he knew practically nothing about economic theory when writing the book. As he himself describes it, he was 'working instinctively: I did not use any other analytical instrument than the interpretation of elementary statistical data, the observation of individual cases, the words of the participants of economic events and their confrontation with one another'.[29] Nevertheless, the method of ethnography seems to have been a deliberate choice of the Theory Section in the Institute:

> The method of the research is to study *directly* the technique of the practice of planning at the companies, at the superior authorities of the companies, including the National Authority of Planning, partly by personal observations and partly with the help of working teams consisting of specialists employed at the companies and at higher levels.[30]

These working teams were groups of informants: managers and ministry officials who, through a series of meetings with researchers, helped the latter gain a better understanding of the everyday reality of economic life. In his preface of January 1957, Kornai himself stressed the 'particularly important role of direct observation' combined with repeated 'many-sided consultations, conversations with specialists and practical leaders of economic life'. He came to his insights by way of an open-minded 'listening to their [the informants'] experience' and comparing their views and experience with one another.[31] A considerable part of the material he was to

[27] János Kornai, *A gazdasági vezetés túlzott központosítása* (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1957). The book was Kornai's dissertation for the degree of *kandidátus* (PhD), which was granted after disputation in Sept. 1956. English edition trans. John Knapp, *Overcentralization in Economic Administration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959).

[28] The review was published in *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 11, no. 4 (1959), 421.

[29] János Kornai, 'Preface to the Second Edition', *A gazdasági vezetés túlzott központosítása* (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1990), ix–x.

[30] Report on the activities of the Institute of Economics for the year 1955 (dated 11 Feb. 1956), enclosed to Mrs Tamásné Kenesei to Klára Fejér, 22 Feb. 1956, *MTA LT, II.oszt.,* 183/7.

[31] János Kornai, *A gazdasági vezetés túlzott központosítása. Kritikai elemzés könnyűipari tapaztalatok alapján* (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1957), 4.

write up had taken the form of 'field-notes' registering his observations made during the interviews and team discussions. In accordance with the above, Kornai finds today that, in terms of its 'fact-finding' method, the book was done in the spirit of the 1930s 'rural sociography' (*falukutatás*) in Hungary,[32] which, in turn, is a Hungarian relative of the Chicago school of urban ethnography.

It could be shown that one sort of 'field-work' or another was an important common experience of the upcoming revisionist economists on the whole front of re-emerging economic research. At this point we only wish to stress that, while in obvious harmony with its naive empiricist epistemology, the dominance of ethnography among the research methods of new course economics was also a matter of an objective constraint arising from the lack and/or inaccessibility of statistical and other information about the economic process.[33] While the (highly personal) ethnographic mode of acquiring empirical information (of necessarily individual character) has remained with Hungarian economic research as a major methodological feature throughout the last forty years, the lack of standard statistical data before 1955/6 made the option of a theoretically informed hypothesis-testing mode of research almost impracticable. The prevailing controls of information, in addition to the susceptibilities of the ideological monopoly position of Marxism-Leninism and to the profound suspicions of naive empiricism against all 'speculative generalisations', carried part of the responsibility for the isolation and provincialism that continued to characterise economic research even after its revisionist revival.

Gyepsor: The Corridor of Empiricist Revolt

No other single academic institution had so important a role in bringing about the empiricist revival of economic thought as the Academy's newly created Institute of Economics. The very establishment of the Institute was a triumph of the new empiricist research programme emerging in open opposition to the class-relativist political economy. From 1954 on, no socially politically informed understanding on the whole or any segment of Hungarian economic thought is possible without due consideration of this fundamentally bipolar structure of the academic field. Institutionally, the recurring conflicts and rivalries between the Karl Marx University of Economics and the Institute of Economics of the Academy were only one aspect of this division.[34] The intention here is to describe and explain the emergence of the

[32] Introduction to the 1990 edition, p. x.

[33] Cf. György Péteri, 'The Politics of Statistical Information and Economic Research in Communist Hungary, 1949–1956', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 2, part 2 (1993), 149–67.

[34] This is not to suggest that all the departments of the university and all the activities pursued there were inspired and controlled by the class-relativist position. There have always been individuals or groups of researchers active at the university who not only in their scholarly work but also in their teaching saw to it that the liberatingly fresh air of empiricism entered the building by the Danube which was otherwise permeated by the odours of cabbage soup emerging from the canteen. The *loci* of exception were the Department of Finance, the Department of Economic History and, especially, the Economic Policy Research Group attached to the Department of Macro-economic Planning (significantly, this group was established in the early 1970s and led by Antal Máriás, a former member of the

empiricist position within the field, the position from where the major heterodox challenges to the official orthodoxy of Marxist-Leninist political economy of socialism originated. This concluding section will be devoted to an exploration of the social ground that proved so receptive to and, indeed propelled the cause of, the empiricist research programme. To put it more concretely, the concern hereinafter is with the social and political constitution of the most important single group of economists who are to a great extent to be credited with the empiricist breakthrough and who, within a short period of time, turned the Institute of Economics into what, in the eyes of the party's agitprop apparatus, was the seat of a 'purulent abscess'.[35] Of course, the group itself was far from being a homogenous formation. One important line of division was hierarchical: it went between the leaders (director, deputy director and section chiefs) and the young research associates of the Institute. It should be emphasised that the role of some personalities in the former group, the role of such high-ranking politicians and political economists as István Friss, Tamás Nagy or Péter Erdös, was crucial in initiating and bringing about the move towards an empiricist epistemological regime. They acted as patrons, protectors for the field as a whole and for their Institute especially. They acted as a vital interface between the professionally orientated segment of economics and the ideological core of state socialist economic thought (the political economy of socialism). Their and especially István Friss' role in mediating between the field and the top political leadership of the country must not be overlooked if one is to understand the relative autonomy, stability and international visibility achieved by economic research in Hungary. For reasons of space, however, concentration will be on the young rank-and-file members of the Institute. After all, it was these young research associates of this early period upon whose changing politics, attitudes, preferences and inclinations the success of the empiricist research programme depended. It was their activities that earned the Institute its pivotal position within the field in a few years' time after 1954. Without their active part in seizing the opportunities offered by the new political climate and by the transformation of the academic regime, the Institute would have certainly failed to exercise any significant impact upon the intellectual and political structure of academic economics in Hungary.

The Sociology and Politics of the Party-soldier Intellectual

These young people entered the post-1948 era of unrestricted Communist rule with great optimism about and high expectations of the new society to come and their

Friss Institute). But the university as a whole was rightly considered to be a major bastion of the conservative Left, politically as well as ideologically, which made it an institution hardly conducive to initiating and sustaining high-quality or, indeed, any interesting research.

[35] Erzsébet Andics, head of the Central Committee's Section for Science and Public Education, was said to have used such epithets for the Institute. The 'purulent abscess' has been mentioned by two of my informants (András Nagy and Róbert Hoch) and was also mentioned in the report by State Secretary and Central Committee member István Tömpe to the Secretariat of the Central Committee on the findings of the 1957–8 Party investigation into the Institute. 'Jelentés a Közgazdaságtudományi Intézet munkájárol', 14 March 1958, copy, *MTA LT, II.oszt.,* 182/9.

own role in it. Their relation to their Party (its leadership) was one of unfailing loyalty. Indeed, they tended to identify themselves as soldiers of the Party, determined to attain personal happiness and virtue by compliance and voluntary subordination. They advanced into positions of responsibility and competence (which they usually lacked to begin with), filling the vacuum created by purges in the academic and white-collar professions. It was of them that Rákosi said in 1947:

> In spite of our 700,000 members, there is an enormous lack of cadres. . . . We may take it for granted that the lack of cadres will stay with us for the coming few years, simply because the tasks to be taken care of by the Party grow faster than the size of the Party and of our body of cadres. . . . how should the Party, under such circumstances recruit the cadres? . . . By resorting courageously to new forces and to the youth.[36]

The young Communist intellectuals recruited to the Friss Institute in early 1955 represented a generous sample of the upcoming generation of researchers whose impact had been so decisive upon what economics was to become in socialist Hungary after Stalin.

Before 1954/5, some of them occupied positions outside academe. Among these we find the economic editor of the party daily *Szabad Nép* (János Kornai) and the secretary of the President of the Hungarian People's Republic (Ferenc Fekete). Two others worked in industry while studying economics at evening classes at the University of Economics. But the majority had already started their academic careers when the Friss Institute was launched. They came from the department of political economy of the University of Economics (Róbert Hoch), from the department of industrial planning of the Budapest University of Technology (Antal Máriás), or from the former Institute of Agricultural Organisation of the Ministry of Agriculture (Béla Csendes and others). The staff of the Friss Institute was recruited gradually in the course of 1955–6.

There is a list from 1956 of the Institute's employees disclosing the occupation of their father.[37] In Table 1 of the Appendix, I have included only the scientific members of the institute from the director down to the research assistants. I have complemented the data by adding three cases of whom two did not figure at all on the list, while the third was listed without naming the father's occupation. The social composition of the Institute was slightly less favourable, from a class relativist point of view, than that of the whole doctoral student body at the Academy of Science. But it was worse only in terms of lower representation of members with worker and peasant backgrounds, while the share of children of intellectual fathers was actually higher in the PhD student body as a whole than in the Friss Institute. Comparing the institute's staff with the PhD student body within the social and historical sciences only, the result for the Institute presents an even less favourable picture, in terms of class relativistic criteria: the gap between the presence of the

[36] Mátyás Rákosi, 'A kádermunka és a kommunista magatartás. Elöadás a kádervezetök tanfolyamán 1947. május 6.-án', in Mátyás Rákosi, *A fordulat éve* (Budapest: Szikra, 1948), 12–13.

[37] 'Közgazdaságtudományi Intézet dolgozói' (Employees of the Institute of Economics, listed by rank/position, disclosing father's occupation), 1956; part of the list is handwritten, the rest is typescript, *PIA*, 276 f., 91/102 öe.

worker and peasant category in the PhD student body and their presence among the members of the Institute is more pronounced than in the former case, while the share of members from an intellectual background seems to be higher among the Institute's staff (see Tables 1–3 in the Appendix). However, a comparison with the aggregate data covering the scientific staff in Hungarian higher education as a whole gives the institute an obvious advantage within a class relativistic regime: the statistical chances for a professor in Hungary's universities and colleges to have come from an intellectual background were much higher (and to have come from a worker or peasant background were much lower) than the same chances were for a member of the Institute of Economics (see Table 4 in the Appendix).

Workers' and peasants' children constituted hardly more than a quarter of the scientific staff. István Friss, Deputy Director Ferenc Donáth, Deputy Section Chief Lóránt Nagy, Sándor Ausch, György Enyedi, Judit Szánthó and Róbert Szücs were the people whose backgrounds were not disclosed by the list. We may therefore safely assume that any reduction of the 'Unknown' category by further identification of social backgrounds would not increase the presence of 'Workers and Peasants' among the scientific staff. In terms of party membership, however, the staff of the Institute was well above the levels exhibited by both the professoriate and the scientific staff as a whole within Hungarian higher education. While in the Institute's case the share of Party members was certainly at least around (or, rather, above) ninety per cent, it was considerably under forty per cent among the ranks of the Hungarian professoriate (see Table 5 in the Appendix). Even the scientific staff employed in Hungarian higher education as a whole amounted to only thirty-seven per cent Party members (with the conspicuous, though understandable, exception of the departments of Marxism-Leninism – among them, the departments of political economy – where almost ninety per cent of the staff were members of the ruling Communist Party).

The junior research economists were without exception Communists, joining the Party most often immediately before or after the war. Prior to 1949–50, practically none of them had any doubt as to the cause represented and the policies pursued by their Party. They were the most disciplined soldiers of the Party on the 'front of intellectual life' (or on some other 'fronts'). A few of them came indeed from the poor social circumstances of industrial worker or peasant families. But the majority had intellectual and/or lower middle-class backgrounds. They were from families where, by tradition, learning had been highly valued. Even if they knew little of economics as such, it presented no problem for them to acquaint themselves with the basic works of Marxism-Leninism. They would often be able to speak and/or read in one or two foreign languages (a final exam in an average gymnasium of the Old World implied that one could at least read German). Taking a degree at the new University of Economics was so small a burden for them that they, simultaneously with their studies, could undertake the teaching of various subjects to their class-mates. It was from among their ranks that the 'assistant librarians' and 'demonstrators' were recruited to the new under-staffed departments of the University of Economics. Their belief in and loyalty towards the Party and its

leaders was unlimited and resolute. Communism seemed to them the only effective cure (because of its radical nature) for a profoundly sick society that not only tolerated racial and religious discrimination but also was capable of producing such horrors as the Arrow Cross rule and the Holocaust. As with almost all the senior economists, a considerable part of the junior group as well was of Jewish origin, and though they came from environments which had been entirely assimilated (*magyar*) for a long time and secularised, they could not but be affected by the experience of the recent past. The Party which acted most swiftly, radically and resolutely in doing away with the old regime, and which promised the fastest march towards a society free of all discrimination and injustice, was an obvious choice for them. And the Communist Party leadership was eager to rely on them and to make use of them: 'Those young comrades who, one way or another, seem to be fitting for scientific work – urged the party's Committee of Science in September 1948 – should be brought into the university departments . . . by creating places for them through additional budgetary support'.[38]

Indeed, the Hungary of the second half of the 1940s and early 1950s must have been a land of promise and opportunities for young Communist intellectuals. Inexperienced and untrained as many of them were, it did not seem to make a great difference for them what sort of career they got involved in. Upon the Party's call, they were ready for swift advances into the vacant positions in the emerging new bureaucracies of state socialism as well as at the universities, in the press, or in Gábor Péter's much feared State Security Authority. Those who happened to be in sufficient proximity in 1948–9 to economics (and that could mean anything from being a student at the university's normal or evening courses to having taken a 'degree' on the two- or four-month Party school course 'specialising' in political economy) could safely count upon a position and upon the opportunity of a rapidly ascending career within the new academic regime of economic research.

One of them told the author of the circumstances in which he began his career as an economist in 1948.

In fact, I started flirting with Marxism already before the liberation [from Nazi-German occupation in 1945]. I became a member of the [Communist] Party in 1945 and started seriously studying Marxism and carried out propaganda work. It has to be admitted that, at that time, even [the alternative of] becoming a philosopher was open for me. From 1945 I regularly went to the lectures of László Rudas which had a tremendous impact on me. . . . But the direct push was given by the [Communist] Party committee of the Vth district [in Budapest]. They called in some of us, young MADISZ-members [Communist-controlled youth organisation], in the summer of 1946. [We had several such conversations.] We were told to choose between various alternatives. On one of these occasions I chose [to work at] the [foreign trade] company of the Party. . . . It is interesting to note that the other alternatives were as follows: police, military, state security police . . . [at the time] when we were called, the task of the *ÁVO* [State Security Authority, the Hungarian KGB] was to detect fascists. That was an enormously attractive task. But one who then entered that [organisation] could hardly leave before the Rajk-process and, then, he could no longer be master of his own life. I

[38] Report of the Committee of Science of the Communist Party, n.d. [Sept. 1948], *PIA* 690.f., 3.öe.

have to say that my luck was that my fiancée told me to choose: either her or the armed forces. . . . A further push [towards economics] was given by the fact that I was enrolled in the evening course at the economic faculty of the University of Technology organised by the Communist and Social-democratic Parties in 1946. I was happy to undertake these studies. Early in 1948, my [foreign trade] company told me I would continue to get my full salary from them and I could go over to the normal 'morning' courses at the university. . . . [Then] I met Tamás Nagy [entrusted by the party to reorganise the faculty of economics], partly as a representative of the 'evening' students, and partly because [my] party company recommended me to him, that I would be an excellent choice as a colleague in his [political economy] department. Thus, when I started [as a student at the new University of Economics] I immediately started [as a member of] Tamás Nagy's department.[39]

Rákosi's Stalinist regime exploited their enthusiasm and grossly misused their loyalty. Yielding to the pressures one was exposed to under the classical (Stalinist) version of state socialism meant joining the gangsters and becoming one of them. The people we are concerned with here were lucky enough and/or had the necessary strength to preserve a minimum of self-respect and moral integrity. But they could not avoid the humiliation of complicity. Fortunate circumstances and/or their moral strength enabled them to offer resistance to, and face conflicts with, what they used to value over and above everything: their Party and the cause of Communism. But the conflict came, as a rule, too late to save them from sins of omission and commission and from the personal crisis they had to undergo when fully realising the moral implications of the monstrous enterprise in which they had engaged themselves with much enthusiasm and to which they had given their name and talents.

Conflict with the Party, Moral Crisis and the Ethic of Revisionist Opposition

For these people, the New Course era starting in mid-1953 made it possible to find a fragile but feasible solution for what by then had proved to be the fundamental tension in their lives – between the need to assert, through resistance, their personal integrity *without* thereby having to compromise the historical project of socialism, to betray the avant garde of that project, the Communist Party, or to make themselves outlaws in the eyes of the political power that was unable to accept organised or outspoken opposition.

By the time the New Course era started, many of these young Communist intellectuals had come into conflict with their Party and its Stalinist leadership. Indeed, the Friss Institute seems to have been pre-eminently a gathering of political outcasts of one or another phase of the Rákosi era. This applies even to some of the leaders of the Institute: István Friss[40] was forced to leave his position as the head of

[39] Author's interview with Professor Róbert Hoch, at the Institute of Economics, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, 27 Nov. 1986.

[40] Friss seems to have been a true *Vatergestalt* for the young economists of *Gyepsor*. He was just as vitally important for the launching and survival of the Institute with its empiricist research programme and for the political protection of the *Gyepsor* community, as he was commonly hated by the members of the latter. They tended to consider him to be but 'one of the representatives of the dogmatic party leadership'. Letter to the author from Professor András Nagy, Institute of Economics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 12 Dec. 1990. It could be easily documented, but it is impossible here due to lack

the Central Committee's economic policy department (his was the only case, however, where the fall was *not* precipitated by Friss having taken the side of pro-reform forces within the Party). Ferenc Donáth, the Deputy Director of the Institute, was victimised in 1951 in one of the purges administered by Rákosi's political police and was imprisoned to serve a fifteen-year sentence. After his release and 'rehabilitation' (1954), he joined the revisionist circle around Prime Minister Imre Nagy. During the revolt of 1956 he was one of Imre Nagy's closest political collaborators. Péter Erdös was accused of having called Stalin in his lectures 'Zsugás Vili' (a play on Stalin's Georgian family name, meaning, in Hungarian slang, something like 'Billy the Card-player'; the name was, in fact, in use as a code-name for Stalin in the pre-war illegal Communist movement in Hungary). Erdös was also said to have cited the work of Rákosi as an example of the concept of 'unproductive work' in Marxian economics.[41] He lost his job and was expelled from the Party in early 1953. He, too, was rehabilitated in 1954. Tamás Nagy, head of the Institute's General Theory Section, lost his position as *kurátor* (at the time, the highest chief) of the Karl Marx University of Economics in late 1952. The background to that high-level political decision was a drama of the sort which only the Communist movement has been capable of producing. Tamás Nagy's wife had close personal contacts with some of the defendants of the Rajk-process. In the autumn of 1949, Rákosi called Nagy to his office and told him that the Party expected him to divorce his wife. Mr and Mrs Nagy, loyal and obedient soldiers of the Party as they were, divorced. In 1952, Tamás Nagy again approached the cadres section of the central committee asking whether they could not be allowed to marry again, for they still loved one another dearly (and they had children). The answer of the section was this: 'That is regarded by the Party as a private matter.' So they remarried – as a consequence of which, he lost the position of *kurátor*, though he continued to hold the chair of political economy.[42]

The researchers in junior positions at the István Friss Institute also tended to distinguish themselves by having been involved in serious conflicts with their Party.

One example was András Nagy, a central person in the politics of the scholarly community of the Friss Institute. He was twenty-nine years of age in 1955. He came from a middle-class family. His father was the chief stage manager of the National Theatre in Budapest and professor in the Academy of Performing Art (Színiakadémia). As an eighteen-year-old boy, putting his life at risk, András Nagy joined, through his elder brother, the underground anti-fascist resistance. Immediately after the war he became a member of the (Communist-controlled) Democratic Association of Hungarian Youth (MADISZ). He worked in the Foreign Relations Section of MADISZ, where he was entrusted with the preparations for the founding congress

of space, that, while many of his writings and political speeches rightfully earned him the bad reputation of a conservative Communist, Friss had a special and very positive role in his relationship to the country's economic research community (and, personally, to a great majority of the best scholars) based on his acting as their most important single patron and protector vis-à-vis the political authority.

[41] This information is from the interview I was granted by Professor Róbert Hoch, 27 Nov. 1986.

[42] Author's interviews with Professor Nagy, 4–21 Nov. 1986.

of the Democratic Association of World Youth to be held in London in November 1945. He was a pupil of one of the best secondary schools in Hungary, the Trefort Street Gymnasium in Budapest, and became, in the spring of 1945, a student in the country's best higher education establishment in the humanities, the Eötvös Collegium, where he studied English and French. In the Collegium (where one of the students was Imre Lakatos), as well as in the apparatus of MADISZ, he came into contact and worked together with many young Communists. In August 1945 he joined the Communist Party himself and, upon his return from the London congress, was appointed chief of the Foreign Relations Section of the MADISZ apparatus. This meant dividing his attention between two full-time jobs: the administrative duties at MADISZ and his studies in the Collegium. In 1948, he was already head of the Foreign Relations Section of the Communist Democratic Association of Youth (DISZ) when his party's Cadres' Council (Országos Kádertanács) ordered him to suspend his university studies and to devote all his time, as Chief Organiser, to the preparations for the Second Congress of the World Association of Democratic Youth which was to be held in Budapest on 2–8 September 1949.

This proved, later, to have been the summit of András Nagy's political career. On 26 September 1949, the death sentences were announced in the Rajk Process. Due to his contacts with some of the numerous victims of the purge, to his knowledge of languages and to his social background which made him highly suspect in the circumstances of the 'ever intensifying class-war', András Nagy found himself, from one day to another, without a job. One morning in June 1950, when he wanted to enter the building of the central offices of DISZ, he was denied admission by the guards. He was not only expelled from his position but the DISZ leadership saw to it that he found it very difficult to get another job. Positions having to do with foreign relations were entirely out of the question. He was rejected even when he tried to become employed as a worker in a factory in Budapest. Following benevolent advice, he then moved away from the capital to work in Sztálinváros ('Stalin's town'), the largest single project of socialist industrialisation in Hungary, producing a gigantic ironworks located in a little village, Dunapentele, at the southern section of the Danube in Hungary, where a whole city was erected in the middle of maize fields. He was employed there first as an unskilled construction worker and, later, as a semi-skilled worker in the ironworks. The time he spent in Sztálinváros gave him a great deal of personal experience with the appallingly low efficiency and the unforgiveably wasteful use of resources that characterised state-socialist central planning. In September 1951, now as someone with an industrial worker's background and with good recommendations from his factory in Sztálinváros, he could start his studies at the Karl Marx University of Economics in Budapest. He supported himself with casual work such as writing articles which appeared in daily papers with others' signatures. In early 1953 he was 'rehabilitated' and offered a job in the Ministry of Education. He became a corresponding student and took the position. Finding his job at the ministry less than stimulating, he asked for and was granted a transfer to the Joint Department of Marxism-Leninism of the Academies of Arts (Szinmüvészeti, Zenemüvészeti,

Képzömüvészeti and Iparmüvészeti Föiskola). Thus, typically for those times, he started teaching political economy to future actors, musicians, artists and designers three years before he completed his own studies at the University of Economics. He was even Head of the Department for a while. At the School of Political Economy (Politikai Gazdaságtan Szak) of the University of Economics, he distinguished himself as a student. In February 1955, Kálmán Szabó, then part-time associate of the Department of Political Economy and the right hand, in matters of economics, of Andor Berei at the Central Committee's cultural and scientific section, recruited him to the newly established Institute of Economics. He became a research associate of Tamás Nagy's General Theory Section and the scientific secretary of the Institute. He assumed within a short period a central position in the informal social and political life of the community of researchers in the Institute. He was one of the few who uncompromisingly adhered to the policies and spirit of the New Course. After the revolt of 1956, he refused to apply for membership of Kádár's new Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. During the revolt, he acted as a liaison between the Revolutionary Committee of Intelligentsia (Értelmiségi Forradalmi Bizottság) and the Revolutionary Committee of the Institute of Economics. To represent the Institute to the outside world was also part of the job of the scientific secretary. On such occasions, especially after February 1956, András Nagy did not hesitate to act as a spokesman for the spirit and ideas of the rebellious intellectuals, criticising with increasing radicalism the Stalinist academic regime. It was he who, at a Communist Party meeting of the Second Section of the Academy, summoned to discuss the lessons for scientists of the Twentieth Congress, demanded that the Section's report for the 1956 Assembly of the Academy should give

> emphasis to the question of democracy within science. . . . It should be criticised in concrete terms how and in what way democracy in our fields has been pushed into the background and strangled. How it was affected by the fact that the management of science, the assessment of scientific achievements were very often not, or only to an insufficient extent, in the hands of the scientists themselves. It ought to be told what remains to be done in this respect, how the tasks of managing and assessing science will to a much greater extent be returned to the hands of scientists. Of course . . . the leading organs of the Party and the state have to have a considerable influence and role in this respect. . . . But the situation that has prevailed up till now is absurd as the scientists wield so little real power.[43]

There are other examples. Sándor Ausch, one of the most promising younger talents at the Institute, received a long prison sentence in one of the bi-acts of the Rajk-process.[44] Released in 1954 he had worked, until he was recruited to the new Institute of Economics, at the Publishing House for Economics and Law (Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó). András Bródy was a publisher after the war. After his company was nationalised, his bourgeois class-alien background and conflict with József Révai's Ministry of Culture over policy issues (such as the ministry's order that the publishers should annul their contracts with certain authors) cost him his

[43] Protocols of the Communist *aktíva* of the Second (Historical and Social Sciences) Section of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 11 May 1956, *MTA LT, 3/3*.

[44] Professor Antal Máriás letter to the author, Budapest, 12 Jan. 1991.

membership of the Communist Party (which was not restored until 1953). Between 1949 and 1952 he worked as an industrial labourer and studied at evening courses of the University of Economics.[45] Róbert Hoch worked at the Department of Political Economy of the Karl Marx University of Economics until late 1954. Together with another colleague of his, Hoch was subjected, in 1954, to a Party disciplinary procedure which found him guilty because he criticised top Stalinist Party leaders (like Ernö Gerö) for sabotaging the policies of the new course. Antal Máriás had worked as an assistant professor at the Department of Socialist Industrial Economy at the Budapest University of Technology before he went over to the newly established Friss Institute. Because of a critical and self-critical lecture of his delivered during the autumn term of 1953 (on the economic and industrial policies of the country prior to Imre Nagy's new course programme), he was taken to task and thoroughly criticised by a special meeting of the University's Communist Party Committee.[46]

János Kornai was hardly more than twenty when (in 1948) he became chief of the column of economic policy in the Party's daily, *Szabad Nép*, a position which he held until his expulsion from the newspaper in 1955. In 1954, he was also appointed Secretary of the Editorial Committee. In the formal hierarchy of the Party, the position of *Szabad Nép* was as high as that of a section of the central committee apparatus. Moreover, as the paper was one of the few organs of mass media (and among these the most significant forum for publicity), the power and importance attached to the office of editor (and, especially, to that of the economic editor) in *Szabad Nép* probably surpassed its formal ranking in the *nomenklatura*. The majority of the members of the government responsible for various economic areas were neither formally members nor were they invited to attend the meetings of the Committee of State Economy (Államgazdasági Bizottság), the party's highest-ranking collegial body for economic policy, chaired by Ernö Gerö. Kornai, as the economic editor of *Szabad Nép*, was present, from 1949 on, at the meetings of the Committee and he was entitled to study the highly qualified documents submitted to, discussed and/or produced by the Committee (though he was not entitled to participate in the discussions). In his editorial work he was 'instructed' (supervised), on the part of the Central Committee, by István Friss, then, head of the Central Committee's section for economic policy (Államgazdasági Osztály). All this makes it little wonder that Kornai's former status, as perceived by some of his young colleagues at the Friss Institute, assumed quite unrealistic proportions which are well reflected by the remarkable piece of 'urban folklore' that maintains, even today, that he was at the side of Chief Secretary Mátyás Rákosi in East Berlin placing the wreath of the Hungarian government delegation (27–9 October 1952) at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Someone even insisted on having seen a photograph depicting the event in a newspaper. (It can be confirmed that Kornai was a member

[45] Author's interview with Professor András Bródy, Budapest, 31 October 1986.

[46] A manuscript version of Máriás' lecture (classified 'Strictly Confidential') as well as a summary of the findings of the extended Party meeting, dated 11 Nov. 1953, can be found among the protocols for 1953 of the University Council, Archives of the Budapest University of Technology. I am indebted for copies of these documents to Dr Gábor Palló, who works on the post-1945 history of the university.

of a group of ten attached to the delegation[47] but the story of his being at the side of Rákosi in a photo published in the Hungarian press cannot.) Whether the story is true or not, it did not affect favorably Kornai's initial reception by his young colleagues at the Friss Institute even though Kornai's salary at the Institute was just as low as theirs. Of course, *Szabad Nép* as a work place offered more than everyday proximity to those wielding power over the country and more than the experience of the actual exercise of that power. Editing a daily paper was always an intellectual task which put certain limits upon the Party's efforts to ensure that the composition of the editorial staff was proper from a class point of view. Indeed, the editorial staff of *Szabad Nép* consisted to a large extent of relatively well-educated men coming from intellectual middle-class families: Miklós Vásárhelyi, Imre Patkó and Péter Kende, for example, who were Kornai's close friends and wanted him to join *Szabad Nép*, were all from urban middle-class families. To begin with, there was nothing wrong with their loyalty to the Party and to the cause it embodied. They worked with great enthusiasm running Rákosi's propaganda machine. They were shocked and alarmed by the slaughter within the ranks of the Party leadership called 'the Rajk process', but they did not think of calling the wisdom and objectives of Gábor Péter's state security police, controlled directly by Rákosi, into question. They had close friends and highly respected acquaintances among the people executed or imprisoned, but their speeches delivered at various meetings and their articles published in *Szabad Nép* and elsewhere showed no doubt whatever as to the tenability of all the fancy allegations concocted during those infamous sleepless nights of Rákosi.[48] Similarly, the ostrich-like policy of the Party soldier allowed them to still their consciences over the propaganda journalism they produced, a 'journalism' for which serving the needs and interests of the Party, as defined by the top leadership, was more important than reporting facts, inquiring into events and charting the processes that characterised the 'real sphere' of social life.

As with the cases of other groups of Communist intellectuals, the political changes of 1953, the introduction of Imre Nagy's New Course policies, provided the background to the radical change in the attitude of a considerable number of *Szabad*

[47] *PIA* 276 f. 65/211 öe. According to fol. 33, the group consisted of Kornai from the *Szabad Nép*, Rákosi's and Gerö's secretaries and personal guards, two officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the representative of the GDR in Budapest and his wife, and Gábor Péter, chief of the office of State Security (the infamous ÁVH or 'ÁVÓ').

[48] In his speech to the Party activists of Greater Budapest, 30 Sept. 1949, the Chief Secretary explained the puzzling facts that the criminal conspiracy could persist for such a long time and at so high a level within the Communist Party by saying: 'We have often been lenient towards the "mistakes" of Rajk and his accomplices and towards their "deviations from the correct party attitude". We had not suspected that in all these the enemy manifested itself, but we ascribed them, instead, to the lack of experience, routines and education. We had been all too patient with these [mistakes and failures] unaware of the fact that we were dealing with traitors. . . . Besides, we ourselves had not had any such experience until uncovering the Rajk case, and, as you may imagine, comrades, we were shocked by the extent of vile treason. We had no experience in handling such cases and we knew that one should not go about them light-headed. Indeed, it was not easy to elaborate [on the plan for] handling it and it had cost me many sleepless nights until the design of execution took shape'. Quoted in Sándor Balogh (ed.), *Nehéz esztendök krónikája 1949–1953. Dokumentumok* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1986), 148.

Nép's journalists, too. The new course era brought with it the intense need for critical self-scrutiny at all levels and, especially, at the level of individuals. The party openly admitted that the country had been mismanaged for at least four years and that major political and economic mistakes had been committed. Indeed, the political struggle after June 1953 was largely about the exact definition of what those mistakes were, what gave rise to them and, last but not least, *who was to shoulder the responsibility* for them? Rákosi and his followers within the mighty Party apparatus were for a long time rather successful in restricting this process of critical reappraisal to the inevitable minimum. This success of theirs could not, however, put a stop to the moral and political awakening that swept over the ranks of the Communist intelligentsia.[49] However unwillingly and half-heartedly Rákosi's men proceeded in the 'rehabilitation' of the many victims of the show trials and other forms of terror, a public condemnation of the preceding years' lawlessness could no longer be avoided and it was made by the very same people responsible for it. Nor could they completely prevent the release from prisons and camps of some of their most prominent victims, who had themselves had held, before their fall, high positions within the Party and state apparatus. These days were highly traumatic for anyone with any sensitivity left in his or her soul: How did you face people returning from hell? What did you tell them and what could you do about the appalling injustice they had been exposed to with one's own consent and loud approval? One famous line of László Benjámin's poem *To repair the irreparable* (*Jóvátenni a jóvátehetetlent*), written on 3 September 1955 and widely circulated in manuscript among Budapest Communist intellectuals, is probably the epitome of the experience described here: *I plead guilty of having believed in your crime*.[50] Significantly, the poem was dedicated to Sándor Haraszti, a prominent home Communist and journalist (chief editor of the Communist *Szabadság*), who was imprisoned by Rákosi in 1951 and released in July 1954 (together with Ferenc Donáth, János Kádár, Gyula Kállai, Géza Losonczy, Szilárd Újhelyi and other leading personalities of the interwar Hungarian Communist underground). The same Sándor Haraszti personally told Kornai of his life in Rákosi's prison, of the tortures he had had to suffer at the hands of Rákosi's security police:

> What actually happened was that, within a year or a year and a half, about ten–fifteen leading employees in the staff of *Szabad Nép* underwent a profound change in their way of thinking, in their outlook. And this change, I believe, was attributable in all cases, including mine, to the release of and personal encounters with those who were unlawfully arrested [and imprisoned]. That is to say, it was *not* the speech [of Imre Nagy, introducing the programme of his government to Parliament in June 1953]. The speech could be taken simply as a correction of the Party line. For example, for me the great collapse [of my previous world

[49] Aczél Tamás and Tibor Méray, *The Revolt of the Mind. A Cast History of Intellectual Resistance Behind the Iron Curtain* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1960), iii. *The Purifying Storm*, give a forceful description, based to a great extent on personal experience, of this moral awakening. János M. Rainer's exemplary work, *Az író helye. Viták a magyar irodalmi sajtóban 1953–1956* (The place of the writer: Debates in the Hungarian literary press) (Budapest: Magvetö, 1990) provides a scholarly analysis of the emergence among Communist writers of resistance and opposition to Rákosi and his faction in the Party.

[50] Cf. János M. Rainer, *Az iró helye*, 189.

view] came when Sándor Haraszti was released from prison and he told me personally how he was tortured. . . . The great dramatic change was brought about by meeting with these people, and by the moral trauma following it. . . . this was something like an axiomatic system which, when you discarded two of its axioms, would inevitably collapse. . . . I think here you had to do with people of moral integrity, who served a cause because they believed in it with the whole of their heart. And if there only had been some 'mistakes', the whole thing could have been maintained. But when it proved to be *morally* indefensible, then the revision of ideas commenced and resulted, within a few months, in profound changes in this group of interacting people of considerable intellectual talents and high moral standards. This process reached its culmination in the meeting [of the *Szabad Nép*'s Party organisation, 22–25 October, 1954].[51]

For those who grew aware of the (personal) moral implications of what had been going on in the country, there could be no doubt as to which side to take in the protracted power struggle between the revisionist-reformer and the Stalinist factions within the Party leadership. They did not simply follow Imre Nagy, but they went in many respects ahead of him in demanding a radical break with Stalinist policies and practices and a thorough rethinking and revision of the socialist political and social order. In their eyes, the cause of socialism could only have a chance of success and, indeed, of survival, if the *political change* unfolding after the introduction of new course policies had been *towards increasing democratisation*. Indeed, it was in this circle of young Communist revisionist intellectuals at the *Szabad Nép* that the first ideas of a reform of the *political system* of existing socialism originated. Kornai's best friend among the paper's editors, Péter Kende, wrote a twenty-six page petition to the Third Congress of the Hungarian Workers' Party. The essay, entitled 'On the question of our democratism',[52] proposed hardly more than what the modest political reforms of the late 1970s and 1980s in Hungary achieved. Leaving intact the Communist Party's monopolistic position by accepting the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat, it pleaded that greater weight in the political process should be given to the organisations of popular representation (local councils and the Parliament). However, in the eyes of the protagonists of the totalitarian regime in 1954, such reforms amounted to a counter-revolution. But the real strength of the essay lay in its critique of the Stalinist political regime. It attacked the alienation of the privileged stratum of leaders from the people. It admitted that 'some bourgeois democracies' performed better in certain respects than Hungary's state-socialist political system: they provided greater freedom for their citizens to criticise publicly the management of the state's affairs; they gave better protection to the individual against the state apparatus; they proved to be superior to the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in making it possible to articulate and express individual opinions; and

[51] Interview with professor János Kornai, Budapest, 14 May 1987.

[52] Péter Kende, 'Demokratizmusunk kérdésehez. Beadvány a párt kongresszusához', enclosed to a letter to Central Committee Secretary Mihály Farkas, 17 May 1954, in which Kende asks the latter's opinion about the petition and information as to the possibility of submitting the petition, including the attached proposals for resolutions, to the delegates of the Congress. Farkas forwarded the petition to Imre Nagy, writing that he did not think it advisable to submit the petition to the Congress. Mihály Farkas to Imre Nagy, 24 May 1954. In the end, the petition was not forwarded to the Congress. *PIA* 276 f. 67. cs. 9. öe., fols 1–26.

they secured a genuine control by the representative legislative branch of power over the executive apparatuses. Kende explained the 'backwardness of our democratism' by, among other things, the misuse of the Party's monopoly position:

> The fundamental problem here is that we have not been able organisationally and institutionally to restrict and counteract [ellensúlyozni] the opportunities for the abuse of power arising out of the Party's monopoly position. In quite a few respects, this has resulted in the transformation of the ideological and political leadership of the party into a party dictatorship [a párt eszmei és politikai vezetése számos vonatkozásban pártdiktaturává csúszott el].[53]

It was, then, in this millieu where the conflict between the Stalinist leadership in the Party and the rebel Communist intellectuals in the newspaper's editorial office, who could no longer accept a return to the state of affairs prevailing before June 1953,[54] led, right after the Stalinist backlash of March 1955, to the expulsion of a number of journalists (with János Kornai among them) from the *Szabad Nép*.[55] Thus János Kornai landed, not at all against his wishes, in the newly established Institute of Economics, losing a great deal of his salary, prestige and status, but gaining a position which offered opportunities to find a new identity and role and which enabled him to combine moral integrity and intellectual creativity with the search for truth as a scholar as well as a socially politically committed individual.

Gyepsor *Ethos – the Legacy of Interwar Sociography*

For the young Communist economists, the crisis of 1953–6 was a profoundly personal crisis of a moral, intellectual and political nature from which the only feasible way out, personally and politically, appeared to be leading through the professionalisation of economic research. Professionalisation in this context meant the attainment and preservation of academic autonomy as well as the construction of a new identity by engaging in a set of new roles. It meant opting for and cultivating a positivistically orientated scientific ethos, for an emancipation from the ethos of the party soldier. Indeed, the political changes brought about by the new course and

[53] Péter Kende, 'Demokratizmusunk kérdéséhez', *ibid.*, 15, fol. 18. Kende's petition was not forwarded to the delegates of the Congress, but Kende submitted the material to the Party's theoretical monthly, *Társadalmi Szemle* (Social review), for publication. The editorial committee discussed the essay on 10 Aug. 1954. None of the committee members declared himself ready to accept the essay without major revisions. But Kende, who was also present at the discussion, rejected most of the critical comments and refused to rewrite the whole text. He suggested that the *Review* publish the essay as a 'debate-article'. The committee declined and committee chairman Andor Berei concluded the discussion by remarking that 'comrade Kende appears to have studied Lenin and Stalin either not in the right manner or not thoroughly enough'. Minutes of the meeting of the editorial committee of *Társadalmi Szemle*, 10 Aug. 1954, *PIA* 276 f. 101. cs. 2. öe., fols 115–21.

[54] This is well documented in the protocols of the 22–5 Oct. 1954 meeting of the party organisation of the editorial office of the *Szabad Nép*. Jegyzökönyv a Szabad Nép szerkesztöségi pártszervezete 1954. Október 22–23–25-én megtartott taggyüléséröl, *PIA*, 276 f. 89. cs. 206. öe. These protocols were immediately copied and circulated among the Budapest intellectuals upon whom it had a revolutionising impact. See also an account of the contemporaries, Tamás Aczél and Tibor Méray, *The Revolt of the Mind: A Case History of Intellectual Resistance behind the Iron Curtain* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1960), esp. Bk iii, Ch. 3, 'The Rebels at *Szabad Nép*'.

[55] Interview with Professor János Kornai, Budapest, 14 May 1987.

the transformation of the academic regime (the empiricist research programme of the Friss Institute) enabled them to pursue such strategies as would turn them from party soldiers into professional research economists. The epistemology of naive empiricism brought social scientific knowledge out of the realm of political volition and made it the concern of the specialised researcher questioning an objective social reality which exists and obeys laws and patterns independently not only of the researcher himself but also of the will of politicians.

The emerging new, relatively autonomous, position of social knowledge and of its professionalising producers was an obvious target for Rákosi's re-Stalinisation efforts from late 1954 onwards. And it was this autonomy and professionalism the demands for which and the interests of which were in so many dimensions and from so many angles articulated by young Communist academic intellectuals in the debates taking place, mostly under the aegis of the Petöfi Circle, during the months between the Twentieth Congress and the uprising of late October 1956. This highly critical and self-conscious spirit erupting after the Twentieth Congress not only influenced and inspired the attitudes prevailing among the young research economists, regular attendants as they were of the Petöfi Circle's discussions, but it was also actively informed and shaped by them.

If, after September 1955, an anthropologist had chosen the circle of young economists of importance from the point of view of the empiricist breakthrough as her subject of study, she could have done most of her field-work along one back corridor of the Institute of Economics. The corridor was on the second floor of a building in Nádor utca [Nádor Street], on the Pest side of the capital (east of the Danube), a short walk from the headquarters of the Communist Party (the Central Committee apparatus) in the same street. The building housing the Institute and the editorial offices of the Economic Review belonged, before nationalisation to a private bank. In state socialist Hungary, Nádor utca was the street with the highest concentration of political power in the country. It was situated in a district of the capital, the fifth, where the overwhelming majority of the top Party and state authorities had their offices. Junior members of the Institute's General Theory Section, headed by Tamás Nagy, had their rooms on the corridor in question. Their windows looked onto a backyard as dark as a lift shaft. Although groups of two or three had to share a room, the associates of the section spent much of their time here. Research economists in those days had to keep themselves to fixed working hours, from 8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. But what tied them even more to their offices was the advantage the Institute could offer them in terms of access to classified information. For many years such access constituted an exclusive privilege of István Friss' Institute: a great deal of classified statistical and other economic information circulated among the country's top policy-making authorities was also sent to the Institute. To be able to receive this material, the Institute was formally granted the right of *Titkos Ügyiratkezelés* (administration of secret documents, TÜK), i.e. the right to hold secret documents. This meant that someone or a whole group of the administrative section had as its task the administration of these documents and the supervision of their use in accord with a set of specific rules. It also meant that a

number of safes were installed in the offices (where the classified documents had to be locked up when not being used by authorised personnel).

But the young research economists had another good reason to keep to their offices. The corridor became, especially after February 1956, an informal place for heated discussions over the main political and intellectual issues of the time. These discussions certainly contributed to the development of a strong cohesion among the members of the group. This was evidenced not only by the cheerfully teasing way in which they related to one another (mocking the dubious trend in the semiology of existing socialism to name towns, squares, streets, factories, co-operatives, etc. after Stalin, Rákosi and other living or deceased classics of Communism, they named the corridor's *pissoir* after András Nagy, a comrade of theirs who enjoyed the greatest popularity among them), but also the fact that they developed a collective identity well reflected in the name they gave to their corridor: the *Gyepsor*.

There is no way of directly translating *Gyepsor* into English. In pre-war Hungarian rural society, *Gyepsor* was the habitat of the poorest and most frustrated of the village community: 'The *Gyepsor* is on the edge of the village. Beyond it lie the endless saliferous fields covered by, instead of vegetation, the droppings of geese, pigs and cattle. Covered, that is, only as long as the dung gets dry enough for the inhabitants of *Gyepsor* to pick it up and heat with it.'[56] The typical inhabitant of *Gyepsor* was the landless agrarian worker dependent on day labour, always in short supply. The agrarian proletariat was a large stratum of Hungary's rural society characterised, for long periods of time, by lethargy and resignation. But it was also in this stratum that the recurring waves of radical agrarian socialism gained momentum. In István Friss' Institute of Economics, too, the *Gyepsor* was the habitat of the underdog. At the same time, and, again, similarly to the *Gyepsor* of pre-war rural society, the corridor was also a nest of revolt.

In the beginning, this name we gave ourselves signified nothing more than our lowest position in the hierarchy as opposed to the position of our bosses, such as [István] Friss (for whom even a bathroom and a restroom had been built), [György] Cukor, Tamás Nagy, [Ferenc] Donáth, [György] Göncöl, [Edit] Jávorka, etc. The latter were placed in the elegant, nicely furnished rooms, which formerly belonged to bank directors and managers, with anterooms for secretaries. Later, however, as we started to form a community and as the political conflict [in the country] intensified, the meaning of *Gyepsor* broadened to include radical reformism, revisionism, i.e. [it reflected the fact] that most of us sided more and more with Imre Nagy against Rákosi. [19]55–56 was a time of political turbulence when we had a lot of discussions, we received and sent on secret information, gossip and rumours, and we were growing increasingly critical of the power and of the Soviet Union. We established contacts with our colleagues working at the [National] Office of Planning, the University [of Economics] and the ministries. In other words, if you will, this corridor community had become a centre preparing in economic theory the [19]56 [revolt], a community which turned, with an increasing self-consciousness and radicalism, against the conservative and dogmatic party leadership.[57]

[56] Péter Veres, 'Ebéd a Gyepsoron' (Lunch in the *Gyepsor*) in *Gyepsor. Elbeszélések* (short stories, first published in 1940), (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1950), 23.

[57] Letter from Professor András Nagy, Institute of Economics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, to the author, 12 Dec. 1990.

Last but not least, the *Gyepsor* as a metaphor nourishing the collective identity of the young Communist rebel economists had yet another significant layer of meaning with considerable potential to assist in a relatively smooth departure from the party soldier identity and the transition to a professionally orientated but socially committed ethos of scholarship. If only by way of association, the *Gyepsor* identity related these young anti-Stalinist (but still socialist) economists to the rural (and urban) sociography of the 1930s. Sociography was an intellectual movement with a number of characteristics that must have been very appealing to the rebellious social science intellectuals in the 1950s.[58] It had grown out of and developed partly hand in hand with, partly in opposition to – but never separated from – the artistic movement of populist (*népies*) writers. The sociography of Ferenc Erdei, Imre Kovács, Gyula Ortutay or Zoltán Szabó was a partisan enterprise in the sense that it was anti-establishment (and the academic establishment effectively saw to it that sociography, together with modern sociology, stayed outside the walls of official academe) and, in so far as it committed itself to radical social reforms, to the improvement of the living conditions of the underdog. However, the sociographers of the late 1930s also emphasised that the scientific method and historical action were two distinct spheres and adhered to the view that maintained the necessity of the tripartite division between the science of facts, the science of norms and values and the sphere of politics. They believed that their social-political commitment was best served exactly by the non-partisan and strictly objective, positive character of sociography. As Zoltán Szabó wrote, sociography is agitation by non-partisanship and objectivity ('a társadalomrajz a pártatlanság és tárgyilagosság izgatása').[59] A contemporary comrade of Szabó, looking back from the 1980s, remembered the sociographer's attitude towards his own research and towards politics like this:

> Did I become a revolutionary? I wanted to see profound social change ('gyökeres társadalmi változást akartam'), and I wished to contribute to bringing it about, but I did not consider myself a revolutionary. I was between twenty-two and twenty-four years old, and I believed that through social research we would understand the country and would make it understood. [I believed] our writings would convince public opinion and . . . the latter would force the political power to accept our reform proposals.[60]

The way Zoltán Szabó wished to see the relationship between sociography and politics, between social research and ideologically-oriented theorizing, was strikingly identical with the credo of the empiricist new course economics:

> [The political Right and the political Left] tend to see the problems from above, from a

[58] In the short section below on interwar sociography, I have relied on the following works: Dénes Némedi, *A ńpi szociográfia 1930–1938* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1985); Gyula Borbándi, *A magyar népi mozgalom* (New York: Püski, 1983), also available as *Der Ungarische Populismus* (Mainz, 1976); and Miklós Lackó, *Korszellem és tudomány 1910–1945* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1988), 333–7. A most useful autobiographical work from an important contemporary practitioner of sociography is Iván Boldizsár, *A lebegök. Egyéni és nemzedéki önéletrajz századunk harmincas éveiböl* (*Die freischwebende* . . . An individual's and a generation's autobiography from the 1930s), (Budapest: Magvetö, 1989).

[59] Szabó Zoltán, 'A társadalomkutatás célja' (The objectives of sociography), *Hitel* (1936), 162–72, quoted by Miklós Lackó, *Korszellem és tudomány*, 334.

[60] Iván Boldizsár, *A lebegök*, 260.

biased theoretical point of view. We want to approach the questions and solutions from under, from reality. They say: acquaint yourself with the teachings of your leader. We say: acquaint yourself with the country. They are more superficial and, thus, they are more courageous. They dare to give their views about the necessary treatment without an intimate knowledge of the patient. We are more conscientious and, consequently, we are more hesitant.[61]

Most importantly, this view was very much akin to that consistently adopted by the Director of the Institute of Economics, István Friss.[62]

Not only did research associates from other sections of the Institute and the editorial staff of the *Közgazdasági Szemle* (who had their offices in the same house) frequent the *Gyepsor*, but also economists from various government economic authorities located in nearby quarters (such as the National Office of Planning or the Ministry of Finance). It seems, indeed, justified to credit the *Gyepsor* with having earned for the Institute as a whole the unmistakable hostility of Erzsébet Andics and other members of the conservative Party leadership.

The *Gyepsor* was more than the sum of the individuals constituting it and yet it was but a coincidental point of intersection, where individual trajectories combined to give rise to the intellectual, social-cultural and political formation underlying the empiricist breakthrough[63] and, thus, also the dualistic structure that characterised economic thought throughout the forty years of state socialism in Hungary. This is what seems to have proved to be the durable achievement of the 1953–6 crisis of state socialism in Hungary, an achievement that survived the red terror following the revolution of 1956, and also survived the high-level disciplinary party investigation into the Institute during late 1957 and early 1958. For however intimidated these economists were amid the oppression of the early Kádárist era, no reversal could effectively be made when it came to their fundamentally new position as professional research economists. There was no way of pushing back this new intelligentsia, so crucially affected by the experience of the first post-war decade, into the mould of the party soldier. While there were almost two new generations of young economists to come, from among whom the corruptible or/and the ignorant and naïve could be recruited to serve as apologists of the state socialist regime, the option provided by the role of the professional economist pursuing empirically and/or (reform) policy-orientated social science research remained in place for all the three and a half decades following the crisis, revolts and revolution of 1953–6.

[61] Zoltán Szabó, Kortárs aggodalmaira, *Pesti Napló*, 21 Feb. 1937, quoted by Dénes Némedi, *A népi szociográfia*, 129.

[62] Cf. István Friss, 'Elöszó' (Preface), in *A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Közgazdaságtudományi Intézetének Évkönyve*, I: *1957* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1957). See above, pp. 299–300 and n. 12.

[63] By early 1956, the General Theory section under Tamás Nagy had ten members. Nine of them had their rooms on our corridor of observation: Sándor Ausch, Béla Csendes, Róbert Hoch, János Kornai, Antal Máriás, András Nagy, Mrs Eszter Solymár (Solymár Jenöné), Aranka Rédei and Ferenc Vági. Péter Erdös, although both in age and in hierarchical position senior to the members of *Gyepsor*, was a regular visitor to the rooms on the corridor (as one of his younger colleagues put it, 'his heart was with the *Gyepsor*'). So were András Bródy of the Industrial Section, Ferenc Molnár of the International Section, and Ferenc Fekete and Zsuzsa Esze of the Economic Review.

Statistical Appendix

Table 1. *The social background of research economists in István Friss' Institute, 1956*[1]

Father's occupation	No.
Workers	3
Peasants	6
Shopkeepers & artisans	2
Unknown	7
Clerks	5
Capitalists & landowners	4
Intellectuals	9

Table 2. *The social background (according to father's status) and Party affiliation of the PhD student body in the seven sections of the Academy, 1951–5*[2]

	Students enrolled in year					Total PhD student body in 1955
	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Worker	25.6	20.5	24.0	18.8	23.1	21.9
Peasant	12.0	9.8	14.0	10.6	9.2	11.1
Intellectual	28.9	35.0	25.7	31.1	32.3	30.6
Other	33.1	34.0	34.4	37.7	31.0	34.6
Class-alien	0.4	0.7	1.9	1.8	4.4	1.8
Party members	71.9	69.4	75.3	54.7	62.0	68.2

[1] 'Közgazdaságtudományi Intézet dolgozói' (Employees of the Institute of Economics, enlisted by rank/position, disclosing father's occupation), 1956, part of the list is handwritten, the rest is typescript, *PIA* 276 f., 91/102 öe.

[2] Sources for Tables 2 and 3: Report on the *aspirantúra* presented to the Committee of Scientific Qualification (Tudományos Minösítö Bizottság), dated 20 April 1956. A copy of the report was sent to László Orbán of the Dept. for Science and Culture of the Central Committee, *PIA* 276 f, 91 cs, 99 öe, fos 109–21; furthermore, Report by the Academy of Science on the Recruitment of Scientific Cadres ('A tudományos káderutánpótlás helyzete'), undated (1956), by the President of the Academy, István Rusznyák, *PIA* 276 f, 91 cs, 10 öe, fols 196–212. The data include all four categories of 'aspirants' (students sent abroad, especially to the USSR, students of the ordinary, corresponding and shortened PhD courses), except for the percentages of party members where no data for students of the so-called shortened courses were available. Students of these shortened courses (rövidített aspirantúra) were allowed to proceed to writing their dissertations without having previously passed the exams prescribed to the other categories.

Table 3. *The social background (according to father's status) and Party affiliation of the PhD student body, Social & Historical Sciences, 1951–5*

	Students enrolled in year					Total PhD student body in 1955
	1951 %	1952 %	1953 %	1954 %	1955 %	%
Worker	28.6	20.4	23.3	21.9	31.9	24.5
Peasant	20.0	14.3	18.6	11.0	8.7	13.6
Intellectual	14.3	24.5	23.3	25.5	17.4	22.3
Other	37.1	40.8	34.8	40.9	42.0	39.4
Class-alien	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.3
Party members	91.4	91.8	94.0	76.6	79.2	87.3

Table 4. *The social background (according to father's status) of the scientific staff in Higher Education for 1953 and 1955*[3]

	W		P		I		O		E	
	1953	1955	1953	1955	1953	1955	1953	1955	1953	1955
Professors										
HE %	9.1	10.8	6.5	5.4	46.0	43.0	32.9	35.7	5.5	5.1
US %	5.6	5.3	5.6	3.9	43.1	41.2	37.5	41.9	8.2	7.7
UT %	7.8	15.0	6.8	6.6	47.0	41.5	35.5	34.4	2.9	2.5
DML %	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
All levels										
HE %	16.4	21.5	9.9	10.3	30.0	27.0	38.6	36.6	5.1	4.6
US %	12.3	17.0	8.1	8.9	32.6	28.0	39.7	40.1	7.3	6.0
UT %	12.3	19.0	6.7	7.6	30.0	28.0	46.6	40.9	4.4	4.5
DML %	40.6	44.2	26.6	26.4	10.6	10.3	20.7	17.4	1.5	1.7

Notes:
HE = Total higher education; US = Universities of science; UT = Universities of technology; DML = Departments of Marxism-Leninism (no professors had been appointed to these departments before 1956)

[3] Source: *PIA* 276 f, 91 cs, 133 öe, fos 99–101. The social categories as defined in the contemporary official statistics and which apply also in our source are as follows: W: workers, P: peasants, I: intellectuals, O: other (mostly petit bourgeois families), E: exploitators (former capitalists and landowners) often referred to as 'class-aliens' (osztályidegenek).

Table 5. *Party affiliation of the scientific staff in higher education*[4]

	1953 Ms	Nms	Excluded	1955 Ms	Nms	Excluded
Professors						
HE %	40.0	58.0	2.0	39.5	58.4	2.1
US %	40.3	58.3	1.4	41.3	56.7	1.9
UT %	27.5	70.0	2.5	29.0	68.0	3.0
DML %	—	—	—	—	—	—
All levels						
HE %	37.0	60.8	2.2	41.5	56.3	2.2
US %	39.1	57.4	3.5	43.8	52.9	3.3
UT %	23.3	75.0	1.7	27.5	70.7	1.8
DML %	82.0	18.0	0.0	88.7	11.3	0.0

Notes:
Ms = Members of the Communist Party; Nms - Not members of the Communist Party; HE = Total higher education; US = Universities of science; UT = Universities of technology; DML = Departments of Marxism-Leninism

[4] Source: *PIA* 276 f, 91 cs, 133 öe fos 99–101.

Ulbricht and the Intellectuals

JOHN CONNELLY

Khrushchev's secret speech of February 1956 threw the moral and political world of East Central Europe's intellectuals into turmoil. One of the most secure belief systems ever devised was suddenly revealed to be the ideological justification for crimes of a massive scale. Several generations of Communists groped for orientation, and radical change seemed inevitable. East Germany's intellectuals were no exception in their expectations and desires for change. Students of the GDR have always understood 1956 as one of formidable intellectual challenge to the Ulbricht regime, and the opening of SED and Stasi archives has strengthened this view, revealing an unrest that pervaded the ranks of students, writers, teachers, and much of the Party cadre.[1]

Yet this remarkable intellectual ferment did not achieve a lasting effect. Despite the presence of leading Eastern European revisionists such as Ernst Bloch, Wolfgang Harich, Jürgen Kuczynski, Robert Havemann, Arne Benary or Fritz Behrens, East German society failed to produce an abiding intellectual challenge to the Stalinist regime. The year 1956 in East Germany did not have the historical resonance for future generations of dissidents that it had for counterparts in Poland or Hungary. By the 1970s the story of that year was hardly known – even to the new generation of dissidents.[2]

Existing scholarship provides only partial answers for this East German anomaly. Early analysts focused explanations upon the Party apparatus. Writing in 1960, William E. Griffith identified revisionism as the 'revolt of Party intellectuals against the *apparatchiki*'. It had gone furthest in Poland and Hungary where the Party apparatus was small, but was easily crushed in Czechoslovakia and East Germany,

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[1] See esp. Armin Mitter and Stefan Wolle, *Untergang auf Raten: Unbekannte Kapitel der DDR-Geschichte* (Munich: Bertelsmann, 1993), and Manfred Hertwig, 'Der Umgang des Staates mit oppositionellem und widerständigem Verhalten. Die Opposition von Intellektuellen in der SED/DDR in den fünfziger Jahren (insbesondere 1953, 1956/57), ihre Unterdrückung und Ausschaltung', in Deutscher Bundestag, (ed.), *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission 'Aufarbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur in Deutschland'* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995), vii. 873–95. Standard accounts are Karl Wilhelm Fricke, *Opposition und Widerstand in der DDR* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1984), and Martin Jänicke, *Der Dritte Weg: Die antistalinistische Opposition gegen Ulbricht seit 1953* (Cologne: Neuer Deutscher Verlag, 1964).

[2] *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission*, vii. 140, and *Die Zeit*, US ed., Vol. 51, no. 47 (1996), 8.

'where adequate numbers of *apparatchiki* were available'.[3] More recent treatments of East German intellectuals' failure to constitute a more cohesive reform movement have stressed their unique commitment to socialism and anti-fascism, and the supposed inability both of the SED and its opponents to appeal to nationalism.[4]

Such explanations have only limited power. The apparatus of the Czech Communist Party did not hinder the Prague Spring after all,[5] and in East Germany intellectuals never actively supported de-Stalinisation. Why was this so? The SED's success in limiting intellectual dissent in the late 1950s may help provide the answers.

East German intellectuals' commitment to socialism and anti-fascism are likewise at best partial explanations. Counterparts in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary were hardly less devoted to socialism than their East German counterparts.[6] And though anti-fascism was bound to have great force in the country which launched Hitler, it was by no means limited to East German intellectuals. Many leading Polish, Czech, Slovak or Hungarian intellectuals had suffered the effects of right-wing nationalism and fascism, and been rescued in 1945 by the Red Army.[7] Furthermore, East German anti-fascism had a largely mythical character: from an early date the East German state began to integrate former Nazis, and by the mid-1950s almost a third of the members of the SED had been members of Nazi organisations.[8]

[3] William E. Griffith, 'The Decline and Fall of Revisionism in Eastern Europe', in Leopold Labedz, (ed.), *Revisionism. Essays on the History of Marxist Ideas* (New York: Praeger 1962), 227.

[4] John C. Torpey, *Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissent. The East German Opposition and its Legacy* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 40–1; Sigrid Meuschel, *Legitimation und Parteiherrschaft in der DDR* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992), 152–68; Christian Joppke, *East German Dissidents and the Revolution of 1989* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 23–9, 183–200.

[5] The Czechoslovak liberalisation of the 1960s in many ways began in 1956. See Vladimir V. Kusin, *The Intellectual Origins of the Prague Spring: The Development of Reformist Ideas in Czechoslovakia 1956–1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 19–27; the comments of A. Liehm in V. V. Kusin, *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement 1968* (London: International Research Documents, 1973), 67–78. For accounts of student demonstrations in Prague and Bratislava, see *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 16 June, 7 July 1956; *The New York Times* 22 May, 15 June 1956; *Hinter dem Eisernen Vorhang*, July 1956; RFE Reports, item nos 5569, 5741, 5742, 5924, 7912/56.

[6] Large majorities of writers of several generations thoughout East Central Europe warmly embraced Soviet-style socialism. See Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind* (New York: Vintage, 1981), Jacek Trznadel, *Hańba domowa. rozmowy z pisarzami* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Test, 1991); Peter Hruby, *Fools and Heroes. The Changing Role of Communist Intellectuals in Czechoslovakia* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1980); Tamas Aczel and Tibor Meray, *The Revolt of the Mind* (New York: Praeger, 1959). This view contrasts with that offered by Heinrich Olschowsky, 'Das Jahr 1956 in der literarischen Szene der DDR', in Hans Henning Hahn and Heinrich Olschowsky, (eds.), *Das Jahr 1956 in Ostmitteleuropa* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996), 133.

[7] See, for example, Peter Kenez, *Varieties of Fear: Growing Up Jewish under National Socialism and Communism* (Washington, DC: American University Press, 1995); Edward Goldstücker, *Prozesse: Erfahrungen eines Mitteleuropäers* (Munich: A. Knaus, 1989); Heda Margolius Kovaly, *Under a Cruel Star: A Life in Prague 1941–1968* (Cambridge, MA: Plunkett Lake Press, 1986); Jan Kott, *Still Alive* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Janina Bauman, *A Dream of Belonging: My Life in Postwar Poland* (London: Virago, 1986); Tomas Venclova, *Aleksander Wat: Life and Art of an Iconoclast* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

[8] In early 1954 almost one in ten SED members had belonged to the NSDAP; fully 27 per cent were members of one of its subordinate organisations. Jan Foitzik, 'Die stalinistischen "Säuberungen" in den ostmitteleuropäischen kommunistischen Parteien. Ein vergleichender Überblick', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, Vol. 40, no. 8 (1992), 745.

'Nationalism' or 'national communism' likewise appear unsatisfactory upon closer examination: on the one hand the SED regime, and no doubt much of its following, perceived itself as the truly patriotic German state. For an East German intellectual of the 1950s, the Ulbricht regime's agitation in the name of the German nation needed be no less credible than its agitation in the name of Marxism. On the other hand, the 'National Communist' regimes of Poland, or later Slovakia, were as successful in quelling intellectual dissent as in supporting it. Moreover, intellectuals in Poland or Hungary in 1956 considered their actions to be carried out in the name of socialism as much as in the name of their nations.[9]

This essay hopes to reach a more balanced understanding of East German intellectuals in the 1950s by placing them in their context: that is by seeing them against the background of other socialist states in the region. It argues that two factors truly distinguished East Germany's intellectuals: the SED leadership's unique attention to the challenges of creating a new élite,[10] and an intellectual culture marked by primary loyalty to the Party/state. Counterparts elsewhere in East Central Europe identified primarily with an historical formation called the 'intelligentsia'.[11] Any intelligentsia in the GDR was a creation of the SED, however, and it had been formed in both positive and negative senses. On the one hand the SED consciously chose members of the new intelligentsia, and on the other it acted to exclude the influence of 'bourgeois' or 'reactionary' elements through repression and an open border to the West.

The understanding of intellectuals used here is a broad one, including writers and artists, but also university communities and especially students.[12] Students have been known throughout East Central Europe for their role in pressing for change at critical moments. Everywhere, that is, except in East Germany.

Early Challenges and Early Policies

The Soviet Military Administration in Germany and its German (SMAG) Communist helpers were determined from the immediate post-war days to influence decisively the emergence of a new intelligentsia on German soil. They were equally determined to hinder intellectual dissent. This is most visible in university policy.[13] In the summer of 1945 the professorial bodies of all six universities of the Soviet

[9] Aczel and Meray, *Revolt*; Peter Raina, *Political Opposition in Poland* (London: Poets and Painters Press, 1978), 39–44; *Andrzej Friszke, Opozycja polityczna w PRL 1945–1980* (London: Aneks, 1994), 67.

[10] Several scholars have posited the SED's comparative success in transforming élites. Meuschel, *Legitimation*, 128–9; Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949–1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 81.

[11] For the absence of such an intelligentsia in the GDR see Melvin Croan, 'East German Revisionism: The Spectre and the Reality', in Labedz, *Revisionism*, 240.

[12] This approximates Ernst Richert's conception of a three-fold division of the East German intellectual community: students, writers and social scientists. *'Sozialistische Universität'. Die Hochschulpolitik der SED* (Berlin: Colloquium, 1967), 142.

[13] For a discussion of controls over the production of art and literature in the early post-war period, see David Pike, *The Politics of Culture in Soviet-occupied Germany 1945–1949* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992).

Zone had re-convened and begun to purge themselves of former Nazis, but the new authorities proved very suspicious of these efforts. Conflicts ensued over precise numbers, with the universities insisting that certain professors had to be maintained in order to guarantee basic university functions. The Soviets responded to German obstinance with an order in early 1946 that every former Nazi be removed from teaching staffs, something the Germans – and Western powers – considered fantastic.[14] The rectors of Rostock, Leipzig and Berlin were replaced by more compliant colleagues; and the rector of Greifswald, the theologian Ernst Lohmeyer, was arrested the day before the scheduled university re-opening in January 1946. He was never heard from again.[15]

As a result of this de-Nazification the number of university teachers active in the Soviet Zone dropped by over two-thirds.[16] This was the most decisive break in professorial continuity in East Central Europe, for the purges touched every faculty. The Czech purges of 1948 were severe, but left medical and natural science faculties essentially intact.[17] It was also the earliest point at which Communist authorities in East Central Europe began forming a new intelligentsia. Soviet or German Communist agencies had to approve not only the hiring of every new university teacher, but also the admittance of each new student.

Soviet and German Communists co-operated[18] in student admissions policies, which were seen as the groundwork for building a new academic élite. According to guidelines of early 1948, the goal of worker courses was the 'formation of the next generation of academics from such strata of the people (workers, peasants, victims of fascism and victims of national socialism) as have been excluded from high school for social or political reasons'.[19] Early in 1946, special faculties were set up throughout the Soviet Zone to prepare worker and peasant children for university. Previously, people from such social strata had been all but denied entrance to university. Through a process of trial and error the SED devised methods of selection and teaching that guaranteed strong contingents of students from these social strata who would succeed at university. The East German worker-

[14] On the purging, see Mitchell G. Ash, 'Denazifying Scientists – and Science', in M. Judt and B. Ciesla, (eds.), *Technology Transfer out of Germany after 1945*, (Chur, 1995).

[15] Marianne and Egon Erwin Müller, *'. . . stürmt die Festung Wissenschaft!' Die Sowjetisierung der mitteldeutschen Universitäten seit 1945* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1953), 65; Universitätsarchiv Greifswald, personnel file Ernst Lohmeyer.

[16] Bundesarchiv, Abteilungen Potsdam, (BAAP), R2/1060/21.

[17] See, for example, the faculty listings in František Jordan, (ed.), *Dějiny University v Brně*, (Brno: Universita J. E. Purkyně, 1969), 370–84.

[18] Soviet officers strongly encouraged the German administration to increase rapidly the numbers of workers at the universities. Examples in Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO-BA); Zentrales Parteiarchiv (ZPA), Berlin, IV2/9.04/697 (unnumbered); Hans-Hendrik Kasper, 'Der Kampf der SED um die Heranbildung einer Intelligenz aus der Arbeiterklasse und der werktätigen Bauernschaft über die Vorstudienanstalten an den Universitäten und Hochschulen der sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands 1945/46–1949', PhD Thesis (Freiberg i. S., 1979), 172; BAAP, R2/4008/56.

[19] BAAP, R2/900/13–14.

peasant faculties became the most serious in the region (see Table 1) and, indeed, outdid even the Soviet variant in consistency of application.[20]

Table 1. *Worker-peasant courses*

Country	Years of operation	Percentage of university admissions from worker-peasant courses[21]
GDR	1946–66	20
Czech Lands	1949–54	10–13
Poland	1945–55	8–9

Soviet and East German Communists complemented these affirmative action policies with a careful ideological policing of university terrains. At first they may have harboured some belief that such policing would not be necessary given that student admissions policies were meant to screen students tainted by fascist ideology. In 1946 the SMAG even permitted student councils to emerge throughout the Zone. Yet students did not behave as expected: in two freely contested elections in 1947 they elected liberals and Christian Democrats. The SMAG responded with changes in election procedures, and growing terror: over 400 students and professors were arrested in East Germany between 1945 and mid-1953.[22] Students of the immediate post-war years proved to be the group in East German society least willing to accept the increasingly authoritarian regime, and thereby reinforced the determination of the SMAG and SED to direct the formation of a new intelligentsia.[23]

Such determination extended to the top tiers of the leadership, and in this the SED was extraordinary. There are no records of Klement Gottwald, Rudolf Slánský, Władysław Gomułka or Bolesław Bierut intervening in favour of worker studies at any point.[24] Walter Ulbricht, on the other hand, constantly involved himself in the formation of the new élite: from Marxist-Leninist schooling to special legal training, stipends, sport instruction, recruiting of women and, of course, the worker-peasant faculties. In 1950, he personally adjusted the numbers of

[20] The Soviet model for such courses, the *rabfak*, was used intensively only in the early post-revolutionary period and during the Great Break (1928–32). It was scaled down and then abandoned altogether in the 1930s. See Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921–1934* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

[21] The East German total represents an average figure from 1952/6. The Czech and Polish numbers are from peak periods in the early 1950s. Státní ústřední archiv, Prague (SÚA) ÚPV 2481 12/3.81.43/54; Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw (AAN) MSW 17/91–2; KC PZPR 237/XVI/120/43; 121/103–5; *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik 1960/61* (Berlin: VEB Deutscher Zentralverlag, 1961), 132–3.

[22] Müller, '. . . *stürmt die Festung Wissenschaft*', 364–79. By 1956 that number had grown to 579. Report of Horst Böttcher, 28 Aug. 1956, SAPMO-BA IV2/9.04/667 (unnumbered).

[23] John Connelly, 'East German Higher Education Policies and Student Resistance, 1945–1948', *Central European History*, Vol. 28, no. 3 (1995).

[24] In Prague, see the Klement Gottwald papers, esp. SÚA–AÚV KSČ, f. 100/24 a.j. 956,975,978; f. 19/7 a.j. 1–346; in Warsaw, see the Party collections AAN KC PPR 295/XVII, KC PZPR 237/XVI, and the state collections of Ministerstwo Oświaty and Ministerstwo Szkolnictwa Wyższego.

worker-peasant students to be admitted, demanding that they be increased threefold.[25] At least in part due to this decisive central will, the SED apparatus was likewise keenly interested in élite-building, and maintained the constant pressure on trade union, youth (FDJ) or basic party cells necessary to direct the ideological and technical education of young cadres.

The results are readily apparent in a comparative glance at student recruitment and stipends (Tables 2 and 3). SED functionaries had been troubled by a significant presence of students who did not 'belong to us', that is, students of bourgeois background.[26] They learned that the most efficient way of binding students to the Party was through scholarships. Students who became materially dependent on the Party tended to behave loyally. The wisdom of this policy was shown in 1956 when trouble tended to emanate from groups not dependent upon stipends, such as future veterinarians.[27]

Table 2. *Worker and peasant students at Czech, East German and Polish universities*

	Czech Lands (student body)	(ČSSR)	GDR (student body)	Poland (freshmen)	Poland (graduates)
1947/8	18.0[28]		16.8[29]	41.7[30]	
1949/50		37.5	34.0	45.6[31]	
1950/1	36.8[32]	44.0	38.6	62.2[33]	
1952/3		41.5[34]	45.4	59.4[35]	
1953/4	37.3	41.4[36]	48.1	57.8	58.9
1956/7	38.4	43.8[37]	57.1	48.5	56.4
1960/1	37.8	43.6[38]	56.0	44.5	53.4
1961/2	39.6	45.7	55.0	44.6	49.7

[25] In June 1950 Ulbricht demanded that the intake for worker-peasant faculties that year be increased from 1,500 to 4,500. BAAP, C20/1019/82–5. For other records of Ulbricht's extraordinary activism see *ibid.*, C20/16, C20/1011; R2/1892/76, 1154/1, 1125/115, 1478/252; R3/223/5; E1/17085/60–92, 17514/6; SAPMO-BA ZPA NL 182/933; IV2/9.04/465.

[26] See, for example, the comments of Professor W. Hauser at 'Vierte Tagung des zentralen Hochschulausschusses der SED am 7. und 8. Februar 1948', SAPMO-BA, ZPA IV2/9.04/6 (unnumbered), 241.

[27] Richert, *Hochschulpolitik*, 133.

[28] These figures may be inflated because they include everyone employed in the agricultural sector. The percentages of workers only among the student body in 1946/7 and 1947/8 were 7.2 and 6.7, respectively. SÚA ÚPV 1110, C. 211894/48.

[29] Herbert Stallmann, *Hochschulzugang in der SBZ/DDR* (Sankt Augustin: Richarz, 1980), 305–7.

[30] AAN MO/2869/47–50.

[31] *Statystyka szkolnictwa*, Aug. 1966, 40.

[32] SÚA – AÚV KSČ, f. 100/1 a.j. 1155/117.

[33] AAN MSW 17/91–2.

[34] SÚA – AÚV KSČ, f. 19/7, a.j. 280/96.

[35] *Statystyka szkolnictwa*, Aug. 1966, 40.

[36] SÚA ÚPV 2481.

[37] *Statistická ročenka Republiky Československé 1957* (Prague: Orbis, 1957), 238. The differences in Czech and Czechoslovak totals are explained by the influx of students of peasant background into the Slovak student body.

[38] *Statistická ročenka Československé Socialistické Republiky 1962* (Prague: Státní nakladatelství technické literatury, 1962), 419.

Table 3. *Percentage of students receiving state stipends*

	Czech Lands[39]	ČSSR[40]	Poland[41]	GDR[42]
1951/2	49.4			88.0
1952/3	48.7			92.0
1954		46.2		95.2
1955		56.3	71.0	88.4
1956		55.2	65.5	90.7
1957		41.8	60.5	87.8
1958		32.3	55.1	94.0
1959		23.0	51.2	90.6
1960		22.1	53.3	89.2
1961		21.4		88.8
1965		30.3	47.5	84.1
1968		38.7	41.9	90.0
1969		44.8	45.1	

In 1958/9 all East German worker-peasant students (55.1 per cent of the total) received full scholarships; the remaining scholarship holders received a two-thirds stipend. In Poland, at the same time, thirty-nine per cent of students received a full stipend and 4.7 per cent a partial stipend.[43] There was in Poland and Czechoslovakia additional scholarship aid from enterprises, but nowhere was the state so directly responsible for student welfare as in East Germany.

The East German Party had been most careful to bind students into a web of dependency and obligation. There were relatively more taken from the lowest social groups; they were given the longest and most expensive pre-university preparation and the highest state stipends, and were made to join Communist organisations. As early as the winter term 1946/7, close to one-third of the students of the Soviet Zone of Occupation were SED members.[44] All of this formed the basis for a highly effective system of reward and punishment. The Polish Party achieved only partial success: many of the students came from a peasant background, but not as many received stipends or became attached to the Party. In 1953 barely nine per cent of Polish students had become members of the PZPR; by 1958 that total declined to

[39] SÚA AÚV KSČ f. 19/7 a.j. 280/95.

[40] Historická statistická ročenka ČSSR, (Prague: SNTL – Nakladatelství technické literatury, 1985), 595, 597.

[41] *Rocznik statystyczny 1960* (Warsaw, 1960), 357; *Rocznik statystyczny 1970* (Warsaw, 1970), 423, 439.

[42] *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik 1960/61* (Berlin, 1961), 133; *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik 1970* (Berlin, 1970), 386.

[43] Werner Kienitz, (ed.), *Das Schulwesen sozialistischer Länder in Europa* (Berlin: Volk und Wissen, 1962), 266–7, 352.

[44] BAAP, R2/1060/46; Kasper, 'Der Kampf', 272.

2.5 per cent.[45] Worse still, they entered unreformed university environments: in 1954 11.1 per cent of Polish professors (full and extraordinary) belonged to the Party.[46] That same year 28.8 per cent of East German professors belonged to the SED.[47] The Polish total stagnated while the East German steadily rose.

The growing numbers of worker-peasants in East German universities are all the more impressive given the relatively small agricultural sector in that country. Places like Bulgaria, Slovakia and Poland, where much of society was moving from village to town, found it much easier to recruit new élites from underprivileged classes. As the Czech statistics indicate, transforming the 'ruling class' into an intermediate stratum was not so simple.[48] Though more than a fifth of the university students in the Czech Lands in the early 1950s belonged to the KSČ few came from worker or peasant backgrounds and therefore did not owe social advancement to the Party.[49] After the mid-1950s the regimes in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia gradually abandoned affirmative action programmes.[50] Though numbers of worker-peasant students began to decline in East Germany as well, they remained high, and the enticements extended relatively the furthest.

The political fruits of this attention were visible during the crisis of June 1953. The uprising of that month was a working-class affair:[51] students, who played leading roles in similar popular outbursts in later years in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, had little to do with the events of that month.[52] At worst, internal SED memoranda criticised students for having behaved too passively on the day:

45 Piotr Hübner, *Nauka polska po II wojnie światowej – idee i instytucje* (Warsaw: Centralny Ośrodek Metodyczny Studiów Nauk Politycznych, 1987) 134, 173; Barbara Fijałkowska, *Polityka i twórcy (1948–1959)*, (Warsaw: PWN, 1985), 464.

46 Hübner, *Nauka*, 174. In 1958 the number of Polish professors and docents belonging to the Party was 11.4 per cent. Fijałkowska, *Polityka*, 464.

47 Ralph Jessen, 'Professoren im Sozialismus. Aspekte des Strukturwandels der Hochschullehrerschaft in der Ulbricht-Ära', in Harmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka and Harmut Zwahr (eds.), *Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1994), 241.

48 John Connelly, 'Students, Workers, and Social Change: The Limits of Czech Stalinism', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 56, no. 2 (1997). On the central role of former peasants in East European Communist élites see Zygmunt Bauman, 'Social Dissent in the East European Political System', in Bernard L. Faber (ed.), *The Social Structure of Eastern Europe* (New York: Praeger, 1976), 129.

49 This figure pertains to students of Charles University in Prague and Masaryk University in Brno. SÚA-AÚV KSČ, f. 02/4, a.j. 120, bod 19.

50 The Polish regime mostly scrapped the affirmative action policy in 1955, though there was a brief resurgence after 1965. Jan Osiński, 'Zasada preferencji społecznej jako metoda przyspieszenia demokratizacji wyższego wykształcenia', in Magdalena Roszkowska, ed., *Rekrutacja młodziezy na studia wyższe* (Warsaw: PWN, 1973), 199. In Hungary, the class-based quota system was relaxed in the mid-1950s. Sonija Szelényi and Karen Aschaffenburg, 'Inequalities in Educational Opportunity in Hungary', in Yossi Shavit and Hans-Peter Blossfeld (eds.), *Persistent Inequality: Changing Educational Attainment in Thirteen Countries* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1993), 274, 295.

51 Jürgen Kocka and Martin Sabrow (eds.), *Die DDR als Geschichte* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1994), 54–5.

52 Anke Huschner, 'Der 17. Juni 1953 an Universitäten und Hochschulen der DDR', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, no. 5 (1991), 682; Ilko-Sascha Kowalczuk, 'Volkserhebung ohne "Geistesarbeiter?" Die Intelligenz in der DDR', in Ilko-Sascha Kowalczuk, Armin Mitter and Stefan Wolle (eds.), *Der Tag X 17. Juni 1953* (Berlin: Linksverlag, 1996), 153–7.

they had not shown enough vigour in opposing strikers and demonstrators.[53] In only a few cases were students reported as having joined strike committees; in many more they had worked to keep production going.[54] During a 1954 retrospective, the State Secretary for Higher Education, Gerhard Harig, recommended expanding worker-peasant education, because the 'overwhelming majority' of students had acted 'exemplarily' during the challenges of the previous year.[55]

The Party also treated the older generation of intellectuals with a mixture of suppression and coddling. Faced with restrictions on scholarship and often with the threat of arrest, leading 'bourgeois' social scientists like Hans Freyer, Walter Hallstein, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Eduard Spranger, Theodor Litt and Hans Leisegang had emigrated by 1948. Those who remained were gradually joined by a distinguished group of leftist intellectuals including Walter Markov, Hans Mayer, Ernst Bloch, Hermann Budzislawski and Wieland Herzfelde. As is well known, many of the most celebrated German writers also chose to live in the East. If they remained loyal, intellectuals in East Germany could be treated to salaries that exceeded a worker's fifty-fold.[56] In addition, university professors retained substantial powers within their institutes. These facts may have desensitised them to contradictions in the world around them.[57] In Poland, by contrast, the bounty could not be spread so thickly; most professors were forced to hold several jobs just to make ends meet.[58] Professors in the Czech Lands were so neglected that Soviet advisors had to encourage the authorities to raise their salaries so that progress might be made in filling vacant slots.[59] In the GDR, policies towards students and

[53] The SED higher education functionary Franz X. Wohlgemuth reported at the first rectors conference after 17 June that 'there have been no disorders [*Unruhen*] at any universities'. BAAP, R3/1538/30. In Halle there were some extraordinary cases of students taking part in demonstrations, but 'in general one can say that the university and its members showed their good side during the events of 17 June 1953'. In Berlin, many students 'show[ed] a positive attitude either by turning away from the demonstrations, or by discussing with the demonstrators instead of joining them'. BAAP R3/147/28–34.

[54] Huschner, 'Der 17. Juni', 690–1.

[55] Speech of 5 July 1954, in Hans-Joachim Lammel (ed.), *Dokumente zur Geschichte der Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Fakultäten der DDR*, II: *1949–1966* (Berlin: Institut für Hochschulbildung, 1988), 130–43.

[56] By January 1952, over 14,000 'individual contracts' of up to 20,000 marks monthly had been concluded with 'members of the intelligentsia'. The average monthly wage in the GDR at that time was 308 marks. Ilko-Sascha Kowalczuk, 'Die Durchsetzung des Marxismus-Leninismus in der Geschichtswissenschaft der DDR (1945–1961)', in Martin Sabrow and Peter Th. Walther (eds.), *Historische Forschung und sozialistische Diktatur: Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft der DDR* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1995), 53. In 1953, over 20 per cent of professors had individual contracts, and workers believed that they also benefitted from special shops [*Intelligenzläden*]. Huschner, 'Der 17. Juni', 682.

[57] Hans Mayer, for example, was taken daily to and from university by taxi – an unimaginable luxury for Leipzig the early 1950s. Andreas Krzok, 'Erinnerung an Leipzig', in Inge Jens, (ed.), *Über Hans Mayer* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 126.

[58] RFE Report, Item no. 353/57; Czesław Luczak (ed.), *University of Poznań 1919 – 1969* (Poznań: Drukarnia Uniwersytetu im. A. Mickiewicza, 1971), 255.

[59] See the letter of Soviet Professor P.M. Bidulya to Z. Fierlinger in SÚA AÚV KSČ fo. 19/7 a.j. 272/99–103, and the report of a trip in the spring of 1953 of Czechoslovak higher education experts to the Soviet Union, in *ibid.*, f. 19/7, a.j. 272/2 136–43.

professors ultimately merged, as in the 1970s the graduates of worker-peasant faculties began populating teaching staffs.[60]

As with students, the older generation of intellectuals behaved passively or loyally during the 1953 crisis. Leading figures of the 1956 intellectual challenge to the SED even welcomed the Soviet forces. Bertold Brecht cheered from his balcony as Soviet tanks entered the Friedrichstrasse. Economist Fritz Behrens ordered a tram driver to remove a 'provocative flag' from his vehicle before allowing the ride to commence. In many cases, professors acted to secure university buildings.[61] Ernst Bloch's son Jan Robert recalled that his father and other beacons of opposition to the SED failed to become seriously interested in the workers' uprising of 17 June.[62] Former emigrés from Nazi Germany were highly suspicious of spontaneous mass street activity. Bloch's friend, the professor of literature Hans Mayer, saw in the demonstrators not workers but a fascist mob: 'In 1933 or 1938 the murderers wore brownshirts. Now they wear Wild West costumes.'[63]

The Interrupted Thaw

Despite the evident success of its policies towards the intelligentsia in June 1953, the regime could not continue as if nothing had happened. Intellectuals had behaved passively at worst, but they were not entirely content. There had been expressions of understanding, if not solidarity, for workers and, more importantly, of desires for greater freedom in research and writing.[64] Professors bemoaned the growing regimentation of scientific research and the difficulties of attending conferences in the West. Students likewise criticised reforms which had imposed a set schedule of classes and robbed them of summer holidays. Massive suppression of tiny Protestant youth groups in 1952 also gave rise to a general feeling of unease.[65]

The SED's response to the dissatisfaction among intellectuals was a more liberal 'New Course' in cultural affairs. The Party permitted relatively open and critical discussions at universities throughout the summer of 1953. For example, a meeting of university rectors in July could demand that the government respect its own laws.[66]

[60] In 1951 7.7 per cent of East German professors were of working-class background, and 23.1 per cent belonged to the SED. In 1971 the figures were 39.1 per cent and 61.5 per cent respectively. Ralph Jessen, *hochschule ost*, no. 3 (1995), 70.

[61] Huschner mentions Halle and Jena, 'Der 17. Juni', 690.

[62] Hans-Dieter Zimmermann, *Der Wahnsinn des Jahrhunderts. Die Verantwortung der Schriftsteller in der Politik* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1992). Yet they also found that workers possessed some legitimate complaints. See esp. the comments of Ernst and Karola Bloch, in SAPMO-BA, ZPA IV 2/9.04/426/93–95.

[63] SAPMO-BA, ZPA IV 2/9.04/426/97–9.

[64] On professors' understanding for workers' demands, see the comments on rector Hämel of Jena. Huschner, 'Der 17. Juni', 690.

[65] Waldemar Krönig and Klaus-Dieter Müller, *Anpassung Widerstand Verfolgung. Hochschule und Studenten in der SBZ und DDR 1945–1961* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1994), 364–93.

[66] BAAP R3/6323/13, 19. Later, there would be reports of 'openly hostile attitudes' expressed at the general meeting of members of the University of Leipzig on 25 July 1953. 'Entwurf einer Entschliessung der PO der Institute f. Philosophie und Psychologie der KMU Leipzig', BAAP R3/4230.

The new atmosphere absorbed the intellectuals' grievances but, more importantly, it provided SED hardliners a chance to regroup, with Soviet endorsement. Whereas the Soviets had driven a wedge in the Hungarian leadership after Stalin's death, the events of 17 June convinced them that only Ulbricht could maintain order in East Germany, and therefore they supported his position.

Internal party reports noted that a 'fundamental improvement of Party work took place after the [summer] holidays' of 1953.[67] By early 1954, the more daring voices of criticism had fallen silent, accused of insisting on 'discussions of mistakes' (*Fehlerdiskussionen*). Organisations of young Christians again came under heavy fire, though without the deafening barrages of 1952. The Party proceeded more quietly, and also more effectively. Rather than permitting semi-independent discussion clubs to emerge within the Party, the leadership pulled tight 'transmission belts' such as the 'Cultural Union for Democratic Rebirth' (*Kulturbund*), which 'organised' 170,000 intellectuals and artists. In February 1954, the second secretary of the *Kulturbund*, former Gulag inmate Erich Wendt, affirmed that intellectuals could not be denied the right to association, but it was better that they meet at the *Kulturbund* rather than 'in pubs, tea parlours or with *Kaffeekränzen* . . . in the old caste spirit'.[68] The fall of Malenkov early in 1955 meant a momentary end to any thoughts of liberalisation, though officially the New Course was not retracted. When asked what the New Course meant, Walter Ulbricht could now answer simply 'Marxism-Leninism'.[69]

The year 1956 therefore caught both the East German regime and East German intellectuals off guard. Although debates had been raging in Polish and Hungarian cultural institutions, the East German scene remained bleak. This was most apparent at meetings of East German with other Eastern European intellectuals. In May 1955, delegations from across Eastern Europe travelled to Weimar to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Schiller's death. Professor of German literature Alfred Kantorowicz (SED) confided his impressions to his diary:

> Discussion with Polish, Hungarian and Czech writers, professors, graduate students. The agreement is stunning. What they say about the ferment of all classes [*Volksschichten*] of their countries against the stubborn dictatorship of the Party functionaries reminds me of the mood around 17 June 1953. It makes one hopeful as well as depressed. The Polish and Hungarian writers have achieved more freedom of movement through their struggle against the cultural functionaries than we have. They have public debates in which the writers are

[67] *Ibid*. This report from early 1954 is typical of the return to the Stalinist practices of intimidation and crushing of dissent. Now it was noted that 'the Party organisation stands unanimously behind the Central Committee decisions and thanks the Central Committee for the annihilation of the traitorous Herrnstadt–Zaisser Group'.

[68] Magdalena Heider, *Politik–Kultur–Kulturbund: Zur Gründungs- und Frühgeschichte des Kulturbundes zur demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands 1945–1954 in der SBZ/DDR* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik), 184. In 1956 Ulbricht would demonstrate a similar adeptness at staying one step ahead of a popular mass movement by himself inaugurating the formation of 'workers' councils', fearing that East German workers might follow the Hungarian example. Stefan Heym, *Nachruf* (Berlin: Der Morgen, 1990), 605–6.

[69] Walter Markov, *Zwiesprache mit dem Jahrhundert. Dokumentiert von Thomas Grimm* (Cologne: Volksblatt, 1990), 208.

like a bloc in their opposition to the bumbling attempts of Party bosses to interfere in literary affairs.

> Here they had occasion to take part in a conference of the chiefs of our 'writers in uniform' ['kasernierte Schriftstellerei', i.e. the East German Writers Union]. . . . Afterwards we met . . . N. said: 'the way they sat there, Kuba [Kurt Bartel] and Claudius and a few other members of the board of your Writers' Union, with their swollen necks, fists resting on the table, and with an expression as if to say: "Do as you like. We have everything under control. No, that would be impossible in our country." (I wrote this sentence down verbatim.) Everyone agreed. I had nothing to say.[70]

Leading figures of the East German Writers' Union had survived the Moscow purges of two decades earlier, and, as Minister of Culture Johannes R. Becher wrote of himself, 'when your backbone has been broken, no one will persuade you to stand straight again'.[71] In Poland and Hungary, younger writers set the tone in 1956; in East Germany famed figures of the older generation such as Friedrich Wolf, J. R. Becher, Wieland Herzfelde, Arnold Zweig, Willi Bredel and Anna Seghers remained powerful and hindered debate.[72]

Writer Gerhard Zwerenz described the scene in Leipzig, a place otherwise famous for intellectual vitality: 'Until 1956 our life at the university was bland and boring.'[73] Even after Khrushchev's revelations SED controls remained stifling. If in Hungary or Poland intellectuals were a bloc, in Leipzig the bloc was the Party: 'News came into the country via western stations, and people began to know what had been said, yet when comrades came together they acted as if nothing had happened. Only people with great trust in each other confided in whispers what was moving them. The Party remained like a block of granite.'[74]

1956 and the Students

The SED leadership felt such confidence in its students that it even dared provoke them. In 1955, the ancient medical faculty of Greifswald University was informed that it would be converted into a military medical academy. Students who chose to remain would become army officers. Soon after this announcement, rumours of a strike began to circulate around the university. Yet, before any would-be dissenter could lift a finger, the SED called the medical students to the university's main hall for a 'meeting' with Mecklenburg's SED boss, Karl Mewis. As the 'meeting' was about to start, Mewis alleged that a student had struck him, and used this 'provocation' to trigger the mechanisms of repression. Over 250 students were quickly transferred from the university auditorium to a nearby jail. Most were released gradually over the next few days and weeks, but several students who had

70 *Deutsches Tagebuch, zweiter Teil* (Munich: Kindler, 1961), 553.

71 See Pike, *Politics*, x.

72 On the behaviour of these 'writers in uniform' in comparison with that of Hungarian writers, see Kantorowicz, *Deutsches Tagebuch, zweiter Teil*, 682.

73 Horst Krüger (ed.), *Das Ende einer Utopie: Hingabe und Selbstbefreiung früherer Kommunisten* (Freiburg: Walter-Verlag), 183.

74 Gerhard Zwerenz, *Der Widerspruch. Autobiographischer Bericht* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1991), 237.

been identified as ringleaders spent years in jail. A fully 'peaceful' conversion of the medical faculty then took place.[75]

For the SED leadership, it was not enough to have stifled dissent where it emerged. Rumours of the planned strike in Greifswald had floated throughout the East German university world, and provided the SED with an occasion to impose even greater control. At the beginning of the summer term, authorities at East Berlin's Humboldt University decided to make an example of one student who had spoken critically about the Greifswald affair. He was put on trial by the university Party leadership, and saved only by the resourcefulness of his professor. But the 'example' had been made.[76]

Despite such aggressive policies, 1956 became a year of consternation for the Ulbricht leadership. It could not sense how far the de-Stalinisation inaugurated at the Twentieth Party Congress would go. For a brief period, the unity of the leadership itself seemed to be in question. Leading functionaries Ernst Wollweber (security), Karl Schirdewan (cadres), Kurt Hager (ideology) and Paul Wandel (culture) are all thought to have favoured some degree of liberalisation. Before the final showdown in Budapest, Otto Grotewohl even promised artists greater freedom and students some revision of the obligation to learn Russian.[77] Ulbricht may have felt particularly uncomfortable because he had kept faith with Stalinism to the last. He was therefore careful to circumscribe the effects of Khrushchev's condemnations. Resolutions were prepared announcing that there had never been a 'cult of personality' in East Germany.[78] Ulbricht even chided younger comrades who had gone too far in their devotion to Stalin, for example by learning his writings by heart. He neglected to mention that they had done so under his direction.

Such prevarications enraged the SED faithful at the universities, and mid- to late 1956 became a time of intense discussion. Because of scant East German media coverage of events in the Soviet Union, East German Communist intellectuals found themselves doing what was once unthinkable: tuning into Western news broadcasts. Such direct access made them some of the best informed intellectuals in East Central Europe. In May the secret police (*Stasi*) reported that:

> At almost all universities heated and extensive discussions of the Twentieth Party Congress are taking place. . . . There was, however, a noticeable failure among the students of many faculties (e.g. the institutes of the philosophical faculty in Leipzig) to give priority to deliberating the harmfulness of the cult of personality; rather, students were out for sensation, and eagerly noted and discussed all published mentions of Stalin's mistakes.

Students hoped that a change of leadership would take place in the SED as it had in other East European parties, yet unlike counterparts in Warsaw, Prague, Bratislava or Budapest, they failed to demand solutions to more than specifically student grievances: too much Russian language, compulsory instruction in

[75] Krönig and Müller, *Hochschule*, 288.
[76] Kantorowicz, *Tagebuch*, 544.
[77] *Neues Deutschland*, 3 Nov. 1956, cited in Richert, *Hochschulpolitik*, 139.
[78] These were to be accepted at university SED organisations without deliberation. Kantorowicz, *Tagebuch*, 603.

Marxism-Leninism, travel restrictions.[79] In May 1956 the *Stasi* reported that students in Greifswald were demanding a curtailment of ideological indoctrination; counterparts in Rostock and Jena concentrated complaints upon Russian language instruction. The single concrete achievement was a withdrawal of travel restrictions after a demonstration by almost 1,000 students in Dresden. Yet those restrictions were quietly reinstated a year later.[80]

Despite their carefully limited character, the SED leadership took challenges from students seriously, and even in this time of uncertainty attempted to stifle hints of disagreement, whether serious or farcical. Imagining that they might take advantage of the more open atmosphere, several hundred students of the Music Academy in Weimar staged a mock demonstration in the centre of the town, protesting about the music of the popular folk singer Herbert Roth, whom they satirised as a 'serious danger for true folk music'. Their 'demonstration' was quickly suppressed and an investigation was launched to find the supposed instigators. The matter even reached the Politbureau, where Walter Ulbricht lamented that 'no one could find out' who had put up the notice on the bulletin board calling for this demonstration. 'This shows that the enemy can surprise us right in the centre of our own country, and we know nothing about it.'[81]

The summer vacation interrupted the formation of oppositional sentiments among students. Yet soon after they returned to university in the autumn, the *Stasi* reported 'agitated discussions' of the events occurring in Poland and Hungary. Students mocked the government's restrictions on the flow of information from Poland, for example by confiscating copies of an East Berlin newspaper which had prominently featured Gomułka and part of his acceptance speech. The *Stasi* observed students getting first-hand knowledge of events in Poland at East Berlin's Polish cultural centre and students of Slavic languages translating news fron *Trybuna Ludu*.[82]

Yet open and organised activity was almost entirely limited to the medical and veterinary faculties. These were the faculties with the fewest worker-peasant students, and the most 'bourgeois professors' who could still provide students with 'traditional role models'. The threatened withdrawal of scholarships may have pacified students of other faculties, but these 'bourgeois' students often had alternative sources of income. For example, veterinary students could earn money by taking part in immunisation campaigns. Their subjects of study had also been among the most resistant to ideological penetration.[83] Further separating these

[79] Mitter and Wolle, *Untergang*, 231.

[80] Krönig and Müller, *Hochschule*, 294–5. On the re-instatement see Aktennotiz für Gen. Hager, 4. Juni 1956. SAPMO-BA, ZPA IV2/9.04/46/19–21; Politbureau meeting of 23 April 1957, in SAPMO-BA, ZPA IV2/2/538.

[81] Mitter and Wolle, *Untergang*, 233.

[82] *Ibid.*, 263.

[83] Richert, *Hochschulpolitik*, 133. For the greater personal continuity among professors of medical faculties, see Ralph Jessen, 'Vom Ordinarius zum sozialistischen Professor. Die Neukonstruktion des Hochschullehrerberufs in der SBZ/DDR, 1945–1969', in Richard Bessel and Ralph Jessen (eds.), *Die Grenzen der Diktatur: Staat und Gesellschaft in der DDR* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1996), 92–3.

students was the Soviet-style method of instruction, which kept students of differing specialisations apart. Thus it was possible for students of Kantorowicz's Institute of German Literature in Berlin to support a resolution condemning the actions of students in the medical faculty.[84]

But even medical students did not intend to mount a political challenge. In the last week of October their activities climaxed in their demands for an end to Marxist-Leninist indoctrination, Russian language instruction and the Soviet-style ten-month academic year, as well as for the right to matriculate freely and form independent student representation. The only demand that transcended direct student concerns was for more open media coverage.[85]

The sole attempts at public demonstrations originated in Berlin's medical faculty. On 24 October, shortly after Gomułka's accession to power in Poland and at the beginning of the armed conflict in Hungary, there was a call to a protest march at Marx-Engels Platz. Ulbricht, perhaps heartened by reports of Soviet intervention in Hungary, now recovered his determination. The students never reached the would-be demonstration, because the SED leader had them incarcerated for two days in the university building where they had been debating.

These efforts at intimidation were not immediately successful, however. On 3 November, students meeting at the veterinary faculty demanded an end to Russian language and 'social science' instruction, an expanded student exchange within Germany, unrestricted travel and better access to Western scientific literature. Students called for a march to proceed from the border with West Berlin to the nearby State Secretariat for Higher Education. About 1,000 would-be demonstrators met at the appointed hour, but instead of taking their demands eastwards, they were pushed back into West Berlin by the People's Police. This was only the most visible manifestation of a pervasive phenomenon: namely, the draining of East German protest potential to the West.

This proved to be the last open expression of dissent among students. News of the suppression of the Hungarian uprising caused a sea change in East German politics as, in the words of Erich Loest, 'from one week to the next functionaries rediscovered the certain old hardness and hard old certainty of their language and arguments'.[86] Large contingents of 'workers'' militias accompanied SED leaders to meetings with students in Berlin in the first days of November; when the 'workers'' turn came to speak they thundered their 'outrage' at the students' demands; the 'workers' after all had made university education possible to begin with. In a meeting with Berlin's academic senate on 3 November, Kurt Hager complained of the difficulty he had in holding back workers who wanted to 'beat up' (*zusammenschlagen*) students.[87] After this, several small student discussion groups emerged in Jena, Halle and Magdeburg which were systematically destroyed in the closing years of the decade.[88]

[84] Richert, *Hochschulpolitik*, 142.
[85] Mitter and Wolle, *Untergang*, 265; Richert, *Hochschulpolitik*, 137.
[86] *Durch die Erde ein Riss. Ein Lebenslauf* (Leipzig: Linden-Verlag, 1990), 288–9.
[87] Kantorowicz, *Tagebuch*, 684, 686–8; Krönig and Müller, *Hochschule*, 291–2.
[88] Beginning in early 1957, a group of seven to eight students formed in Halle for free discussion

'Revisionism'

The most significant intellectual challenge emerged only after the Ulbricht regime recovered its sense of mission in the wake of the Hungarian revolution. The challenge emanated from young Party members associated with the cultural journal *Sonntag*, the Aufbau publishing house, and Leipzig and Berlin universities. As with counterparts elsewhere in East Central Europe these 'revisionist' Marxist intellectuals desired a reform of socialism, and took inspiration from the Yugoslav model: workers' councils, multi-candidate elections, profit-sharing for workers, an end to collectivisation and greater intellectual freedoms. Their ostensible leader, the brilliant young philosopher Wolfgang Harich, hoped in addition to achieve German unity through a joint SED–SPD platform.[89]

What made East German revisionists stand out against an East Central European background was not so much their ideas as their activities. These were characterised by unwavering loyalty to the Party. How these intellectuals imagined change to be possible without direct challenges to Ulbricht remains a mystery. Having worked for years in the Party they knew of its strict centralisation and hierarchical character, yet they refused to consider allies outside or even within the Party leadership:[90] neither they nor Ulbricht's Politbureau rivals considered making common cause.[91]

As loyal Party soldiers, East German revisionists wished not to be seen to be a faction, and they therefore ignored the rules of conspiracy. Perhaps the most important meeting of would-be opponents – the November 1956 gathering of editors Walter Janka, Gustav Just, Heinz Zöger with Wolfgang Harich, and Paul Merker in Klein-Machnow near Berlin – agreed to do nothing in order not to 'endanger the unity of the Party'.[92] Harich openly confided his plans to the Soviet Ambassador and to Ulbricht himself, and failed to consult his closest associates before under-

of 'political and world view problems'. They were moved by the 'growth of intolerance in political life after the suppression of the Hungarian Uprising'. Two of the founders were sentenced to seven years in prison for 'state treason'. Krönig and Müller, *Hochschule*, 296–300. In 1958 four students in Magdeburg were given prison sentences of several years for protesting at the founding of a medical academy there. *Ibid*., 300. A group of students formed in Jena in 1954 at the Eisenberg high school, and considered themselves a true resistance group in the tradition of Stauffenberg. They continued meeting as students in Jena, until discovered in 1958. *Ibid*., 301–4. In 1959, a trial took place in Dresden of five students of the Technical University who had formed a school group in 1956 to protest the limitations on political freedom. They received a sentence of five to ten years. *Ibid*., 305–8. On Eisenberg, see also Patrik von zur Mühlen, *Der 'Eisenberger Kreis': Jugendwiderstand und Verfolgung in der DDR 1953–1958* (Bonn: Dietz, 1995).

[89] Loest, *Durch die Erde*, 298; Croan, 'Revisionism', 246–7; Richert, *Hochschulpolitik*, 150.

[90] Gustav Just, *Zeuge in eigener Sache. Die fünfziger Jahre* (Berlin: Der Morgen, 1990), 101–2.

[91] Ulbricht's major rival, Karl Schirdewan, claims to have represented a socialist alternative to Ulbricht. See his *Aufstand gegen Ulbricht: Im Kampf um politische Kurskorrektur, gegen stalinistische, dogmatische Politik* (Berlin, 1994), 100, 114. Yet, in the decisive days of 1956, he played the resolute hardliner, telling students that to advocate change to 'social science' revealed a 'reactionary petty bourgeois lifestyle'. Richert, *Hochschulpolitik*, 138.

[92] *Ibid*., 108–9. For Janka's recollections, see *Schwierigkeiten mit der Wahrheit* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1989). Harich's response is *Keine Schwierigkeiten mit der Wahrheit* (Berlin: Dietz, 1993).

taking his spectacular trip to *Der Spiegel* in Hamburg.[93] Any group cohesion – for example of 'the Harich-Janka group' – was an invention of Walter Ulbricht for use at trials that would intimidate other intellectuals. Such behavior very much contrasts with that of their Polish counterparts, for whom conspiracy and faction formation were ways of life, inherited from generations of foreign occupation.

After the summer of 1956, Ulbricht never lost the initiative. Events in neighbouring countries had reinforced his conviction of the danger of intellectuals. The SED leadership decided that there was 'an organic agreement of the counter-revolutionary ideology' of East German revisionist intellectuals with that of the 'hostile' groups in Hungary and Poland. This could be explained only by the 'unified direction at the hand of the [class] enemy'.[94] Despite its fundamental subservience, Ulbricht therefore subjected the East German intelligentsia to waves of repression. The Western press tended to magnify his concerns, facilely identifying Bloch as the German Lukács and Harich as the German Kołakowski.[95]

In November 1956, Harich became Ulbricht's first victim. He was accused of 'relations with the reactionary Petöfi circle in Hungary'.[96] After thanking the *Stasi* for arresting him, Harich proved willing to co-operate fully in the Party's destruction of his mentors and friends, and implicated in particular Janka and Bloch. He reported, for example, that Bloch 'throughout the year 1956 worked himself into a position directly hostile towards the SED leadership'.[97] The next victims of the crackdown were Janka and his colleagues from the cultural weekly *Sonntag*, Gustav Just and Heinz Zöger.

Ulbricht then turned his attention to the circle around Ernst Bloch in Leipzig, where there had been vigorous discussions among young writers and students.[98] According to writer Gerhard Zwerenz, in early 1956 the 'old Stalinists withdrew in confusion and indignation' and made no attempt to hinder the revisionists' activities.[99] Yet in the autumn, the bureaucrats' confidence returned and this 'group' quickly dissolved.[100] In March 1957, Ernst Bloch was compulsorily retired. His remaining students were 'strongly advised' to renounce their master. Some did, like Hans Pfeiffer. Jürgen Teller did not and, in order to prove his worthiness, was sent to 'production' where an accident cost him his right arm. Günter Zehm also

[93] Gerhard Zwerenz has called Harich an 'adventurer'. *Der Widerspruch*, 212–3.

[94] SAPMO-BA IV/2/1/183/18ff. Cited in Mitter and Wolle, *Untergang*, 288. For the judgement that Ulbricht 'overreacted', see Karl Wilhelm Fricke, 'Widerstand und Opposition von 1945 bis Ende der fünfziger Jahre', in *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission*, Vol. 7, 24.

[95] For SED reports on Harich and Bloch, with copious and annotated Western press cuttings, see SAPMO-BA, ZPA IV 2/9.04/162–3.

[96] In the words of Kantorowicz, to mention the Petöfi-Club 'called forth the same reaction among party functionaries as did the mention of the devil among believers in the Middle Ages'. *Tagebuch*, 692.

[97] Guntolf Herzberg, 'Ernst Bloch in Leipzig: Der operative Vorgang ''Wild'' ', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, Vol. 42, no. 8 (1994), 686.

[98] Loest, *Durch die Erde*, 293.

[99] *Ende*, 184–5.

[100] *Ibid.*, 186, 189–90; Loest, *Durch die Erde*, 292.

refused and was arrested.[101] Loest was likewise arrested, but Zwerenz managed to escape in time to West Berlin.

In June 1957 a group of Slavicists from the university in Halle were arrested, and in September their 'leader', Ralf Schroeder, was seized. Like Harich, Schroeder proved willing to reveal every detail of the conspiracy known to him.[102] People who had been closest to the arrested refused to help their families financially.[103] Most remained in prison well into the 1960s.

After this point, the Ulbricht regime carried its offensive into the ranks of intellectuals who had never entertained the idea of political opposition, namely the social scientists. At risk were the few who had departed furthest from Stalinist dogmas in scholarship, and in some cases felt enthusiasm over events in Poland.[104] Even more than in the case of the 'Harich-Janka group', any conspiratorial character to these intellectuals' designs was a fabrication of the SED leadership, and in all but a few instances slight prodding was all that was needed to produce massive self-criticism.

Prominent among Ulbricht's targets were historians. In general their response to the Twentieth Party Congress had been restrained;[105] nevertheless, the editorial board of their major journal, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, was reconstituted and used to discipline the GDR's foremost economic historian, Jürgen Kuczynski. Kuczynski later noted that all the leading East German historians (except Walter Markov) formed a 'united front' against him.[106] The attack was led by historian Fritz Köhler, not coincidentally a man who had seemed moved by the revelations of Khrushchev.[107] In the conjuncture of 1957, perhaps feeling obliged to over-compensate for his past,[108] Köhler delivered to the Central Committee a series of damaging indictments on Kuczynski, claiming that he had been the true inspiration of revisionism in the GDR, and concocting a conspiracy between Kuczynski, the economist Fritz Behrens and the historian Joachim Streisand. Supposedly Streisand had close contacts with West Berlin.[109]

Despite some reservations as to Köhler's motives, the SED leadership used him to keep Kuczynski fending off pseudo-academic attacks – for example that he had denied the complicity of right-wing Social Democrats in Germany's entry to the First World War – for years.[110] Such a strategy was not limited to the historical

[101] *Ibid.*, 306; Peter Zudeick, *Der Hintern des Teufels. Ernst Bloch – Leben und Werk* (Moos/Baden-Baden: Elster, 1985), 237–8.

[102] Loest, *Durch die Erde*, 320–1. Schroeder is 'Lehmann'.

[103] *Ibid.*, p. 309.

[104] See, for example, the report of Jürgen Kuczynski's trip to Poland in April 1956. SAPMO-BA, ZPA IV2/9.04/147/14.

[105] Fritz Klein, 'Dokumente aus den Anfangsjahren der ZfG', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, Vol. 42, no. 1 (1994), 43, 54.

[106] Jürgen Kuczynski, *Frost nach dem Tauwetter. Mein Historikerstreit* (Berlin: Elephanten Press, 1993), 64.

[107] SAPMO-BA, ZPA IV2/9.04/148.

[108] Interview with Fritz Klein, 10 Sept. 1996.

[109] Aktennotiz of 18 March 1957, SAPMO-BA IV2/90.4/148.

[110] Jürgen Kuczynski, *'Ein linientreuer Dissident', Memoiren 1945–1989* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1992), 104–29. For a discussion of revisionist ideas in the social sciences, see Jänicke, *Der dritte Weg*, 104–54.

community: simultaneously less gifted philosophers were mobilised against Ernst Bloch (Rugard Otto Gropp), and less gifted economists (Herbert Prauss) against Fritz Behrens and Arne Benary. As Kuczynski has lamented:

> Real Marxists like Fritz Behrens, Walter Markov and myself, real progressive scholars like Hans Mayer and Ernst Bloch, were forced to debate with primitive scholarly figures that were promoted and encouraged by the Party. And the Party supported them, indeed directed them against us, especially in the person of Kurt Hager . . .[111]

In early 1957, a younger colleague at the Institute for Economics in Berlin supplied the SED Central Committee with detailed reports of conversations with Behrens and Benary, in which the former praised the Leninist period of Soviet history as a time when 'everyone could freely speak their opinion'. Soon these revisionists were forced to recognise a higher principle: in February Benary confessed that 'it has always been clear to me that the power of the working class stands and falls with the unity of the Party. Yet the discussions we had undoubtedly did nothing to promote the unity (*Einheit und Geschlossenheit*) of the Party, and therefore our political practice did not live up to this correct principle.'[112]

After dealing with historians and economists, Ulbricht took the assault to scholars of Marxism-Leninism, who were perhaps his truest allies in academe.[113] In 1958, the SED leadership decided to 'annihilate a group hostile to the Party' at Humboldt University's Institute of Social Sciences. One comrade, when told to examine her conscience, confessed to the deepest shame for having procured a copy of Khrushchev's speech from her aunt in the West: 'Today I see clearly that the only foundation is solid unlimited trust in our Party.'[114]

What is remarkable in the behaviour of even the most daring 'revisionists' is the way in which slight pressure caused them to splinter, and often deny one another in the hope of regaining the Party's favour. Cases of solidarity with the victims are all but unknown, despite the supposed mass support their views enjoyed. Loest recalled the moments before he was expelled from the SED: 'He had known some of the people in the meeting for years. One person with whom he had played cards for years swore never to have been his friend. He encountered anger and disgust, sometimes feigned, sometimes real.'[115] When he fell into disfavour in 1953, Gerhard Zwerenz recalled that 'in the great city of Leipzig hardly a human being attempted to speak to him'.[116] Writer Wieland Herzfelde dared defend Zwerenz in a meeting in January 1957, but after a leading functionary called Zwerenz an enemy of the Party, he quickly asked for the podium again and avowed that he had 'not wanted to ally himself with enemies of the Party'.[117] At the January 1956 Congress

[111] Kuczynski, *Historikerstreit*, 76.
[112] The conversation took place at Behrens's weekend house. SAPMO-BA ZPA IV2/9.04/402/123–8, 160.
[113] Richert, *Hochschulpolitik*, 136. Even the 'doctrinaire Stalinist' Hanna Wolf was implicated. She subsequently aided Ulbricht in defeating Schirdewan. Jänicke, *Der dritte Weg*, 124.
[114] Cited in Mitter and Wolle, *Untergang*, 282.
[115] Loest, *Durch die Erde*, 312.
[116] Zwerenz, *Der Widerspruch*, 101.
[117] Loest, *Durch die Erde*, 304.

of the East German Writers' Union, Stefan Heym had dared to contradict Walter Ulbricht to his face. He later recalled the coffee break that followed:

An isolation as deadly as the one in which S.H. and his wife Gertrude found themselves in the whirl of the crowd during this half hour in the foyer of the congress hall is hardly imaginable outside really existing socialism. Only here is people's instinct so well developed for the dangerous glow radiated by a person under an official ban. A single person breaks through the invisible wall, and this not a German, but rather a Turk: Nazim Hikmet.[118]

Perhaps most poignant is the example of Walter Janka. Though they had enlisted his help in 'rescuing' Georg Lukács from Budapest in November 1956, Johannes R. Becher and Anna Seghers refused to come to the aid of the editor who was arrested the following year. He later described the trial:

The writers in attendance, from Anna Seghers and Willi Bredel to Bodo Uhse, did not take part in the screaming. They remained silent. Their faces were pale. . . . The face of Heli Weigel, the widow of Brecht, who had shown Janka her sympathy by winking at him, had become ashen. She stared into space, full of consternation. The failure of even one of the friends of Lukács who had come to the trial to protest the untrue allegations was for Janka the worst disappointment during the trial.[119]

Gustav Just likewise wondered at the failure of Janka's associates to speak a word in his defence:

And where were Seghers, Bredel, Uhse and all the others in his time of trouble? I can report something positive about only one of them: Ludwig Renn. Shortly after Janka's arrest he came to me in the editorial office. He was angry, but was able to control himself in his typically reserved way. He asked me how he could send Janka a pack of cigarettes with his best greetings. I advised him to try the state prosecutor's office. As Janka later told me, he received the greetings. What that can mean for a prisoner who feels abandoned by everyone, one can only imagine.[120]

Party and non-Party intellectuals alike had internalised the Leninist interdiction of factions. Jürgen Kuczynski, even decades after the fact, felt proud to have prevented his students from forming a school. In correspondence and discussions with the Party powerful, Ernst Bloch denied the school that had formed around him.[121] And after Bloch decided to stay in the West in 1961, Kuczynski denounced him in an open

[118] Heym, *Nachruf*, 598.

[119] Janka, *Schwierigkeiten*, 90–4.

[120] Just, *Zeuge*, 123–4.

[121] In a discussion with Central Committee functionaries on 25 Jan. 1957, Bloch quickly distanced himself from students Zehm and Kleine, professing he could not be held 'responsible for their thinking'. SAPMO IV2/9.04/163/28. Three days earlier he wrote to the Rector of Karl-Marx-University, G. Mayer, that when: 'the Horthy regime was on the rise in Hungary, I told the head of the institute: "It's high time now. When will the Red Army finally march in?"' He further wrote of his 'deep differences' with the arrested Wolfgang Harich, and emphasised the care he had taken to hire only graduate students who belonged to the SED, 'this in distinct contrast to other institutes at the Karl-Marx-University'. *Ibid.*, IV2/9.04/163/15–26. In Dec. 1957, Bloch wrote to the SED leadership: 'If Zwerenz calls himself my student, then this is incorrect'. *Ibid.*, IV2/2/569. For the view that Bloch remained loyal to his students, see Helga Grebing, *Der Revisionismus: Von Bernstein bis zum 'Prager Frühling'* (Beck: Munich, 1977), 165.

letter, signing 'hatefully yours' (*Verachtungsvoll*).[122] But of course, several years earlier, Bloch had publically denied himself, declaring 'it is the German Democratic Republic on whose ground I stand . . . criticism can be objective only if it takes place on the ground of the Republic'.[123] He was echoing words writen by East Germany's other great critical intellect, Bertolt Brecht. On 17 June 1953, Brecht wrote Ulbricht: 'At this moment, I feel a need to assure you of my solidarity [*Verbundenheit*] with the Socialist Unity Party of Germany.' He was a 'Marxist who stood loyally on the ground of the workers' and peasants' state'.[124] Happy indeed a land that does not require heroes.

Explanations for the unusual subservience and atomisation of East German intellectuals can only be preliminary, but the East Central European context does give some hints. In terms of politics that context was nearly uniform: under common ideological pressures from Moscow, East Central Europe's intellectuals became united in their dedication to socialism and anti-fascism. During the Stalinist period, even the anti-Soviet intellectuals of Poland collaborated with the new regime, and leading authorities embraced the new orthodoxies and styles.[125] What distinguished the intellectuals of various societies were their cultural origins. The Polish intellectuals who formed a 'bloc' against the Party in 1955 derived from a formation called the 'intelligentsia', which itself derived in complex ways from the Polish gentry.[126] Stubborn legends about their group's ancient and exalted geneology reinforced their loyalty to it.[127]

As has been described above, any East German intelligentsia had been formed by the Party. No revelations about Stalin's crimes could shake that intelligentsia's primary loyalty to its creator. After Stalinism, Polish intellectuals evolved away from the Party as a group, regardless of any attachment to Marxism. When in 1964 the head of the Polish writers' union, the 'servile' writer Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz, accepted the Polish Party's decision to toughen censorship, thirty-four prominent intellectuals drafted a letter of protest to the Party leadership. Among the signatories were Catholics such as Stefan Kisielewski and Jerzy Turowicz as well as lapsed or lapsing Communists such as Jan Kott or Jerzy Andrzejewski. A number of prominent young writers still in the Party, for example Tadeusz Konwicki or Kazimierz Brandys, refused to condemn the letter.[128] All these intellectuals implicitly claimed to play the traditional role of their nation's conscience.

[122] SAPMO-BA, ZPA IV2/9.04/163/110–1.

[123] *Neues Deutschland*, 20 April 1958; cited in Zwerenz, *Der Widerspruch*, 285–6.

[124] Cited in Werner Mittenzwei, *Das Leben des Bertolt Brecht oder der Umgang mit den Welträtseln*, Vol. 2 (Berlin/Weimar: Aufbau, 1988), 493–4; Alfred Kantorowicz, *Etwas ist ausgeblieben: zur geistigen Einheit der deutschen Literatur nach 1945* (Hamburg: Christians Verlag, 1985), 147, 214–15.

[125] See in this regard esp. the interview with Zbigniew Herbert, in Trznadel, *Hańba*, and Leopold Tyrmand, *Dziennik 1954* (Warsaw: Res Publica, 1989).

[126] Aleksander Gella, *Development of Class Structure in Eastern Europe: Poland and her Southern Neighbors* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989).

[127] For the famous critique, see Józef Chałasinski, *Społeczna genealogia inteligencji polskiej* (Łódź: Czytelnik, 1946).

[128] Raina, *Opposition*, 74–82; Friszke, *Opozycja*, 178–9.

Such a role could not exist for the few East German intellectuals who challenged Party hegemony, such as Robert Havemann or Wolf Biermann, for the SED had created an intelligentsia in a negative as well as a positive sense. If people did not like SED rule, until 1961 they could leave. For Left-leaning intellectuals this step proved very difficult, because within the extremely polarised German political context the SED laid almost exclusive claim to anti-fascism.[129]

In fact, the SED hoped that discontented intellectuals would leave. In 1949, Anton Ackermann spoke to leading functionaries about the 'serious problem' of 'emigration of intellectuals', but admitted to distinctions: 'When a reactionary philosopher or historian leaves the Eastern Zone, this only makes us happy. But it's different with physicians, mathematicians, physicists, biologists or technicians, whom we need and cannot replace.'[130]

The border thus served a double function: harmful when skilled labour escaped, but beneficial when it permitted the draining away of potential resistance. The SED was the only Communist Party in the Soviet Bloc which could dispose of 'bourgeois' intellectuals in this way; the other parties had to make some sort of compromise.

The open border also made the East German intelligentsia the sole intelligentsia in Europe which had chosen socialism in full consciousness of the realities of East and West. French intellectuals were Stalinists ignorant of Stalinism; Russian or Romanian intellectuals were Stalinists ignorant of the West. This made East German intellectuals' adherence to socialism frequently fanatical. Looking upon the 'restorationist Adenauer regime' of the 1950s, they were convinced that they chose either socialism or fascism. Perhaps the best-known East German dissident, the chemist Robert Havemann, had been deeply affected by the Twentieth Party Congress. But that changed nothing in his perceptions of the evils of the West, and the need to use Stalinist methods to enforce the Party's understanding of what was right. In June 1957, he attended an election meeting at which a student alleged that the GDR was not democratic enough. In response Havemann

> said that in comparison with West Germany we have practically ideal democratic conditions. He explained this thoroughly and well. It came down to the difference between a prison cell and a good life in which one occasionally gets angry about the refrigerator that keeps going on the blink. Then comrade Havemann got very sharp and said that students who had not understood this after all these years should go work in a factory so that they would understand it.[131]

[129] Antonia Grunenberg, *Antifaschismus – ein deutscher Mythos* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1993), esp. 113–19.

[130] 'Stenographische Niederschrift des Referats des Genossen Anton Ackermann auf der Arbeitstagung über die Frage der Auswahl und Zulassung zum Hochschulstudium', 6 May 1949. SAPMO-BA ZPA IV2/9.04/464 (unnumbered). Dietrich Staritz argues that the regime welcomed the flight of many farmers in the early 1950s, as they left behind land used to form agricultural collectives. *Geschichte der DDR 1949–1985* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), 92.

[131] 'Notiz über das Auftreten des Gen. Havemann am 18. Juni 1957 in der Wahlversammlung bei Prof. Neunhöffer', SAPMO-BA, ZPA IV2/9.04/164/105.

Erich Loest wrote many years later of his difficulty in deciding to escape from East Germany, even under imminent threat of arrest. He remained:

> He did not know an alternative. It would have been unthinkable for him to go to West Germany. For him that was Adenauer's capitalist, revanchist state; that was where former Nazi teachers had gone and were receiving fat pension cheques, that was where the *Blutrichter* of Freisler still meted out justice . . . to him, even the most tedious[*strapaziös*] socialism seemed far more moral and to have a much greater future than the most perfect economic miracle.[132]

Gerhard Zwerenz battled with himself throughout the summer of 1957 over whether to escape arrest by fleeing to West Berlin. He grew darkly sun-tanned during weeks spent camping at public lakes in East Berlin. Despite the risk of prison, Zwerenz returned to Leipzig, where only the coaxing of Karola Bloch could convince him at last to slip away to West Berlin. The case of Bloch's student Günter Zehm is perhaps more impressive. During the summers Zehm had travelled throughout the West, attending the seminars of Merleau-Ponty in Paris, discussing existentialism in West Germany and touring Italy. Upon his return to Leipzig he found the dialectical materialism there 'poor and antiquated'. Yet this only intensified his drive to reform socialism *in* East Germany. When arrested in 1957 by the *Stasi*

> I looked upon the cops, who pressed me into the car and sat to my right and left holding a pillow over my hands so that no one from the street could see the hand-cuffs, in a certain sense as allies. In the weeks [leading up to the arrest] I had been expelled from the Party, had been forced to leave the university, denied all possibilities of a bourgeois existence, so that I had to work as a peon for a writer. All this injustice had not sufficiently opened my eyes. Only in prison would Communism literally be beaten out of me. I wanted to debate with the interrogating commissars, and they answered with their fists. What a lesson I learned! . . . How my eyes now were opened to the real quality of the German Democratic Republic. How much did I learn in the following years, when murderers and executioners, whom the regime had hired as guards, spied on me, when I was watched over by threatening machine guns and ferocious dogs, and had nothing to read throughout my captivity except *Neues Deutschland*, the central organ of the SED![133]

Zehm later became an editor for the conservative daily *Die Welt*. Yet for most of Ulbricht's leading victims, years of prison had not been enough to shake their allegiance to the Party: Harich, Schroeder, Janka, Just, Merker, Dahlem, Schirdewan and Herrnstadt all refused to criticise the SED during its reign. They feared upsetting 'Party unity'. Such Leninist loyalty drew sustenance from German political culture's 'conventional unpolitical attitude'.[134]

The open border had helped concentrate the leftist and apolitical traditions of German political culture in one small part. A grotesque example of this combination was related to Gustav Just by the writer Kurt Bartel (who liked to be called 'KuBa'):

> I remembered that KuBa, full of enthusiasm, once told me about comrades who had returned from the Soviet Union and spent fifteen years or more in jails and camps though they had

[132] Loest, *Durch die Erde*, 307.
[133] Krüger, *Ende*, 44–6.
[134] Meuschel, *Legitimation*, 15–22. See also Joppke, *Dissidents*, 206–12.

done nothing. Their first path had been to the Central Committee: 'Comrades, I'm back! What would you like me to do now?' Perhaps there is something exalted in such behaviour, but I do not understand this mentality. For me, these are inhabitants of a different planet.[135]

Just may not have 'understood this mentality', but he shared it. He waited until 1989 before releasing memoirs written in the 1960s that seemed critical of 'socialism' – and the Party.

Conclusion

The year 1956 was a year of heated debate and quiet hope in the German Democratic Republic. Perhaps more than any other year in that country's history, it was a year of the intellectuals. They embodied widely held aspirations for change. Yet the intellectual ferment of 1956 achieved nothing concrete, and even failed to leave traces in the East German collective memory.

The most important factor in accounting for this outcome was the Ulbricht regime. Through a mixture of incentives and terror it kept intellectual opposition divided; and it pursued this policy consistently from the early post-war days. The SED leadership also methodically created its own intelligentsia from 1946 onwards, and had achieved impressive results by the early 1950s. East German students were more often drawn from the lower classes, and were more often beneficiaries of state aid, than counterparts elsewhere in the region. During periods of political instability they tended to side with the regime. To return to the analysis of William E. Griffith, one might say that the SED resolved the tension between the apparat and intelligentsia by making the two one.

The East German leadership also formed an intelligentsia in the negative sense, and here it had special advantages: the open border permitted discontented 'bourgeois' elements to emigrate freely for over fifteen years. The GDR was the only country in Europe where Communists chose the East in full knowledge of both East and West. The precise function of the open border is one of the most pressing questions in the historical sociology of the GDR, but preliminary research does suggest that people who were more highly educated were over-represented among those 'fleeing the Republic'.[136] Even after the building of the Wall the regime continued to force dissent westward, and policed entrance to universities almost as carefully as to the Party itself. Dissident challenges of later decades came from outside the Party, from people who had been denied higher education and socially marginalised.[137]

The Soviet Military Administration was central to this double-edged strategy of intelligentsia creation. It could requisition buildings and other supplies necessary to

[135] Just, *Zeuge*, 116.

[136] In 1961 3.4 per cent of the male population of West Germany was university-educated. Of the male refugees from East Germany, the percentage was 7.2. Helge Heidemeyer, *Flucht und Zuwanderung aus der SBZ/DDR 1945/1949–1961* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1994), 50.

[137] J. Fuchs, R. Jahn, K. Weiss, U. Poppe and G. Jeschonnek all had their path to higher education blocked; the careers of W. Templin and G. Poppe in the Academy of Sciences were terminated. See the biographies in Torpey, *Intellectuals*, 217–32.

running the early worker preparation courses (*Vorstudienanstalten*), and through its security arm helped eliminate opposition to the SED, arresting between 1946 and 1949 the leaders of the Berlin, Leipzig and Rostock student bodies. Nowhere else in East Central Europe did the Soviets become so directly involved in policies of élite formation.

The dynamic of the split nation had not forced these aggressive policies of intelligentsia formation upon the SED. As with other parties in the region, the SED faced alternatives in building a socialist society; it chose to realise the potentials of education for building socialism. Precisely why the Party's leaders, and in particular Walter Ulbricht, valued education and so acutely sensed the dangers of intellectual dissent, remain subjects for further study.

Finally, the East German regime inherited the legacies of an apolitical intellectual community, which felt primary loyalty to the state and Party. No doubt the 'myth of anti-fascism' helped cement these intellectuals' devotion to Party unity, but the East Central European context reveals this factor as by no means decisive. Unlike counterparts elsewhere in the region, the East German intelligentsia had no existence separate from the Party.

Biographical Appendix

Jerzy Andrzejewski (1909–83)
Polish novelist. Before World War II known as Roman Catholic writer of moralistic drama. Nazi occupation in Warsaw. Drifted leftwards after war, joining PZPR and propagating socialist realism. Broke with Party in 1957 and became founding member of KOR in 1976. Character 'alpha' in Czeslaw Milosz's *Captive Mind*.

Kurt Bartel (1914–67)
German writer known by pseudonym KuBa. Apprenticeship as interior decorator. Joined SPD in 1933, emigrated to Prague and England. Returned to Germany, joined SED; 1946, co-founder of FDJ (Free German Youth). 1952–4 First Secretary of East German Writers' Union; 1954–67 member of SED Central Committee. From 1956 head dramaturge at People's Theatre in Rostock. Target of Brecht's famous poem 'The Solution'.

Johannes R. Becher (1891–1958)
German poet. Freelance writer; 1914–18 morphium addict; 1919 KPD, but 1920–2 strong religious leanings; 1923 rejoined KPD. Experimental and expressionist poetry. 1928 co-founder of Union of Proletarian Writers. From 1935 emigrated to USSR, main editor of journal *International Literature*. From 1946 member of SED Central Committee. 1953–6 Minister of Culture; unsuccessful mediation for more liberal cultural policy.

Fritz Behrens (1909–80)
German economist. Apprenticeship as mechanical engineer. 1926 SPD, 1932 KPD. 1931–5 studied economics and statistics in Leipzig. 1935 doctorate on finance capital. 1939–41 statistician with headquarters of Wehrmacht. 1941–5 taught at German University in Prague. 1946 professor in Leipzig; founder of social sciences faculty. 1947 supported 'limitations on academic freedom' and 'monopoly in science' for SED. 1954 co-founder of Institute of Economic Sciences of GDR Academy of Sciences. 1955 director of GDR statistics bureau. 1956 with economist Arne Benary supported introduction of worker self-management, flexible price system, decentralisation. After

massive accusations of 'revisionism' in 1957 writings suppressed; head of department at Institute of Economic Sciences of German Academy of Sciences.

Wolf Biermann (b. 1936)
German songwriter. Born in Hamburg in Communist working-class family. Jewish father died in Auschwitz. 1953 settled in GDR. Studied political economy. 1957–9 apprenticeship at Brecht's Berliner Ensemble. 1963 refused SED membership; friendship with Robert Havemann. 1964 appearances in cabaret 'Distel'. 1965 forbidden to appear in public; thereafter recordings released in West Germany only. After concert in Cologne in 1976 refused re-entry into East Germany.

Ernst Bloch (1885–1977)
German philosopher. Before World War I studied in Munich, Würzburg; friendship with Georg Lukács. 1917–19 in Switzerland as opponent of war. 1926–33 Berlin; close to Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht, Weill, Kracauer. KPD member. 1933–8 Switzerland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, France. 1938–49 USA. 1949 professor of philosophy in Leipzig; 1949–57 director of Institute of Philosophy in Leipzig; lectures on history of philosophy. 1957 forbidden to teach. August 1961 decided to stay in West Germany, where vacationing when Berlin Wall built. Thereafter professor in Tübingen, supporter of student movement.

Kazimierz Brandys (b. 1916)
Polish novelist. Studied law at Warsaw University, where he belonged to leftist organisations. After war wrote for leftist weekly *Kuźnica* and after 1949 propagated socialist realism. Propagated de-Stalinisation with similar vigour. Thereafter drift to theatre of the absurd and in the 1970s the dissident movement.

Willi Bredel (1901–64)
German writer. Apprenticeship as turner, 1919 KPD. Work as journalist and turner. 1934 flight to Soviet Union; 1937/8 Spanish Civil War as commissar. From 1941 military service for Soviet Union. Returned in 1945 as member of KPD initiative group for Mecklenburg. 1950 co-founder of East German Academy of Arts. 1953–6 chief editor of *Neue Deutsche Literatur*. 1954–64 Member of SED Central Committee.

Hermann Budzislawski (1901–78)
German journalist. 1919–21 studied economics and poltical science in Tübingen. Dissertation, *The economics of human hereditary factors*. Freelance journalist; work for *Weltbühne*. 1929 SPD. After 1933 emigrated to Prague, Paris and USA; worked for emigré newspapers. 1948 returned to Germany and joined SED. 1948–66 professor for international press in Leipzig.

Eduard Claudius (1911–76)
German writer. Apprenticeship as bricklayer. 1932 KPD. After 1934 emigrated to Switzerland, 1936–8 Spanish Civil War. 1945–8 Western zones; work in Bavarian Ministry for De-Nazification. 1948 Potsdam, worked as writer. 1956 First Secretary of East German Writers' Union. 1956–9 GDR consul in Syria; 1959–61 ambassador to North Vietnam.

Hans Freyer (1887–1969)
German philosopher, sociologist. Studied theology, philosophy economics; 1911 PhD. 1922 professor of philosophy in Kiel. 1925 first professor of sociology in Germany at Leipzig. 1938–44 visiting professor and Director of German Cultural Institute in Budapest. After war refused teaching post in Leipzig because of earlier writings supportive of National Socialism. 1948 worked in Wiesbaden with Brockhaus publishers; 1953–55 professor in Münster. Important and controversial voice of German conservatism.

Otto Grotewohl (1894–1964)
German politician. Apprenticeship as printer. 1912 SPD. 1914–18 soldier. 1918 USPD. 1920–6 member of Landtag in Braunschweig. 1922 SPD. 1923 Minister of Justice; 1926–30 auditor at the Higher School for Politics at Berlin University. 1925–33 Deputy of Reichstag. 1933–45 businessman in Hamburg and Berlin. 1945 co–chair of SPD in Berlin; presided over Party in Soviet Zone during forced unification with KPD in April 1946. 1946–54 co-chair of SED; 1949–64 Politbureau of SED.

Kurt Hager (b. 1912)
Chief SED ideologue. 1930 KPD. 1931 Abitur. 1933–45 emigrated to France, Spain, England. 1945 director of department for Party schooling; 1949 professor of philosophy Humboldt University. From 1954 Central Committee of SED. From 1952 head of department for science and higher education in SED Party executive. 1955 Secretary for Science and Culture in Central Committee. From 1963 member of SED Politbureau. 1990 expelled from SED–PDS.

Wolfgang Harich (1923–95)
German philosopher. 1942–44 Wehrmacht (deserted). 1945 KPD. 1945–50 intensive work as journalist. 1946–51 studied literature and philosophy in Berlin. 1950–4 part–time editor at Aufbau publishing house. 1951–4 docent for philosophy in Berlin. 1953–6 chief editor *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*. 1956–64 prison for 'formation of conspiratorial group hostile to the state'. From 1975 freelance scholar in East Berlin. 1979 invalid. 1979–81 Austria and West Germany; worked in peace and ecology movement.

Gerhard Harig (1902–66)
German historian of science. 1922–7 studied physics in Leipzig and Vienna. 1928 doctorate at Aachen with work on absorption spectrum of mercury. 1933 KPD, emigrated to Soviet Union, worked at Institute of Physics at Leningrad Technical University. 1938 sent to Germany for anti-fascist work; arrested and interned in Buchenwald until 1945. 1947 professor of history of science at Leipzig University. 1951 State Secretary for Higher Education. Replaced in 1957 by hardliner Wilhelm Girnus, and returned to teaching.

Robert Havemann (1910–83)
German chemist. 1929–33 studied in Berlin, Munich. Close to KPD. Doctorate 1935. 1943 arrested for activity in anti-fascist opposition group 'European Union'; sentenced to death. Survived in Brandenburg prison by conducting experiments supposedly important for the conduct of war. 1945–50 director of Berlin Institute of Kaiser-Wilhelm Society, 1946 professor in Berlin. 1950–4 assistant rector for student affairs, responsible for repression of politically non-conformist students. Strongly affected by revelations of 20th Party Congress, became most important Marxist critic of East German regime. 1964 lost teaching positions and Party membership. Thereafter under permament surveillance by *Stasi*. In early 1980s supported independent peace initiatives in GDR.

Stefan Heym (b. 1913)
German-American author. Studied philosophy and German in Berlin. Emigrated to Czechoslovakia and the USA. Completed studies at the University of Chicago, and began writing fiction in English. 1943–5 US Army; co-founder of Munich-based paper *Neue Zeitung*. Dismissed from Army for pro-Communist sympathies. 1952 emigrated to GDR, where continued writing and gained reputation as thorn in the side of the SED, though loyal to 'socialism'. After 1989 elected to Bundestag for successor Party to SED, the Party of Democratic Socialism, though never a member of SED or PDS.

Wieland Herzfelde (1896–1988)
German writer. Soldier in World War I. 1917–33 co-founder of Malik publishers in Berlin with

brother John Heartfield. 1919 KPD. 1933–9 director of Malik publishers in Prague, voice of the revolutionary German Left and Dadaism. 1939–48 in New York as journalist and book dealer. Returned to Germany as professor of sociology of modern literature at Leipzig University.

Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz (1894–1980)
Polish poet. 1912–18 studied law and music in Kiev. 1918 emigrated to Warsaw. Author of popular novels, poetic prose, librettos for Szymanowski. Member of 'Skamander'. Occupation in Warsaw; home outside Warsaw meeting place for intellectuals. After war leading literary figure in Poland; president of Writers' Union.

Walter Janka (1914–94)
German editor. By trade typesetter. 1932 KPD. 1933–5 political prisoner. 1935 deported to Czechoslovakia. 1935/6 secret work in Germany. 1936 battalion commander in Spanish Civil War. 1941–7 exile in Mexico. 1947 returned to Germany; personal secretary to Paul Merker. From 1952 director of Aufbau publishing house. 1956–60 imprisoned for 'boycott propaganda' (*Boycott-Hetze*). After release unemployed, then dramaturge at DEFA film studios. Radio presentation of Janka's memoirs in October 1989 a highpoint of the East German revolution.

Gustav Just (b. 1921)
German writer. From Bohemian Communist family. Served in Wehrmacht. Graduate of a 'new teacher' course after war. General Secretary of East German Writers' Union 1954–6; assistant editor of cultural weekly *Sonntag*. Imprisoned 1957–61. Thereafter translator. Elected to Parliament in Brandenburg 1990, but forced to resign after revelations of involvement in Wehrmacht commando that executed partisans in Ukraine.

Alfred Kantorowicz (1899–1979)
German literary scholar. Veteran of World War I. Studied law and literary history. 1923 LLD. Worked as Paris cultural correspondent of the *Neue Vossische Zeitung*. 1931 KPD. 1933 emigrated to France; with R. Rolland, A. Gide, H. G. Wells and H. Mann founded German Library of Freedom. 1936–8 officer in international brigades in Spain. 1941 flight to USA. Director of foreign news bureau CBS. 1946 returned to Berlin, editor of journal *Ost und West* (closed 1949). 1949 professor of German literature at Humboldt University. Research on exile literature; editor of the works of H. Mann. Escaped to West Berlin 1957.

Stefan Kisielewski (1911–91)
Polish composer and publicist. Studied Polish philology at Warsaw University; music studies in Paris 1938–9. During Nazi occupation official in underground state's cultural department. Regular columnist for *Tygodnik Powszechny*, except 1953–6 and 1968–71. 1957–65 Deputy in Seym. Multiple Polish and foreign awards.

Tadeusz Konwicki (b. 1926)
Polish writer. 1944–5 officer Home Army. Studies Polish philology at Jagiellonian University (Kraków). Member of editorial staff of leftist journals *Odrodzenie*, *Nowa Kultura*. From 1954 film director and stage designer. Late 1960s expelled from PZPR, engagement for university students persecuted by regime.

Jan Kott (b. 1914)
Polish essayist and translator. Studied law and French literature in Warsaw. Began with writings of poetry and French surrealism. Occupation in Lwow and Warsaw, where he joined underground Communist resistance. Editor of leftist *Kuźnica* after war; doctorate in literature. Professor at Wroclaw. Important tool of Stalinisation of Polish literary establishment but also important voice in the Polish Thaw. Internationally influential interpreter of Shakespeare.

Jürgen Kuczynski (b. 1904)
German economic historian. Studied philosophy, economics, statistics. 1930 KPD. 1936 emigration to England. 1944–5 statistician with US Army. 1945 President of Central Finance Administration in Soviet Zone. 1946 Professor in Berlin for economic history. 1947–50 President of Society for German–Soviet Friendship. 1956 founded the department for economic history in the Institute of History of GDR Academy of Sciences. Author of over 1,000 books.

Erich Loest (b. 1926)
German writer. 1944 Wehrmacht. 1946–50 *Leipziger Volkszeitung*. 1947 SED. From 1950 freelance author. 1952 novel, *The West German Mark Keeps Falling*. 1952 ABF Leipzig. 1955/6 studied at Johannes R. Becher Institute for Literature in Leipzig. 1957–64 imprisoned for forming counterrevolutionary group. After release published detective stories under pseudonym. From 1980 living in West Germany.

Walter Markov (b. 1909)
German-Slovene historian. 1933 KPD. 1934 doctorate on Serbia at the beginning of World War I. 1935 arrested for resistance activities; 1935–45 inmate of Siegburg prison. 1946 SED. Docent at Leipzig University. 1947 habilitation on Balkan diplomacy. 1949–68 Director of Institute of General History in Leipzig. 1951 expelled from SED for 'objectivism' and 'Titoism'.

Hans Mayer (b. 1907)
German literary scholar. 1925–9 studied political science, law, philosophy. Dissertation, *The crisis of German political science*. Emigrated to France, Switzerland. 1946–7 in charge of political programming Radio Frankfurt. 1948 professor of literary science in Leipzig. Students in Leipzig include: Christa Wolf, Volker Braun, Uwe Johnson. 1963 failed to return from trip to West Germany; became professor in Hanover.

Paul Merker (1894–1969)
East German politician. Waiter by trade. 1920 KPD. 1923/4 Secretary of KPD in Western Saxony. 1927–45 member of KPD Central Commitee. 1940 interned in France; 1942 onwards exile in Mexico. 1946 return to Germany. 1946–50 member of SED Party executive. 1950 expelled from SED for contacts with Noel Field. 1950–2 restaurant director. 1952–6 prison. 1956 rehabilitated and editor at Volk und Welt publishing house. Said to be rival that Ulbricht feared most.

Ludwig Renn (1889–1979)
German writer. 1911–20 military officer. Studied Russian, law, history of art. 1928 KPD. 1928–32 Secretary of League of Proletarian Writers. 1933–5 prison. Emigration, then participation in Spanish Civil War and exile in Mexico. 1947 returned to Germany. Professor of anthropology in Dresden. From 1952 freelance writer.

Karl Schirdewan (b. 1907)
East German politician. Transport worker. 1925 KPD. 1934–45 Nazi concentration camps. 1946 in charge of checking behaviour of SED members during Nazi period. Functions in Saxony. 1952 responsible for department 'leading organs of the parties and mass organizations'. 1953–8 Politbureau. 1958 lost all Party functions, 1959 recanted. 1958–65 director of state archival administration of GDR in Potsdam.

Ralf Schröder (b. 1927)
1944 Wehrmacht. 1946 SED. 1946–51 studied history and Russian in East Berlin. 1951–3 taught Russian at Greifswald University; 1953–7 Leipzig University. Doctorate on the young Gorki. 1957 expelled from SED and arrested; 1957–64 prison. 1966–88 editor in charge of Russian at Volk und Welt publishing house.

Anna Seghers (1900–1983)
German writer. 1924 PhD. 1928 Kleist Prize for first short stories. 1928 KPD, member of League of Proletarian Writers. 1933 arrested by Gestapo; emigrated to Switzerland, France, Mexico. 1947 returned to Germany. 1952–78 chair of East German Writers' Union. Remarkable for absolute loyalty to Party line; supported repression of Biermann.

Joachim Streisand (1920–80)
East German historian. Studied in East Berlin. 1948 SED. Dissertation on 'imperialist German sociology'. Co-founder of *Zeitschrfit für Geschichtswissenschaft*. Responsible for early nineteenth-century German history. Unlike colleagues, preferred not to work in collective. 1963 professor of history Humboldt University.

Jerzy Turowicz (b. 1912)
Polish journalist and writer. 1939 graduated from Jagiellonian University with degree in philosophy. From 1945 editor of Roman Catholic socio-cultural weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny*. 1953–6 forbidden to continue as editor of *Tygodnik Powszechny* for refusal to print article on Stalin's death. 1956 reinstated. 1945–82 member of Polish Journalists' Association. Recipient of numerous Polish and foreign awards.

Bodo Uhse (1904–63)
German writer. 1927 NSDAP. After 1931 close contact with KPD. 1935 joined KPD. Exile in France, Spain, Mexico. 1948 returned to Germany. 1950–2 chair of East German Writers' Union. 1950–4 delegate to East German Parliament.

Paul Wandel (1905–94)
East German politician. Machinist by trade. 1926 KPD; KPD Secretary in Baden. 1933–45 emigrated to USSR, teacher at Comintern school. 1945–9 President of German Education Administration in East Berlin (DVV). 1949–52 Minister of Education. 1953–57 Secretary for Education and Culture in Central Committee.

Friedrich Wolf (1888–1953)
German writer. 1913 MD. November 1918 member of Workers' and Soldiers' Council in Dresden. Functionary in USPD. 1919 first dramas performed. Worked as physician. 1928 KPD. 1933–45 emigrated to Soviet Union. 1945 returned to Germany. Co-founder of DEFA studios. Father of *Stasi* general Markus and filmmaker Konrad.

Ernst Wollweber (1898–1967)
East German politician. Sailor by trade. 1918 involved in mutiny in Kiel. 1919 KPD; 1921 onwards, member of Central Political Council. 1933 emigrated to Soviet Union, 1936–40 Scandanavia. Arrested in Sweden, but released in 1943 to Soviet Union at its request. 1946 returned to Germany. 1950–3 State Secretary in Ministry of Transport. 1953 State Secretary then Minister of State Security (*Stasi*). 1958 removed from Central Committee with K. Schirdewan for 'factional activity'.

Arnold Zweig (1887–1968)
German writer. 1907–14 studied German and philosophy. From 1905 wrote fiction. 1914–18 soldier. From 1923 worked for Berlin-based *Jüdische Rundschau*. Member of Society of Friends of the New Russia. 1933 emigrated to Palestine. 1948 returned to Berlin. 1949–67 member of East German Parliament.

Gerhard Zwerenz (b. 1925)
German writer. 1942 volunteered for Wehrmacht. 1944 deserted; 1944–8 prisoner of war in

Soviet Union. 1948 East German People's Police, SED. 1952–6 studied philosophy in Leipzig. Student of Bloch. 1957 expelled from SED and fled to West Berlin to escape arrest.

Sources: Czeslaw Milosz, *The History of Polish Literature* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983); Günther Buch, *Namen und Daten: Biographien wichtiger Personen der DDR* (Bonn: Dietz, 1973); Jochen Cerny (ed.), *Wer war wer – DDR. Ein biographisches Lexikon* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1992); John C. Torpey, *Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissent. The East German Opposition and Its Legacy* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Juliusz Stroynowski (ed.), *Who's Who in the Socialist Countries of Europe* (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1989); W. Killy and R. Vierhaus (eds.), *Deutsche biographische Enzyklopädie* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1989).

Intellectuals and Mass Movements. The Study of Political Dissent in Poland in 1956

PAWEŁ MACHCEWICZ

Poland in 1956 saw a profound crisis in the political and social system created during the Stalinist period. The decay of the system after Stalin's death resulted in, and was at the same time accelerated by, a great mobilisation of and participation involving various political and social groups. Social activity on such a scale recurred only once in the history of Communist Poland – the 'Solidarity' period (1980–1).

The striking feature of the political dissent which arose in 1956 in Poland was its pluralism: its various streams were often very distant from or even alien to each other, identifying with different values and programmes, using different political and ideological languages, symbols, banners. The main argument of this article is the profound distance between intellectuals (*intelligentsia*)[1] and mass movements.[2] This

[1] 'Intelligentsia' (*Inteligencja*) is a broader term than 'intellectuals', usually comprising educated people (basically with higher education), whereas 'intellectuals' refers to those whose role is 'creative', 'professional' (writers, scholars, journalists, etc.). The division between these two categories is vague, as we should bear in mind when using the term 'intellectuals' in this paper. The fact is that in Poland, and probably in other Eastern European countries (especially Russia), the much more common, more frequently used term was 'intelligentsia', with roots going back to the nineteenth century. In 1956 in Poland the word 'intellectuals' was rarely used; in public language much more common were 'intelligentsia' and 'members of the intelligentsia' (*inteligenci*). For the discussion of both concepts see Alexander Gella, 'The Life and Death of the Old Polish Intelligentsia', *Slavonic Review*, Vol. 30, no. 1, (1971); *idem*, *The Intelligentsia and the Intellectuals* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1976).

[2] The theoretical notions of mass movements and mass behaviour are well established in the social sciences, although they often tend to be somewhat obscure when used in historical empirical studies. A brief clarification of the terms used in this paper seems to be relevant. A mass social movement arises when 'a group of people somewhat orient themselves to the same belief system and act together to promote change on the basis of the common orientation'. Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978), 40. Mass behaviour is 'group behaviour which originates spontaneously, is relatively unorganized, fairly unpredictable, and which depends on interstimulation among participants.' Stanley Milgram and Hans Toch, 'Collective Behaviour: Crowds and Social Movements', in *The Handbook of Social Psychology* ed. G. Lindzay and E. Aronson, Vol. 4: *Group Psychology and phenomena of interaction* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1969), 507. The concept of mass social movement is defined by contrast with some other social forms, such as formal organizations, mass parties, and clubs. Its more distinctive features include substantive and diffuse orientation and polymorphous structure combined with inclusive membership. . . . Because of their antiorganizational character and amorphous structure, movements articulate themselves in the form of short-lived, periodical bursts – rallies, blockades, marches, etc. They rely on the mobilization of the collective moral energy, commitment, and dedication, which – in the absence of an institutional framework – cannot be

political and ideological gap, which to a great extent determined the nature of the anti-Stalinist dissent in 1956, exerted a significant impact upon political opposition and protest in Poland over the following decades.

I Workers' Revolt in Poznań

The two highest points of the collective action and political participation in 1956 were the workers' revolt in Poznań in June and the nationwide wave of political meetings and riots in October and November.[3]

The immediate causes of the Poznań revolt were social and economic claims. Dissatisfaction had increased in industry over several months, as workers protested against the arbitrary raising of production norms, poor organisation of work which reduced their earnings, an unjust and (in their estimation) irrational tax system and poor working conditions. Initial demands concerned a general increase of salaries and a lowering of prices, in certain instances by as much as fifty per cent. Workers organised mass meetings (*masówki*) and even short strikes of a few hours' duration.[4] On 28 June workers of 'Cegielski' factory, the biggest and oldest in the city, refused to work, formed up for a protest march outside the factory gates and then moved off towards the city centre. They were joined en route by the employees of other factories and offices. At this early stage of the protest economic demands were predominant: demonstrators called for higher wages and lower prices, 'human' living conditions, and the abolition of production norms. They shouted: 'We are hungry', 'We want bread', 'Down with the exploitation of workers', 'Down with the Bloodsuckers' and 'Down with the Red Bourgeoisie'.[5]

Interestingly enough, some of the slogans, obviously directed against the ruling Party, were expressed in the ideological language of the latter. Was it an effect of the brainwashing that the workers had been continually exposed to during a previous decade, or was it rather an intuitive attempt to manipulate the 'Party language', to legitimise the workers' protest by using official slogans? Probably both explanations

maintained for a long time.' Jan Pakulski, 'Social Movements in Comparative Perspective', *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, Vol. 10 (1988), 248–50.

[3] The main sources from which to reconstruct mass movements in 1956 are documents from the Party and Public Security apparatus archives. Archival materials from the Committee of Public Security (Komitet Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego) and local Public Security Offices (Urzędy Bezpieczeństwa) – now in Biuro Ewidencji i Archiwum Urzędu Ochrony Państwa; documents of Polish United Workers Party (both from the Central Committee and from local committees) – now in Archiwum Akt Nowych. The most useful are reports prepared systematically by the local Public Security Offices (*Wojewódzkie Urzędy Bezpieczeństwa, Powiatowe Urzędy Bezpieczeństwa*) and by the Central Committee's Organisational Department (*Wydział Organizacyjny KC PZPR*), based on the regular reports of the provincial (*voivode*) and district (*powiat*) PZPR committees. The author's book, *Polski rok 1956* [Poland in 1956] (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza 'Mówią Wieki', 1993), was based on these previously inaccessible materials.

[4] For the situation in Poznań plants before 28 June 1956 see Jarosława Maciejewskigo and Zofia Trojanowiczowj (eds.), *Poznanski Czerwiec 1956* (Poznań: Wydarnictwo Poznanskie, 1990); Zbigniew Żechowski, 'Z ekonomicznych źródeł sytuacji strajkowej w Zakładach im. H. Cegieskiego wiosną 1956 r.', *Kronika Miasta Poznania*, Vol. 3–4 (1957).

[5] Biuro Ewidencji i Archiwum Urzędu Ochrony Państwa (hereafter UOP), 155/5, 155/37.

are complementary, although one should bear in mind the spontaneous, uncontrolled nature of the events (especially in the subsequent stages), which in fact precluded any deliberate plans to shape the political or ideological image of the demonstration.

None the less, the nature of the protest was soon extended and overlaid by purely political ones: 'Down with the Party', 'Down with the Bolsheviks', 'Down with the Communists', 'Long live Mikołajczyk',[6] and 'We demand free elections under United Nations control'.[7]

Demonstrators assaulted and entered the town hall and premises of the local Party committee – symbols of political authority. Once inside the buildings they tore up Party propaganda, pulled down red flags, and smashed busts of Communist leaders. Their hatred focused upon the Security Police. Attempts were made to identify and capture functionaries on the streets, who were then assaulted; one was lynched. The siege of the Security Police headquarters remained the central point of the street battle for many hours. Demonstrators seized weapons from militiamen and soldiers who, in the initial phase of the uprising, did not want to fight against the rebels. In this aspect, the Poznań revolt was very similar to the Hungarian revolution (October 1956), although in Budapest the popular reaction against the Security Forces (AVH) was even more violent.[8]

What was probably different from Budapest was the outburst of religious feeling. Demonstrators in Poznań sang religious songs, prohibited, at least in public, by the Communist state, and shouted: 'We want God', 'We want religion in schools'. When they passed a church along the route, the workers leading the column of demonstrators knelt down and received a blessing from two priests standing on the steps. These religious symbols and feelings played an important role in creating the emotional identity of the protest – people believed that their common enemy was the secular State and atheistic Party which persecuted the Catholic Church and its religion. This attitude reflected a well-established model of Polish nationalism (whose roots went back to the partitions of Poland and the nineteenth-century struggles for independence). The Poles were defined as Roman Catholics, in opposition to their alien oppressors: orthodox Russians and Protestant Prussians. Within the Poznań revolt the national and religious feelings were, in fact, to a great extent inter-related, overlapping each other all the time.

National symbols were present from the very outset of the Poznań events, constituting the core of the mass language. Demonstrators sang the national anthem and other patriotic songs, and shouted, 'We want an independent Poland'. National feelings revealed an unequivocally anti-Russian and anti-Soviet edge. The streets of

[6] Stanisław Mikołajczyk was the leader of the Polish Peasant Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe), which in the period 1945–47 constituted the core of the legal anti-Communist opposition. In October 1947 Mikołajczyk fled Poland and became one of the most emminent Polish anti-Communist emigrés in United States.

[7] UOP, 155/6, 155/14, 17/IX/124, t. 14, 17/IX/124, t. 9.

[8] For the description of Budapest in 1956 see György Litvan (ed.), *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Reform, Revolt and Repression 1953–1963* (New York: Longman, 1996).

the town resounded to calls of: 'Russians go home', 'Muscovites, go home', 'Down with Russians', 'Russkies, get out of our town'. Demonstrators sang the *Rota* (a nationalist song from the turn of the twentieth century), whose original refrain referred to the Germans, but which now included the words: 'Until the Russian mess collapses into dust and ashes'.

The conflict was perceived by many demonstrators as a battle of Poles or true Poles against non-Poles. In the collective imagination, their opponents – soldiers and security agents – were excluded from the national community and identified with the Russians. The town was full of rumours about the presence of Soviet troops wearing Polish uniforms. There was a widespread rumour that fighting at the Secret Police headquarters had been initiated by a Russian woman MVD (later KGB) functionary, who shot at children from the window of the building.[9]

Judging by the patterns of collective action and behaviour of the Poznań crowds, Polish Communists were widely regarded as lackeys or puppets of a foreign power – the Soviet Union – which occupied and exploited Poland. The revolt was seen by many of the participants as an anti-Russian uprising to liberate Poland from foreign domination. Nationalism became the leading factor among various elements – socio-economic, political, religious – of the revolutionary mobilisation (of course, in reality they were all mixed; the distinction between them is mostly analytical). The reality is that this co-existence and interdependence of various dimensions and currents of mass movement stimulated the dynamics of social protest. We see in Poznań what could be described – to use a concept proposed by Ralph Dahrendorf[10] – as the overlapping of several axes of the conflict. In conditions of monocentric-dictatorial order, state-run economy, lack of national sovereignty, humiliating dependence on the Soviet Union, an emotional and ideological distance between the people and the state, all kinds of social claims merged into a single great wave aimed against the prevalent structures of power. This became the instrument whereby the workers' protest, the origins of which were social and economic demands from factories, inevitably turned into a political and national revolt.[11]

II The Polish October

The Poznań revolt had a great impact throughout Poland. According to the Party and police reports, it radicalised social moods and opinions. Thereafter, the Party leadership acted under the strong pressure of the danger that such an outburst could spread to other towns, or even possibly to the whole country. It faced the urgent necessity of finding a safe means to discharge social anger and frustration, and to overcome the worsening political crisis in a way controlled 'from above', which

[9] UOP, 155/6, 155/28, 155/37, 17/IX/124, t.9.

[10] Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1959).

[11] For the detailed description of the Poznań revolt see *Poznański Czerwiec 1956*; Machcewicz, *Polski rok 1956*; Edward Jan Nalepa, *Pacyfikacja zbuntowanego miasta. Wojsko Polskie w Czerwcu 1956 r. w Poznaniu w świetle dokumentow wojskowych* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Bellona, 1992).

would not put in jeopardy the rule of the PZPR. The only man who could accomplish this was Władysław Gomułka, the Party leader in 1948 accused of 'rightist-nationalist' deviation, demoted from the Party leadership and subsequently imprisoned (in 1951), to be released only after Stalin's death. Thanks to his defiance of Stalin in 1948–9, and his subsequent imprisonment, in 1956 the majority of Poles saw in him a politician who could reject both the Stalinist system and Soviet domination. After several months of talks with the representatives of the Politburo, Gomułka agreed to re-join the Party leadership, on the condition that he become First Secretary.[12]

Thanks to his great popularity, Gomułka did eventually manage to overcome the political crisis and pacify political and social discontent. However, even his popular standing, coupled with his political skills and flexibility, could not avert the next phase of social mobilisation. This occurred a few months after the Poznań revolt – in October 1956. Gomułka was supposed to assume Party leadership at the Eighth Plenum of the Central Committee (19–21 October). However, on the first day of the Plenum the Soviet Party leadership unexpectedly arrived in Warsaw. Its obvious aim was to prevent Gomułka's return to power. At the same time Soviet forces stationed in Poland (in Lower Silesia and Pomerania) began moving towards Warsaw. The threat of Soviet military intervention was clear to everyone.[13]

This was a time of a great tide of public meetings, demonstrations and street marches, in hundreds of large and small towns throughout Poland. The desire to express support for Gomułka, and to protest against Soviet pressure, was in the majority of cases the basic reason for holding meetings in the streets and workplaces. The meetings were usually organised by local Party cells, local authorities and trade unions. However, the political content of the meetings frequently went beyond their initial agenda. Official organisers lost control of those they had managed to assemble.[14] Thousands of people, previously deprived of any possibility of political expression, could – for a brief moment – articulate their convictions and emotions in a way not controlled from above. The activity of the crowds often took on extremely radical forms, which in many cases resulted in street unrest and clashes with police and other law-enforcement agencies. The peak of political activity occurred during and immediately after the Eighth Plenum but continued into November and even December. Thus, demonstrators in Bydgoszcz destroyed the

[12] For the internal situation of the Polish United Workers' Party see Zbysław Rykowski and Wiesław Władyka, *Polska próba. Październik '56* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1989); Andrzej Friszke, 'Rozgrywka na szczycie. Biuro Polityczne KC PZPR w październiku 1956', *Więź*, Vol. 9 (1996), 188–212; Andrzej Werblan, 'Gomułka i Październik', *Dziś. Przegląd społeczny*, Vol. 10 (1996), 58–66.

[13] For a description of the talks between the Polish Politbureau and the Soviet delegation see Paweł Machcewicz, *Władysław Gomułka* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1995), 40–1; Andrzej Werblan, 'Rozmowy kierownictwa PZPR z delegacją KPZR. Nieznane dokumenty z października 1956 r.', *Dziś Przegląd społeczny*, Vol. 4 (1995), 105–11; L. W. Gluchowski, 'Poland 1956. Khrushchev, Gomulka and the "Polish October" ', *Cold War Bulletin*, Issue 5 (1995).

[14] For a detailed description of the mass meetings and demonstrations which took place in Poland in Oct. and Nov. 1956 see Machcewicz, *Polski rok 1956*, 153–67.

militia headquarters and radio jamming equipment (18 November); a crowd in Szczecin attacked public buildings, including a prison, the state prosecutor's office, militia headquarters and the Soviet Consulate (10 December).

The agenda of the mass movement in October was similar to that of the June revolt. Throughout the entire country, as earlier in Poznań, people expressed a fierce hatred of the security police. Meetings called for the dissolution of the State Security Committee (KBP), and the punishment of its most brutal and guilty functionaries. Demands were formulated to reveal the identity of informers for the security police at workplaces. Those suspected of collaborating were frequently assaulted. In many localities, crowds gathered outside the headquarters of the security policy, shouted hostile slogans and broke windows.[15]

A phenomenon analogous to that of June was the outburst of religious feeling. Religious songs were sung during public meetings, and the most frequent demands concerned the release of the Primate, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, imprisoned in 1953, the reinstatement of bishops previously arrested or suspended from their dioceses, the re-introduction of religious instruction in schools, and the placing of crucifixes in classrooms.[16] As in Poznań, the strongest feature of mass mobilisation was nationalist sentiment which became the predominant tone at a majority of public meetings and demonstrations. At the symbolic level, this was expressed by the singing of patriotic songs and the national anthem, the call for the return to the traditional version of the national emblem, the white eagle, and the restoration of traditional uniforms in the Polish army.

National emotions were also expressed as specific political and social demands. They invariably concentrated on the dependence upon the Soviet Union and the Soviet presence in Poland. Universal demands were made for the withdrawal of Soviet troops and the dismissal of Soviet officers from the Polish armed forces, including Marshal Rokossovsky, who was regarded as the most humiliating symbol of Soviet domination. The return of the eastern territories (with Wilno i Lwów) annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939, and a public explanation of the Katyń massacre, were demanded as was the punishment of those responsible for that crime. There were widespread demands for the abolition of Russian lessons in schools and their replacement by instruction in Western languages. Even when meetings and demonstrations raised socio-economic issues, these were usually related to the Soviet question. Thus, the low living standard in Poland was blamed on the Soviet Union, and prospects for its improvement were connected with the ending of Soviet domination and exploitation.[17]

These anti-Soviet attitudes created a combustible mixture which resulted in the most violent and radical gestures and behaviour. Judging from police reports, Poles spent the last ten days of October desecrating monuments to Liberation by the Red Army, pulling down red stars from roofs of houses, factories and schools, and

[15] UOP, 17/IX/99, 17/IX/99, t. 6, 155/24; Archiwum Akt Nowych (thereafter AAN) 237/VII–3861, 71.
[16] UOP, 17/IX/99, t. 6.
[17] UOP, 17/IX/95; AAN, 237/VII–3843.

destroying red flags and portraits of Rokossovsky. Attempts were even made forcibly to enter the homes of Soviet citizens in the regions where Soviet troops were stationed – mostly in Lower Silesia. Such anti-Soviet feelings and attitudes acted as catalyst for the social protest and facilitated its articulation. Speakers who during public meetings and demonstrations criticised or contested any aspects of the political and socio-economic system in Poland almost always raised the question of its foreign origin and its subordination to Soviet interests. This nationalist, anti-Soviet dimension of social protest thereby legitimised all other postulates.

Paradoxically – unlike in Poznań in June 1956 – the nationalist, anti-Russian feelings did not radicalise and reinforce an anti-Communist edge of the mass movement, and did not push it towards strictly anti-systemic slogans and behaviour. In October, the Communist authorities were not openly and uncompromisingly questioned – as had happened in Poznań – nor was the existing political order totally rejected. During the October demonstrations and meetings political slogans and demands such as 'We want free elections', 'Down with communist dictatorship' and 'Down with the Party' were much less numerous. People did not attack Party committees, nor Security Police headquarters, although the latter were universally hated.

Crucial in the two Polish contexts was the different response of the authorities. In June, tanks were sent out against demonstrators and the revolt was radicalised by the absence of any attempt to meet workers' demands. In October, the political leadership was much more flexible, probably because it had already learnt the lesson of Poznań. The return to power of Gomułka met the desires of the great part of the Poles, for whom this very fact meant the end of the worst evils of Stalinism and the policy introduced since his downfall in 1948. The new leader reinforced these social aspirations in his famous speech during the Eighth Plenum, denouncing Stalinism (although not using this term, but the more euphemistic 'system of the cult of personality'), the rule of terror and the collectivisation of agriculture through administrative pressure and force. Soon after the plenum, Cardinal Wyszyński and all the other imprisoned bishops and priests were released. Soviet 'advisers' and military officers, including Rokossovsky, were sent home. These decisions, and many others, reinforced public hopes that the new Party leadership would continue a reform process that would eventually liberalise and democratise the entire political system.

This stand taken by the Communist leadership contributed to the relatively moderate political dimension of social protest in October in comparison with the Poznań revolt. However, it should not be regarded as a complete explanation. Also crucial in this context was the comparative impact of nationalism or national emotion. It stimulated social protest in June, but dampened it in October, when the threat of Soviet military intervention – against Gomułka and the forces supporting him within the Party – transformed the social image of Polish Communists. In Poznań, they were still treated as the puppets and servants of alien, anti-Polish interests, and hence excluded from the national community. In October, they became part of a nation opposing Soviet domination. Gomułka enjoyed the

enthusiastic support of a great part of society, above all not as a new leader of the Communist Party but as a leader of a nation, who by his resistance to Soviet demands, embodied a national longing for independence and sovereignty. A huge number of appropriate illustrations throughout the country could be cited, but one may suffice. Leaflets found in Świdnica in Lower Silesia (22 October) stated: 'Red Army – go home. We demand an independent Poland. Long live Władysław Gomułka, First Secretary, hero of the Polish nation.'[18]

A cult of Gomułka spontaneously arose all over Poland. His name was chanted at thousand of meetings, together with anti-Soviet slogans. This anti-Soviet image of Gomułka was obviously mythical and exaggerated. However, in the social imagination it was justified by the anti-Stalinist line taken in 1948 and the subsequent few years of imprisonment, and confirmed in October by his declaration of a Polish 'national road to socialism' and his resolute stand against Khrushchev's demands made while Soviet tanks were advancing on Warsaw.

Thus Polish Communists, unexpectedly, found themselves at the head of a national liberation movement. In practice, it was aimed against the Russians. The enthusiastic social support offered to Gomułka – in great part as the leader of national, anti-Soviet resistance – contributed to the legitimisation of Communist rule in Poland. It helped pacify the mass movement. Nationalism (and anti-Sovietism) had to a great extent radicalised social protest during the Poznań revolt. In October, however, it lowered the level of political protest against the existing regime. The difference was decisive for the outcome of the political crisis. As a result of the flexible political strategy on the part of the Communist leadership, and the impact of the national, anti-Soviet feelings we have described, the mass movement in October did not aim at breaking the prevalent structures of power. Communists managed to a great extent to incorporate it into the framework of the existing system. Instead of destroying the political system, as in Hungary, the social protest was absorbed within it.

III Intellectuals against Stalinism

The mass level of the 1956 crisis, reconstructed in the previous section, constituted the broader social framework in which intellectuals acted. The knowledge of mass movements which arose in Poland in 1956 is essential, because only against this background can the significance of the role played by intellectuals (or members of the intelligentsia) be properly assessed.[19]

[18] UOP, 17/IX/99, t. 6.

[19] In the case of mass movements we have to refer to Party and State Security documents, which are the only available sources with which to reconstruct mass phenomena. If we want to reconstruct the political thinking and political demands of the intellectuals, we should use other types of sources. Basically, there are two: the press, and resolutions (taken, for example, at meetings held at academic institutions, research institutes, professional associations, e.g. the Union of Polish Writers). The latter were held in the former KC PZPR archives (after 1989 transferred to Archiwum Akt Nowych in Warsaw).

The most important role played by intellectuals in 1956 was the production and promotion of political ideas (which in general is one of the distinctive features of intellectuals anywhere), or even thorough political programmes. These programmes in most cases contained two levels (or dimensions). One was negative: the critique of the past, explaining the necessity of breaking with the Stalinist legacy. Another one was positive: the description of necessary political (social and economic) changes and reforms, leading in many cases to the creation of more or less complete visions of the new, desired order. We will try to reconstruct both levels, as they were interdependent.

This needs to be prefaced by a few remarks about the means of communication – the way in which these political ideas and programmes, created by intellectuals, were publicised, transmitted both to the ruling élite and society at large. The crucial means of political communication and articulation in 1956 was the press: newspapers and weekly magazines which played at that moment an extremely important role – probably never to be equalled during the whole history of Communist Poland.

There were at least two reasons which account for the extraordinary importance of the press in the 1956 crisis. One is the absence of any other organised or crystallised channels of political articulation: after several years of Stalinism there were no autonomous political parties, trade unions, associations, etc. In the public domain the press was the only voice left to a mute society.

The other factor, which explains why the press could fulfill this important task, was the relaxation of censorship, which began in the spring of 1956, after the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) (14–25 February), and reached its peak in the autumn of 1956. At that moment one could have gained the impression, judging by the content of the newspapers, that censorship did not exist. The degree to which political control of the press was paralysed illustrates the fact that censors themselves claimed some limitation of the role of censorship. In September and October 1956, in several *Urzędy Kontroli Publikacji i Widowisk* (Offices of the Control of Publications and Performances) in the large cities, censors issued resolutions in which they stated that public discussion in the press should not be limited by arbitrary political intervention, that censorship should not be used as an instrument to silence democratic demands and that, in general, the position and prerogatives of censorship must be limited – according to a law which should be passed and accepted by Parliament (such a law was accepted only in 1981, during the 'Solidarity' era).[20]

This relaxation of censorship obviously had deeper political reasons, apart from the spontaneous reluctance of censors to fulfil their duty. The crucial point was the internal struggle within the Party, which accounts for the reason why political control over the press was softened.

By April 1956, one could clearly distinguish two competing factions in the Party leadership. One group, so-called *Puławy* (after the street in Warsaw where prominent politicians of this group lived), comprised such figures as Politburo

[20] Jan Skórzyński, 'Odwilż w cenzurze', *Krytyka*, Vol. 34–35 (1991), 102–16.

member Roman Zambrowski and Central Committee Secretaries Jerzy Albrecht, Władysław Matwin and Jerzy Morawski. The other group, so-called *Natolin* (after the palace belonging to the Council of Ministers on the outskirts of Warsaw, where members of the group often met), included Politburo member and deputy Prime Minister Zenon Nowak, Deputy Minister of Defence Kazimierz Witaszewski, and leader of the (state-run) trades unions Wiktor Kłosiewicz. Aleksander Zawadzki, chairman of the Council of State (formal head of state), and Marshal Konstanty Rokossovsky, Minister of Defence, were also regarded as sympathisers of *Natolin*. Situated somewhere at the centre – but closer to *Puławy* than *Natolin* – were Edward Ochab, First Secretary of PZPR since Bierut's death in March 1956, and the Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz. Because both factions were informal, and acted not in an open manner but behind the scenes, many facts and decisions concerning them all, and relations between them, remain unclear and equivocal. However, no one could deny that a harsh political struggle was taking place at every level within the PZPR after Bierut's death.

Despite the personal, political and ideological obscurity of both groups, it is possible to define their general goals and the methods which both chose in order to gain social support and channel social discontent and frustration. *Puławy* referred to the slogans of liberalisation and democratisation (of course, within the limits of the Communist system), welcomed the news of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU (14–25 February 1956) and emphasised the necessity of further de-Stalinsation (although many *Puławy* adherents had been active in implementing the Stalinist order). *Natolin* tried to gather mass support, not by advocating anti-Stalinist reforms but simply by calling for the punishment of those individuals most responsible for Stalinism in Poland. Its main and most visible political manoeuvre was broad exploitation of populist, anti-intelligentsia and anti-semitic sentiments (many prominent *Puławy* adherents were of Jewish origins).[21]

There were two main political consequences of this factional struggle within the Party. Firstly, it weakened the Party and State apparatus which could no longer function in an effective way and became incapable of making any coherent responses to the demands and dangers that now arose. It accounts for both the outbreak of the Poznań revolt and the disorganisation of censorship. Secondly, the popularity of *Puławy* among intellectuals, journalists, writers and, last but not least, censors, led to the relaxation of censorship (which was in most cases under control of the adherents of *Puławy*) and promotion in the press (and in the whole of public life) of pro-democratic, anti-Stalinist slogans, programmes and demands. *Puławy* tried to

[21] For the factional struggle within the Party see Rykowski and Władyka, *Polska Próba*; Friszke, 'Rozgrywka na szczycie'; Werblan 'Gomułka i Październik'; Witold Jedlicki, *Klub Krzywego Koła* (Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1963); Antoni Zambrowski, 'Rewelacje wyssane z palca, czyli puławianie i natolińczycy w 1956 roku', *Warszawskie Zeszyty Historyczne*, Vol. 2 (1988), 49–78. For anti-semitism in Poland in 1956 see Krystyna Kersten, *Polacy. Żydzi. Komunizm. Anatomia półprawd 1939–68* (Warsaw: Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1992); Paweł Machcewicz, 'Antisemitism in Poland in 1956', in Antony Polonsky (ed.), *Polin. Studies in Polish Jewry*, Vol. 9. *Poles, Jews, Socialists. The Failure of an Ideal* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996), 170–83.

mobilise against *Natolin* the section of public opinion (in fact the great majority of society) which favoured a clean break with Stalinism. The internal struggle within the Party, and the deliberate (one may say, instrumental) relaxation of censorship by the *Puławy* faction, created unprecedented opportunities (probably much broader than in any other Communist state in 1956) for public discussion in the press.

Another significant feature of Poland in 1956 was the predominance (in terms of significance and popularity) of the press run by the younger generation – edited by people (journalists, editors, etc.) in their twenties and thirties. They defined themselves (with very few exceptions) as anti-Stalinist Marxists. Although they constituted (and represented) only a part of the Polish intelligentsia, there is no doubt that they were the most vocal and dynamic group among intellectuals.

The one weekly whose importance exceeded by far all other titles was *Po prostu* (its limited print-run was 150,000) – 'the weekly of students and young intelligentsia' (as its subtitle ran). When, in October 1957, Gomułka took the decision to close *Po prostu* the result in Warsaw was four days of street unrest and clashes between police and demonstrators. Another important title of young intelligentsia was the daily *Sztandar Młodych*, a newspaper edited by Związek Młodzieży Polskiej (ZMP; the Communist youth organisation). The most important (in terms of politics and prestige) titles for an older generation were *Nowa Kultura* and *Przegląd Kulturalny* (both weeklies).

As mentioned, the turning-point in the scope and tone of the press discussions was the Twentieth Congress and its aftermath: a very broad distribution of the Khrushchev 'secret speech', which in Poland became available or known to everyone who was interested in it (it was read at thousands of open meetings of Party cells in factories, universities, institutions, etc.). By April the timid press criticism of bureaucracy, bureaucratic errors and so forth (quote commonplace since the end of 1955) was replaced by much bolder critiques of the whole system and demands were issued for substantial political and economic reforms (while remaining, obviously, within the boundaries of the Socialist system).

The article which evoked great discussion and was a major step up in the level of public debate was published by *Po prostu* on 8 April. It was signed, to emphasise its importance, by the entire editorial board. Its title *Co robić*? ('What is to be done?'), unequivocally referred to Lenin's famous work *Chto dielat*?, dating from the initial stage of the Russian revolution. The article suggested the transformation of ZMP into a 'real revolutionary organisation', initiating 'the struggle to reintroduce and develop Communist norms', violated during the Stalinist period. *Po prostu* called on students, young members of the intelligentsia and all other people willing to improve political and social reality, to initiate at once – in the places where they lived, studied, worked – efforts to implement reforms, and not to wait for the initiatives of the authorities. A very important part of the article was the description of the repudiated past: unprecedented in its boldness and sharpness, setting the pattern for how to analyse the Stalinist system, which was to be developed in subsequent months. The whole system was at fault, not merely some partial errors or distortions (*błędy i wypaczenia*):

The system of distortions penetrated wide circles of our society. It penetrated the big cities, towns, villages and cooperative farms, work-places, institutions and administration. Universities were not free from its influence. It penetrated the psyche. Many people are corroded by Stalinist norms of life, alien to Marxist ideology. Many people were demoralized, lost their sense of human dignity, and felt humiliated. . . . We must struggle together with the Party for the most rapid destruction of this system, its eradication from even the most remote parts of our country, for the demotion of demoralized satraps [*kacykowie*]. The people must regain the feeling of their own power and strength.

The final reference to ordinary people's power and importance was not incidental. The core of the political programmes, written by young intellectuals and published in *Po Prostu* and *Sztandar Młodych*, resided in the decisive pressure exerted by spontaneous mass activities. In other words, the Stalinist system should be destroyed not only by reforms from 'above', introduced by the Party leadership, but also 'from below', by constant participation of the people. Jerzy Urban wrote in *Po Prostu*:

The initial source of all the degenerations of the system, all the hurts we experienced, all reflections of the cult of the personality and associated events, lay in the lack of real democracy [*ludowładztwo*].[22] . . . The dictatorship of the proletariat does not exist when it is ruled by professional functionaries in the name of the proletariat. The people's democracy does not exist without actual rule by the people, which is the decisive force.[23]

Authors of many articles published in 1956 argued that Stalinism was not a 'dictatorship of the proletariat', it was rather a 'dictatorship over the proletariat': 'a dictatorship of the bureaucracy', 'a system of socialist bureaucracy', 'state socialism'. One could find interpretations which were very similar to Milovan Djilas's concept of 'the new class'. Probably, in some cases, they explicitly drew their inspiration from that source, although not acknowledging it openly. Djilas's ideas were, for instance, discussed in June 1956 in *Klub Krzywego Koła* (the Crooked Circle Club) in Warsaw, the famous discussion club where young intellectuals met.[24]

How to channel the spontaneous mass activities? How to use it to break the Stalinist system and destroy the bureaucracy? And how to implement it as a tool in building a new democratic system – a real socialism, the system which would be constantly kept in motion by the broadest social participation?

Attempts to answer this fundamental question constitute the essence of the political manifestos and programmes published in 1956. The common idea was to extend the power of the parliament (*Sejm*), which during the Stalinist period ceased to have any autonomous role. The demands published in the press comprised more frequent sessions of the parliament; parliamentary responsibility of the government (*Sejm* could demote any minister); the obligation of the government to answer all interpellations from the deputies; and in general, greater prerogatives for parliamentary control over the current responsibilities of the government – economic policy

[22] 'Ludowadztwo' is an ideological word from the Communist vocabulary. Its closest English equivalent would probably be 'revolutionary democracy' or 'people's democracy'.

[23] J. Urban, 'O ludowładztwie', *Po prostu*, 15 Apr. 1956.

[24] For the discussions in the Crooked Circle Club see Jedlicki, *Klub Krzywego Koła*.

and foreign affairs. As far as elections were concerned, the common postulate was to enlarge the participation of the constituency in the process of choosing the candidates (previously selected by authorities, without any social participation).

Another common topic was the idea of public openness (*jawność*)[25] as one of the most important bases of a democratic system. Many resolutions, especially passed by Party cells at universities or research institutes, demanded that all major decisions, taken both by Party and State institutions, be made public and be exposed to public discussion and criticism, that the differences of opinions in the Party bodies not be hidden. The most frequent postulate demanded publication of the minutes of the Seventh Plenum of the Central Committee (18–28 July 1956), where serious clashes between *Puławy* and *Natolin* took place.

In practical terms the call for public openness often implied a demand to limit or abolish (in the most radical cases) censorship. It was stated both in press articles and in many resolutions, especially those voted on by scholars, journalists, writers and other. For instance, in a resolution of 28 September 1956 by the Party organisation in the Union of Polish Writers (*Związek Literatów Polskich*) its members said:

> POP [Basic Party Cell] states that the press played a leading role in the struggle for democracy. Unfortunately, the Censor [GUKPPiW] and various levels [*instancje*] of the Party often limited and still do limit freedom of discussion. . . . Our standpoint is that the Censor should be abolished and that *Sejm* should pass a constitutional law on the press, defining the responsibility of authors and editors.[26]

Both ideas – enlarging the role of the parliament and limiting that of censorship – were certainly very significant in political terms, and incompatible with the Stalinist version of socialism. However, these reformist demands had very clear political limits. Not a single press article or resolution suggested the reintroduction of a multi-party system. The political monopoly of the Communist Party was still accepted as dogma. The boldest programmes, mostly published in *Po prostu*, suggested the creation of a 'revolutionary' Communist youth organisation, which would have the role of a second quasi-party (although this latter idea was never stated openly).[27]

The stress was usually put on the introduction of internal democracy within the Party. The Party should not suppress the different opinions and standpoints of its members, it should not be governed by Party bureaucrats but by 'rank-and-file members, and basic party [POP] organizations', which 'will really have a decisive

[25] Its meaning is very similar to the slogan invented and promoted thirty years later by Gorbachev – *glasnost*.

[26] AAN, 237/XVIII–153, 103–4.

[27] Such a union – Rewolucyjny Związek Młodzieży (Revolutionary Union of the Youth) – was founded on 7 Dec. 1956 by members of 'revolutionary' groups and committees, composed usually of students and former ZMP activists. The RZM activists had very good contacts with *Po prostu* and *Sztandar Młodych*, which promoted the union and its programme. RZM existed only for a month. At the beginning of Jan. 1957, under pressure from the Party apparatus which could not tolerate an independent youth movement, RZM was united with another youth association and transformed into Zwiazek Młodzieży Socjalistycznej (Union of the Socialist Youth), controlled by the Party.

influence on the party activities, not merely as supplementary to the apparatus, but being its real master'.[28]

In practical terms the most important demand was that all members of party authorities on every level, from the basic party cell [POP] and Factory Committee [*Komitet Zakładowy*] to Politburo, should be elected in a democratic manner by the bulk of Party members, and not nominated from above (as it had happened so far in most cases).

Authors of several articles also suggested a new interpretation of the political hegemony of the Communist Party. It should apply principally to political and ideological matters; other dimensions of social life – economy, culture, etc. – should be given a broader margin of autonomy. In these domains the Party would preserve its role as the highest supervisor, but would not try to govern on a day to day basis.

The most revolutionary element of the political programmes published in 1956, having potentially the most far-reaching implications for the whole system, was the idea of workers' self-government. Intellectuals, publishing their political programmes in the press, enthusiastically greeted the emergence (from September 1956) of workers' councils in many factories. *Po prostu* and *Sztandar Młodych* not only publicised the efforts of the workers, who wanted to participate in the administration of their workplace, but also created the whole political and ideological framework for the concept of workers' self-government. According to such ideas, workers' self-government was not merely a way to increase the efficiency of a factory, to improve its administration and the position of employees in their workplace, but the tool of a thorough transformation of both the economic and political system, leading to the emergence of a democratic socialism, the reverse of Stalinism, which suppressed autonomous and spontaneous social activity in all spheres of life.

The whole economy would be run by self-governing structures – the pyramid of workers' councils, composed of several levels: from the lowest, a workers' council in a single factory, to the intermediary, a grouping of representatives of the same branch of industry (for instance, metallurgy), and the highest, at the national level. The top of the whole pyramid could be transformed into a self-governing chamber in parliament (the socialist counterpart of the senate in 'capitalistic' countries). All previously existing bureaucratic structures – ministries, central administration (*Centralne Zarządy*), directors in factories – should be subordinated to relevant bodies of workers' self-government; their role would be mostly executive, which would mean the implementation of decisions taken by workers' representatives.[29]

The significance of workers' self-government went far beyond the boundaries of the economy. It was often regarded as a pattern applicable to all spheres of social life. 'Workers' self-government', wrote two authors in *Po prostu*, 'is the foremost political and systemic institution. It gives power over the means of production to the direct

[28] J. Kossak, W. Wirpsza and E. Lasota, 'Przywódca czy administrator', *Po prostu*, 4. Nov. 1956.

[29] See M. Borowska, J. Balcerak and L. Gilejko, 'Rady czy system rad', *Po prostu*, 6 Jan. 1957.

producers – the workers themselves. It sets a precedent, which should spread to all spheres of social life. The direct producers should govern everywhere.'[30]

Authors writing about workers' self-government were impressed by the Yugoslav experience, which was often explicitly mentioned as a point of reference or even an overtly desired model. In April 1956 a group of Polish journalists visited Yugoslavia, which resulted in several articles describing, usually very favourably, the Yugoslav system (the most important was probably the series of articles by Artur Hajnicz published in *Życie Warszawy* under the common title, 'The discovery of Yugoslavia').[31]

In September and October 1956 employees of several big plants (for instance, Fabryka Samochodów Osobowych in Warsaw's in Żerań Car Factory, Gdańsk Shipyard, Lenin steelworks in Nowa Huta, Pafawag in Wrocław) spontaneously took initiatives to organise workers' councils. The process was accelerated after the Eighth Plenum, and formalised in November, when the *Sejm* passed the law on workers' councils (*ustawa o radach robotniczych*). By the end of January 1957 about 500 councils had been formed, by December 1957 about 5,600.

However, despite this impressive growth, the real prerogatives of workers' councils were much more limited than those suggested by *Po prostu*. Councils could not choose their director (who was still nominated by ministries) and output was subordinated to overall plans (prepared by the Committee for the Economic Planning and ministries). Moreover, the activity of workers' councils was limited to one workplace, with no higher or broader structure created. Hence, the prerogatives of the councils were restricted to participation in the internal structure and organisation of a plant, the efficiency and discipline of work, production norms for workers, working conditions, salaries, and so on. After the spring of 1957, even those prerogatives were narrowed step by step from two sides: by Party committees in workplaces and by ministries and other levels of industrial bureaucracy. In 1958 the autonomy of workers' councils practically disappeared. By a central decision they were forced to merge with cells of trade unions and Party committees, into one body – the *Konferencja Samorządu Robotniczego* (Conference of Workers' Self-government) which was deprived of any real influence in the management of a plant. The short experiment of workers' councils with a state-run economy, which remained highly centralized, was doomed to fail.

More important in this context, there is no evidence – except for one major case (to be discussed below) – that employees organising workers' councils were inspired by revolutionary ideas of radical intellectuals published in the press. According to various descriptions, testimonies and sociological surveys, the attempt to organise workers' self-government was non-ideological and pragmatic. The aim was to improve the situation of workers, increase their influence on their workplace and eliminate the inconveniences and absurdities of the Stalinist economy, which

[30] S. Chełstowski and W. Godek, 'Samorząd robotniczy w niebezpieczeństwie', *Po prostu*, 20 Jan. 1957.

[31] 'Zobaczyć i zrozumieć', 22 May 1956; 'Trzy zasady', 23 May 1956; 'Kto i jak kieruje fabryką', 4 June 1956.

seemed to workers both irrational in economic terms and based on their severe exploitation.[32]

The one, but important, exception was the large automobile plant in Warsaw, FSO (Fabryka Samochodów Osobowych-Żerań Car Factory). The council in Żerań was created by workers (among them the famous Lechosław Goździk, the first secretary of Komitet Zakładowy PZPR) who were in touch with most radical (pro-reformist) members of the *Puławy* faction and some Warsaw intellectuals. There were discussion meetings, at first in private apartments, in which workers from FSO and radical Party intellectuals, writers and journalists took part. One of the issues which was discussed was workers' self-government. Artur Hajnicz, an author of the series of articles in *Życie Warszawy*, talked about the Yugoslav experience.[33] In the summer of 1956 Hajnicz gave a public speech in FSO, and the plant was visited by a group of Yugoslav journalists. In October, during the stormy days of the Eighth Plenum, workers' activists from Żerań collaborated closely with radical party activists from the Warsaw Committee (Stefan Staszewski and Stanisław Kuziński) PZPR, who were, on their part, in close contact with journalists from *Po prostu*. *Po prostu* publicised the self-governing initiatives of FSO workers. However, it would be erroneous to look at the workers' councils from the perspective of FSO. According to all we know about the workers' councils movement, Żerań was one of very few cases where workers and intellectuals collaborated closely.

We do not have at our disposal precise data (opinion polls, sociological surveys, etc.) to enable us to reconstruct in detail (as percentages, for instance) the political and ideological views of workers.[34] The only possibility is a 'behavioural' analysis,

[32] The most important work on the workers' attitudes towards workers' councils was done by the team of sociologists from Zakład Badań Socjologicznych (Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences) led by Jan Szczepański. See Maria Jarosz, Jolanta Kulpińska, Irena Majchrzak and Halina Szostkiewicz, 'Samorzad robotniczy w opiniach załóg robotniczych', in *Studia nad rozwojem klasy robotniczej*, ed. by Jan Szczepański (Łódz-Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1962) ii. 89–153. The weak point of this very valuable work is that it was based mostly on observations and interrogations of the workers of the FSO factory, which was an exceptional case and should not be treated as representative of the whole country. Nevertheless, one observation from this work may be very relevant here. The birth of the workers' council was greeted with enthusiasm by the great majority of workers, but after a few months the situation had changed radically. The workers' council supported the measures to increase the efficiency of production (e.g. by increasing production norms), which turned the majority of the employees against it.

[33] The workers' councils movement (including especially FSO) is described by Kazimierz Kloc, *Historia samorzadu robotniczego w PRL 1944–1989* (Warsaw: SGH, 1992). See as well Szymon Jakubowicz, *Bitwa o samorząd 1980–1981* (Warsaw: In Plus, 1989), 21–39; Jan Skórzyński, 'Upadek rad robotniczych', *Zeszyty Historyczne*, Vol. 74 (1985).

[34] There does exist a very valuable sociological literature (based on empirical surveys) on Polish workers for the second half of the 1950s, but it focused mostly on their social roots, economic situation, position in the factory, etc. Political and ideological orientations of the workers were not (for obvious reasons) analysed in those works. See *Z badań klasy robotniczej i inteligencji*. Jan Szczepański (ed.), (Łódź: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1958); *Studia nad rozwojem klasy robotniczej*. Praca zbiorowa pod red. Jan Szczepańskiego, I (Łódz Warsawa: 1961) II (1962); Salomea Kowalewska, *Psychospołeczne warunki w przedsiebiorstwie przemystowym. Studium o systemie społecznym socjalistycznego przedsiębiorstwa* (Wrocław Warsaw-Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1962).

referring to such events as the workers' revolt in Poznań and their participation in meetings and demonstrations in October, as presented in the first part of this article.

If we bear in mind the dominant features of mass movements in 1956 (the most, important factors of mass mobilisation, the strongest characteristics of collective thinking), the conclusion could only be that there was a considerable distance between popular feeling and attitudes on one side and revolutionary programmes produced by radical intellectuals and published in the press on the other.

Young intellectuals, writing in *Po prostu*, *Sztandar Młodych* and other periodicals, regarded themselves as fervent Marxists. New revolutionary interpretations of Marxism – in opposition to the dogmatic, Stalinist version – were their source of inspiration, the tradition their articles referred to and the ideological basis for all programmes they were proposing to the public. They referred to the works of the 'young' Marx and stressed its humanistic, democratic values (condemnation of all kinds of human alienation). In their ideological vision, Stalinism was the violation of the humanistic content of Marxism, a pitiful break in the democratic tradition of workers' movements. They referred to pre-Stalinist Russia, to Lenin, to the councils of workers' and soldiers' deputies. The most frequently heard slogan was the return to 'Leninist' norms. They saw in the Polish 'October' the movement whose political and ideological sources went back to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

'Thirty-nine years since the salvo from the "Aurora" ', according to the editorial commentary in *Sztandar Młodych*, 'and twelve years after the "Lublin" manifesto,[35] the car workers of Żerań take up the slogan of *putiłowcy*:[36] "We want to govern". Their slogan "All power to the Soviets" becomes most relevant now. The analogy between the two "Octobers", despite all other differences between 1917 and 1956, contains both the tragedy of the fall of the Communist movement and the drama of its rebirth.'[37]

Hence, what was regarded by the masses as a national anti-Russian uprising, seemed to radical Marxist intellectuals to be a Socialist revolution, reviving the 'pure' tradition of the Bolshevik 'October'. It is striking that this was not a kind of tradition and language which could be understood and accepted by 'average' Poles (whatever that means). Mass movements in 1956 were mobilised, as we have seen, around other slogans and from completely distant ideological and emotional background. They used a different political 'language'. Marxist ideology, although anti-Stalinist and revolutionary in the mouths of young intellectuals, was likely to be treated on a mass level not only as alien and remote but also as a part of a hostile world, one they contested and rejected – a part of the 'Russian' and Soviet system which was instinctively hated.

Moreover, this ideological and emotional distance was even deepened by outright criticism by Marxist intellectuals of the Church and religion, which constituted the core of self-identification of mass movements in 1956. In revolu-

[35] The first document announced under Communist rule in Poland in July 1944.

[36] The workers of the Petersburg steel factory, who played an active role in the Russian Revolution of 1917.

[37] J. Lenart, 'Tak uważamy', *Sztandar Młodych*, 7 Nov. 1956.

tionary Marxist programmes the Church was regarded as a political and ideological enemy. The repressive policy towards the Church during the Stalinist period was condemned, but was to be replaced by a resolute political and ideological struggle (without administrative and police measures) to eradicate religious prejudice from the hearts of Poles. The Church and religion were described by such notions as reaction and the bulwark of backwardness (*Ciemnogród*).

We will not find many common points in revolutionary programmes of Marxist intellectuals and 'spontaneous programmes' of mass movements (because of their vagueness it is probably better to use words: symbols, ideology, language, etc.) besides the purely negative rejection of the evils of the Stalinist system: the rule of terror, bureaucratisation and extreme centralisation of the economy and of the social life, collectivisation by force. Even this last point was dubious: whereas for millions of Poles one of the most important gains of the Polish 'October' was the retreat from collectivisation (within a few months of the Eighth Plenum, ninety per cent of existing co-operative farms dissolved), for Marxist intellectuals the goal of collectivised agriculture remained a crucial element of their vision of a socialist society. The difference was that they condemned the Stalinist repressive collectivisation, and opted instead for peaceful, gradual and voluntary collectivisation.

Probably the most important meeting-point between Marxist intellectuals and mass movements was the rejection of Soviet domination, although, of course, the language and slogans used by both sides were different. While on a mass level the emotions and attitudes were fervently anti-Russian and anti-Soviet, and the Polish 'October' was regarded by many as another national, anti-Russian uprising, the press and intellectuals used, for obvious reasons, much more moderate language. They spoke about more equal rights within the socialist community, more just relations among socialist states and the introduction of true 'internationalism', which was non-existent during the Stalinist period. 'Placing of our relations with the Soviet Union on the basis of equality and sovereignty, clearing up all matters which are sensitive for the Polish nation, and which were previously concealed and falsified – this is the best way to develop Polish–Russian friendship', wrote three authors in *Po prostu*.[38] The press wrote about the 'Polish road to socialism', autonomous from the Soviet pattern. The Yugoslav example was sometimes cited as a desirable model of the international status of the Socialist state.[39]

Bold demands referring to Polish–Soviet relations were formulated even in resolutions taken by Party cells. The Party organisation of the Department of History of the Party School (Instytut Nauk Społecznych) where party cadres were 'forged' (*'kuźnia partyjnych kadr'*) wrote in 'a letter to the Party leadership': 'The Warsaw Treaty Organization text. . . . should be supplemented by a clause which would prohibit any interference in the internal affairs of any member state'.[40]

Despite the convergence in this important issue of Polish–Soviet relations, in

[38] J. Kossak. R. Turski and R. Zimand, 'Internacjonalizm', *Po Prostu*, 28 Oct. 1956.
[39] Z. Uberman, 'Szanse polskiej polityki', *Poglądy*, 8 Nov. 1956.
[40] AAN, 237/V–294, 62.

terms of ideology, values, political language and symbols, mass movements and Marxist intellectuals were two separate, remote currents in the 1956 crisis, with very few affinities, links or connections. The feeling of this ideological and emotional distance was testified to (although usually much later) by many radical intellectuals who played an active role in 1956. In his memoirs Jacek Kuroń described a scene that took place on 20 October 1956, the most heated moment of the political breakthrough. Kuroń and his colleague Krzysztof Pomian, both members of a 'revolutionary group'[41] at Warsaw University, met officers from Polish troops marching towards Warsaw. They asked them 'in our Marxist language, whether they would take any action against the working class, to which one responded – "Well, I would put it in a different way: I will not take any action against the Polish nation . . .".'[42]

Even more impressive testimony was given by Jerzy Urban, in 1956 one of the most famous and radical journalists of *Po prostu* (in the 1980s the notorious press spokesman of the Jaruzelski martial law regime). The Poznań revolt was apparently a real shock to him. After the Poznań events he thought, 'When this crowd speeds up, it will wipe up us out, too. We will be hanged on the lamp-posts as well. We did not imagine the people rising in that way. How did we imagine it? That people meet and pass resolutions.'[43]

It must have been a very bitter observation for Marxist intellectuals: the core of their programme was the mobilisation of the masses, who were supposed to crush Stalinism and create democratic socialism. But it turned out that when people took to the streets, they mobilised around slogans and symbols completely alien or even hostile to those shared by young Marxist intellectuals.

Perhaps the sharpest and most cruel assessment of the programmes formulated in 1956 by Marxist intellectuals was given much later by one of them, Krzysztof Pomian, in a book published in the 1980s. According to Pomian, 'revolutionary' socialist rhetoric of Marxist intellectuals not only deepened their social isolation; in fact, their role was even counter-productive to the struggle of workers:

> It is obvious now that illusions related to the workers' councils are incompatible with the demands for the free trade unions and the right to strike. . . . 'Revisionist' intellectuals contributed to a great extent to the cultivation of those illusions, which were so predominant that the issue of free trade unions was not taken up at all, and the right to strike was mentioned only very timidly. Hence, it was no wonder that the PZPR apparatus managed, without great resistance, to deprive workers' councils of their real meaning and turn them into bodies supporting directors' decisions.[44]

Pomian mentioned the word 'revisionist' in relation to the radical Marxist

[41] 'Revolutionary groups' were groups of young radical Marxist activists, usually students, often former ZMP activists, who had been active since the autumn of 1956, trying to push the Party towards political reforms. 'Revolutionary groups' merged into Rewolucyjny Związek Młodzieży, which was founded in Dec. 1956.

[42] Jacek, Kuroń, *Wiara i wina. Do i od komunizmu* (Warsaw: Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1989), 116.

[43] Barbara Łopieńska and Ewa Szymańska, *Stare numery* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo 'Alfa', 1990), 67.

[44] Krzysztof Pomian, *Wymiary polskiego konfliktu* (London: Aneks, 1985), 93–4.

intellectuals. It was a critical label used by Gomułka in 1957 to describe this faction of party activists and Marxist intellectuals, who pushed for further reforms. This notion clearly referred to the reformist currents in the history of workers' movements, always condemned by Bolsheviks and Communists.

In October 1957, in his speech at the Tenth Plenum, Gomułka compared 'revisionists' and 'dogmatics' (Stalinists) to two illnesses to which the Party was exposed. The former was, in Gomułka's words, 'tuberculosis', the latter 'influenza'. It is not difficult, according to this medical terminology, to assess what was regarded by the First Secretary as more harmful and dangerous to the healthy Party core. This name – 'revisionism' – although first given a critical negative meaning, soon became neutral, and was even accepted by people who considered themselves 'revisionists' – in general those who, being Marxists and often Party members, tried to reform the existing system 'from within', preserving its socialist character and the leading role of the Communist Party, but introducing democratic mechanisms (internal democracy in the Party, freedom of expression, etc.).

There is a common agreement, shared both by scholars and by contemporary protagonists, to use the word 'revisionism' for the political and ideological formation, whose programmes and initiatives were described in this paper. However, the notion of 'revisionism' with respect to 1956 had a somewhat broader meaning. Apart from young Marxist intellectuals, publishing in *Po prostu*, *Sztandar Młodych* and other periodicals, it refers also to people from an older generation, active in the Party apparatus, usually close to the *Puławy* faction. This group, although vague and differentiated, was usually less radical than younger 'revisionists', less 'revolutionary' and more reformist. It did not aim at the mobilisation of the masses but opted for gradual reforms controlled by the party apparatus. In the field of tradition they referred, for instance, not to the councils of workers' deputies from 1917 but to the NEP from the 1920s. However, this older group was much less active in the press, its views were much less well known to the public than those promoted by *Po prostu*, *Sztandar Młodych*, 'revolutionary groups', Rewolucyjny Związek Młodzieży, and so on.

The 'revisionist' programmes promoted in the press were certainly not shared by all intellectuals (or even the majority of them), who in 1956 favoured the liberalisation and democratisation of the system. Older intellectuals, formed before the Second World War (such as Antoni Słonimski or Maria Dąbrowska), certainly did not identify with Marxist revolutionary rhetoric. They belonged to a more liberal democratic (in the traditional meaning of these words) school of thinking.

Intellectuals active in Warsaw's *Klub Krzywego Koła* (the Crooked Circle Club, a famous discussion club founded in 1955 and dissolved in 1962), although in general also Left-orientated, were usually less fervently Marxist and more social democrat (if we try to find any suitable labels). Intellectuals (or rather members of the intelligentsia), who founded *Kluby Młodej Inteligencji* (Clubs of Young Intelligentsia) in many medium-sized and small towns, were usually not involved in ideological matters, but were simply trying to be active in their local communities.

Finally, there was an important part of the intelligentsia, who rejected the leftist

formation, and orientated themselves more to the Right. They identified themselves with various traditions of pre-war Poland. For them the 'revisionist' programmes were not only alien and distant, but, in many cases, repellent. One can assume that they identified more with mass movements than with programmes published in the press. However, this group was mute in the public domain, as it did not have access to the press and other official institutions.

In fact, young Marxist intellectuals, although certainly not representing the majority of intellectual élites (however vague this notion is), were most vocal, visible and publicised in the press. Even more important, they were the only group who managed to create more or less coherent, complete political programmes. This is why, when we focus on the political role of Polish intellectuals in 1956, we should refer mostly to this group and these programmes, regardless of their relatively narrow social support and background.

IV The Legacy of the 'Revisionism'

The thesis of this article is that 'revisionist' Marxist intellectuals did not influence the mass movements in 1956, whose ideology, slogans, symbols and 'language' were very different and distant. Social isolation of 'revisionists' prevented them from playing an important political role, regardless of the great publicity they gained thanks to the press. The outcome of the Polish crisis of 1956 was decided not by the claims of Marxist intellectuals but, to a much greater extent, by the pressure of mass movements which jeopardised the stability of Communist rule. The Party leadership was forced to seek solutions which would pacify and discharge social anger and demands. This accounts for the scope of the political breakthrough after the Eighth Plenum (19–21 October 1956).

This is not to imply that the 'revisionist' tradition of 1956 should be regarded as insignificant. On the contrary, it was an important part of Polish intellectual life in the 1960s, being a vital source of inspiration for Marxist intellectuals and reformist Party activists, who were contesting Gomułka's autocratic rule. However, the 'revisionism' of the 1960s was different from that of 1956. Although comprising various groups and milieux,[45] in general it evolved towards a more democratic stance (for instance, the approval of the multi-party system, as in the famous 'Open letter' by Jacek Kuroń and Karol Modzelewski from the mid-1960s).

However, the crucial feature of intellectual 'revisionism' in 1956 – its social isolation – continued in the 1960s. The most violent social conflicts in the decade after 1956 were related to the anti-Church policy (1958–66) introduced by Gomułka's regime, which resulted in major street demonstrations and violent clashes between the police and the people (who, for instance, defended crucifixes

[45] The best, most accurate and up-to-date overview of Polish 'revisionism', its roots and political and ideological development is given in an excellent book by Andrzej Friszke, *Opozycja polityczna w PRL 1945–1980* (London: Aneks, 1994).

displayed without official permission, protested against the taking over of buildings belonging to the Church by the State, etc.).[46]

The first great attempt to eliminate the distance between dissident intellectuals and the common people was made in the 1970s. The democratic opposition, which arose in that decade, was already distant from 'revisionist' Marxist ideology and language. This observation is also valid for the most important oppositional group, KOR, whose members often came from the 'revisionist' tradition of 1956 and the 1960s.

Finally, various currents of the Polish opposition to the Communist dictatorship merged in 1980–1 into the one great political and social movement of 'Solidarity'. The uniqueness of Solidarity lay in the fact that this movement could combine (for a short while, as it turned out later) traditions and people who had previously been very distant, as had been the case in 1956.

[46] See Antoni Dudek and Tomasz Marszałkowski, *Walki uliczne w PRL 1956–1989* (Kraków: Krakowska Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1992), 52–104; Antoni Dudek, *Państwo i Kościół w Polsce 1945–1970* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo PiT, 1995), 74–211.

The Politics of Artistic Identity: the Czech Art World in the 1950s and 1960s*

MARUŠKA SVAŠEK

Introduction

Since the Czech 'revivalist' movement of the last century, Czech art – along with the roles assigned to its artists – has been undergoing a continual process of definition and redefinition.[1] The question of what constituted and what should constitute Czech artistic identity has often proved politically charged, with artists and art historians on opposing sides attacking each other for their political views. More often than not, debates on the issue have been part and parcel of wider social contexts in which artists and art historians have competed for influential positions and artistic prestige within the art world itself.[2]

This article aims to analyse the power struggle which took place within the Czech art world in the 1950s and 1960s between orthodox Stalinist art historians and artists and their more liberal (both Communist and non-Communist) colleagues. It focuses in particular on conflicts arising from attempts to define Czech artistic identity and the role of artists. To provide an insight into the complex relationship that existed between the artistic and political aspects of this struggle, the article uses three levels of analysis: the organisational dynamics in the art world, the formation of social groups and hierarchies, and the creation of artistic discourses. On each of the three levels, changes came about which directly influenced the stuggle to define artistic identity and the role of artists in society.

* I would like to thank Kathleen Burk, Justin I'Anson-Sparks, Peter Pastor, Gyorgy Péteri and *Contemporary European History*'s anonymous referee for their critical remarks on an earlier version of this paper.

1 Maruška Svašek, 'Styles, Struggles, and Careers. An Ethnography of the Czech Art World, 1948–1992', PhD thesis (University of Amsterdam, 1996); *idem*, 'The Soviets Remembered: Liberators or Aggressors?', *Focaal. Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 10, no. 25 (1995) 103–24; 'What's [the] Matter? Objects, Materiality, and Interpretability', *Etnofoor*, Vol. 9, no. 2 (1996), 49–70.

2 Inherent in all artistic discourse is the concept of artistic quality, by which 'good' artists are distinguished from 'bad', and hierarchies of artistic reputation are created. A higher reputation normally brings commercial benefits in the art market and a place in art history. However, the definition of artistic quality is never totally fixed, and art specialists may support conflicting opinions. Defining what is art and what not thus often remains a contentious issue debated by art historians and artists who struggle for the acceptance of their own particular viewpoint. In specific socio-historical contexts the struggle for artistic recognition becomes inseparably linked with political power struggles.

The article makes use of the terms 'public' and 'hidden' discourse put forward by the anthropologist James Scott. The former refers to people's conformism within an oppressive political system, while the latter refers to their unvoiced criticism and resistance. For Scott, public and hidden behaviour are to be regarded as two poles of a continuum, political changes as moments in which hidden, unvoiced criticism, suddenly becomes public:

> [P]aying close attention to political acts that are disguised or offstage helps us to map a realm of possible dissent. Here, I believe, we will typically find the social and normative basis for practical forms of resistance . . . as well as the values that might, if conditions permitted, sustain more dramatic forms of rebellion.[3]

Scott's perspective helps explain why and how issues of Czech artistic identity and the role of artists were linked to political conflicts within the country and the Eastern bloc as a whole. It also shows just how hidden forms of resistance in the art world could develop into public acts of protest which, given certain developments on the international political stage, could generate domestic political change.

The Czech Avant-Garde: Abstraction and the Link with Western Europe

To be able to understand the complexities of the situation in the Czech art world in the 1950s, it is necessary to look briefly at a number of developments which took place during the first half of the twentieth century. Before the Communist coup in February 1948 (with the exception of the period of occupation during the Second World War), the Czech art world was noted for its organisational, social and discursive pluralism. A wide variety of artistic styles co-existed, ranging from conventional figuration to innovative abstraction. Czech artists had close ties with the West, and a number of them participated in international avant-garde art movements such as Cubism and Surrealism. On occasion, they travelled to Paris, the centre of the innovative avant-garde, where they participated in international exhibitions. In Prague, various art associations such as Mánes and Umělecká Beseda organised exhibitions of avant-garde art and reviewed abstract works in their art journals.

Cubo-Expressionism (a stylistic mixture of Cubism and Expressionism) was defined as a uniquely Czech genre, whereas other Czech art works were predominantly classed as belonging to one or another artistic genre within European art history, meaning the history of High Art (in contrast to that of 'lower' folk art). It would not be too great a generalisation to say that the artists who gained most prestige in the Czech art world during the first half of the twentieth century were those who created international, abstract avant-garde works. The production of innovative styles and experimentation with abstraction were two of the most central aims. Resistance and outsiderism were inherent in the avant-garde tradition. The avant-garde artists defined themselves as 'independent creators' and attacked artistically stifling, bourgeois norms. During the Second World War, when the Nazi occupiers banned their

[3] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1990), 20.

works and labelled them 'Entartete kunst', the artists who continued to produce avant-garde works in secret regarded their activities as acts of political resistance.

Gottwald's 1948 Speech on Art and Culture: Artists as Political Propagandists

Even though many visual artists (particularly after the betrayal at Munich in 1938 and the liberation by the Red Army in 1945) became members of the Czech Communist Party, they remained artistically orientated towards Western Europe and towards abstraction.[4] After the Communist coup in February 1948, however, they were forced to adapt to a new political situation. The relatively autonomous, pluralist art world was re-organised into a centralised, politically controlled public institution. With the onset of the Cold War, all official communication with Western art worlds was broken off, and abstraction was redefined as a type of 'bourgeois formalism'.

A few months after the coup the Czechoslovak Communist Party organised the Congress of National Culture (Sjezd národní kultury). During the Congress the President and Party leader, Klement Gottwald, delivered a speech redefining the role of artists and intellectuals in the new 'socialist democracy'.[5] The President announced that, in the present political order, artists and intellectuals would no longer work for élitist groups of successful capitalists (servitude to whom had, in the past, created an illusion of artistic independence and freedom at the expense of the needs of the working classes), but would henceforth make their work accessible to all people in society.[6] Gottwald made his point with a series of rhetorical questions.

[4] For a more elaborate analysis of the period 1938–48, cf. Svašek, 'Styles, Struggles and Careers', 26–33.

[5] Klement Gottwald, 'Projev Klementa Gottwalda na Sjezdu Národní Kultury 1948', *Výtvarné Umění*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (1950), 4; Vilém Jůza, 'Smutná léta padesátá. Druhá avantgarda', in Jiří Vykoukal (ed.), *Záznam Nejrozmanitějších Faktoru. České Malířství 2. Poloviny 20. století ze Sbírek Galerií* (Prague: Národní Galerie, 1993), 27.

[6] The idea of artists and intellectuals being a closed élitist group, mistakenly considering itself 'free and independent', was not an idea bandied about within the Eastern Bloc alone. It was also taken up and further developed by Western European socialist scholars. The topic was heatedly debated in the interwar period in Britain and France and during the immediate post-war years throughout Europe. Various Western social scientists, historians, literary critics and writers developed theories in which they viewed the role of art in modern capitalist societies as an instrument of class distinction. See further, Theodor Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976); Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht* (London: New Left Books, 1973); Pierre Bourdieu, 'Symbolic Power', *Critique of Anthropology*, Vol. 4, no. 13–14 (1979), 77–85; *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984); Bertold Brecht, 'A Short Organum for the Theatre', in John Willet (ed.), *Brecht on Theatre. The Development of an Aesthetic* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), 179–205; Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology* (London: New Left Books, 1976); Nicos Hadjinicolaou, *Art History and Class Struggle* (London: Pluto, 1978); Francis Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion and Collecting in England and France* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1976); Arnold Hauser, *The Social History of Art* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968); Pauline Johnson, *Marxist Aesthetics. The Foundation within Everyday Life for an Emancipated Consciousness* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984); Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964); *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978).

From whom [must artists and intellectuals] withdraw today? From whom must they protect their so-called 'inner freedom' and 'independence'? From the people? . . . . Today the exact opposite is necessary – the broadest genuine co-operation and honest service to the whole. They must not be afraid to meet other levels of society, and must not be afraid to go out amongst the people and make them conscious.[7]

Artists were to serve the interests of the people and become integrated into a single, unified society. They would, so they were told, only gain respect by expressing shared, far more 'preferable', socialist ideals. The President criticised intellectual and artistic élitism: 'I really do not know why higher culture should only delight tens of hundreds of exclusive individuals, when it could stimulate hundreds of thousands and millions on the march to the great ideals of the humanities'.[8]

Gottwald gave clear directives as to how artists and intellectuals should behave. He called upon them to accept the newly formed Communist cadres, in spite of their lack of education, because they would play a crucial role in the nationalisation and popularisation of culture. These measures were intended to counter the control which the international bourgeoisie had exercised over culture, knowledge and the arts before February 1948. In other words, the Communists claimed for themselves the right to shape and control public, artistic and intellectual discourse and practice.

Gottwald argued that art and culture would serve a national purpose. 'In the people's democracy, culture is not and will never be a Cinderella, as it was under capitalism, but will be an important source of *national power* and will be a *national asset* which they [intellectuals and artists] must nurture and support' (emphasis added).[9] In Stalinist discourse, art and culture were thus interpreted as public property which should be used to propagate Communist values. *National* struggles were redefined as essential parts of the (more fundamental and important) *international* struggle against capitalism and 'bourgeois élitism'. The fight for a Communist future by individual People's Democracies was first and foremost defined as a collective struggle.

Gottwald assured his audience several times that no one would suffer any loss of status in the new order, because they would be given the important task of protecting and giving form to the new socialist culture.

It is wrong to be anxious about the destiny of intellectuals and culture in the people's democracy . . . . I repeat again: in our people's democratic state, in our march towards socialism, no kind of degradation will be suffered whatsoever by our intellectuals. Exactly the opposite will be the case: their task will grow, [and] will not be subject to the grace and disgrace of capitalist despotism . . . . They will co-operate in the contribution made by all people to the prosperity of the whole.[10]

In contrast to these words of reassurance, he warned his audience not to distrust or fear the new political order. Artists and intellectuals who did not accept Communist

[7] Gottwald, 'Projev na Sjezdu Národní Kultury 1948', 4.
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] *Ibid.*

ideology posed a threat, he claimed, because their fear was 'causing unrest in the country', and was creating 'a gulf between the worker and the intellect'.[11]

The demonising of 'enemies' within a country's national borders is a common element of political discourse.[12] The Czechoslovak Communists used the notion of political enemies as a negative myth, which contrasted with the positive myth of socialist man. After Gottwald's claim that they would 'hinder the country's development', all kinds of negative characteristics were ascribed to intellectuals and artists who were unwilling to accept the new 'order'.[13] He did not mince words when describing what would happen to those who did not co-operate:

> In February [the date of the Communist take-over], we did not sweep the pieces of these malevolent thoughts away with a feather duster, but with an iron broom. We will likewise sweep away the heritage it has left behind, we will sweep away all deceitful opinions that create a breakdown between the working hand and the mind, whether they are the product of malintent or unconsciously made.[14]

Official Art History in the Context of the Cold War

After the coup of 1948, Czechoslovak official artistic discourse became highly influenced by Cold War rhetoric.[15] Artists whose work was considered important in pre-1948 art history, were classified as either Western-style reactionary enemies or progressive friends. It was claimed that the former produced works which mystified reality while the latter sought to elucidate reality and make people politically conscious.[16]

In Czechoslovakia, artists from East and West who had made art works which could be appropriated to fit Communist political discourse were positively reviewed in the art journal *The Visual Arts* (*Výtvarné Umění*), established in 1950. The critic Vladimír Šolta so enthusiastically discussed the works of nineteenth-century French, Russian and Czech Realists that the bygone artists themselves seemed to approve of current Eastern bloc politics. The French painters Honoré Daumier and Gustav Courbet were praised for the support they had given to 'the expansion of the proletarian movement', and the members of the Russian art group *The Wanderers* (*Pěředvižníku*) were praised for taking their inspiration from the common

[11] *Ibid*.

[12] See Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (eds.), *The Myths We Live By* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 5.

[13] Gottwald, 'Projev na Sjezdu Národní Kultury 1948', 4.

[14] *Ibid*.

[15] See Christine Lindey, *Art in the Cold War. From Vladivostok to Kalamazoo, 1945–1962* (New York: New Amsterdam Books, 1990), 8.

[16] According to Lindey, the demonising and idealising of two opposing groups of artists during the Cold War should be set against the backdrop of the Second World War, during which people had become used to thinking in terms of allies and enemies. She argues that, after 1945, 'it was easy for people to substitute the Red Menace or the Capitalist Devil for the Nazi Demon'. *Art in the Cold War*, 8. In the West, the media similarly propagated an extremely simplified and negative mythical image of their Soviet counterparts. H. L. Nieburg, *Culture Storm: Politics and the Ritual Order* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1973), 204.

people.[17] In Czech art history, Josef Mánes, Mikoláš Aleš and Josef Václav Myslbek, were considered good examples of progressive art. Under the Hapsburg Empire they had been active in the nationalist movement, producing art works which were inspired by Czech folk culture. This made their work ideologically sound. Šolta invoked memories of the Second World War and the struggle against fascism to prove his point. The following extract was written about the work of the artist Mikoláš Aleš.

> Thousands of our nation's members will acknowledge that Aleš's monumental designs, and his illustrations in books and school textbooks, taught them to love the Czech people, the Czech countryside and Czech history. Even during the reign of fascist terror they inspired national pride and consciousness, and convinced our generation of the future power and glory of our nation.[18]

Standing in direct opposition to progressive art was the *cosmopolitan* art of the enemy, which included all non-figurative styles. Impressionists, Cubists and Surrealists, Šolta argued, had all sought to 'construct an art outside reality, to deprive it of its effect as an instrument for enhancing knowledge and transforming reality'. He accused its proponents of 'covering up class conflicts' and of 'turning away from reality'.[19] All propagators of idealist aesthetics, he argued, were agents of the imperialist capitalist bloc led by the United States.

> Given our present circumstances, the 'ideologists' of cosmopolitan art are propagators of the most reactionary obscurantism, and through their activities they aim to break the consciousness and power of the working masses, and thus prepare the ground for an invasion by the usurpers of global power, the imperialists from Wall Street.[20]

Šolta did not deny the historical reality of a strong Czech avant-garde, but reinterpreted it to his own ends, praising artists who had 'kept on working in a realist vein even when decadent cosmopolitan art had become the fashion'.[21] At the same time he was keen to cite examples of artists who, as it were, had been re-converted from non-figuration to realism, and who were therefore especially worthy of artistic respect. At the time the article was published this was something of an olive branch offered to those readers with an avant-garde past. They, too, would be given a chance to build a new artistic career in the new Communist society.

[17] *The Wanderers* were inspired by works of Chernyshevsky such as *The Aesthetic Relations of Art and Reality* (1855) and *What is to be Done?* (1864). Chernyshevsky advocated an art that would not limit itself to the beautiful but which would embrace the whole of reality. David Elliot, *New Worlds. Russian Art and Society 1900–1937* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), 8.

[18] Vladimír Šolta, 'K některým otázkám socialistického realismu ve výtvarném umení', *Výtvarné umění*, Vol. 1, no. 3 (1950), 110.

[19] *Ibid*.

[20] *Ibid*.

[21] *Ibid*., 117–18. Šolta referred to Antonín Slavíček and Max Švabinsky as exemplars. Slavíček (1870–1910) mainly painted landscapes. Eva Reithartová, 'Slavíček, Antonín', in Emanuel Poche (ed.), *Encyklopedie českého výtvarného umění* (Prague: Československ Academy of Science, 1975), 464. Švabinsky (1873–1962) was known for his historical paintings. Ludvík Hlaváček, 'Skupiny tvůrcích umělců', in Emanuel Poche (ed.), *Encyklopedie českého výtvarného umění* (Prague: Československ Academy of Science, 1975), 519.

The Division between Official and Unofficial Artistic Discourse

In this new political environment, artists and art historians who had earlier defined themselves as 'non-political professional experts' or 'independent critics' (for example, of bourgeois norms or the Nazi occupation) were expected to redefine themselves as 'propagandists of socialist [i.e. Stalinist] ideas'. If they wanted to gain prestige in the context of the re-organised art world, they had no option other than to conform to the official notion of artistic identity. To those who supported the ideals of state socialism and who worked in figurative styles this was not a problem. They believed that the political turn-around would improve working conditions for them, and that Stalinism would bring about a better future for all Czechoslovak citizens. Partly or wholly convinced of this, they were ready to use their figurative style for the propagation of socialist values. The journal *The Visual Arts* introduced them to Soviet Socialist Realist art and other ideologically correct works. Appendix 1 shows that in 1950, 43.5 per cent of the reviewed art works were created by foreign artists from Eastern bloc countries, and ten per cent by 'progressive' colleagues from the West.

Figurative artists benefited from the political situation precisely because they were able to capitalise on their past artistic status. Almost overnight they were officially valued as prominent and important representatives of Czech art. Those interested in organisational matters gained central positions in the newly established centralised Union of Czech and Slovak Artists, and helped create official Stalinist artistic discourse.

In contrast, abstract avant-garde artists found themselves in an unenviable position. Their (neo)Cubist and (neo)Surrealist works were no longer allowed to appear in public, and were defined as 'formalist' representations which mystified reality. The relatively autonomous art associations and art groups which had earlier exhibited avant-garde art were banned. All artists (who wanted to continue to work as artists) had to register as members of the Communist Art Union. Some of them rejected their official role as political propagandists and, in secret, continued to produce works which were politically, and therefore artistically, unacceptable. As a result, they were forced to work outside the official art scene.[22]

In the course of the 1950s a new generation of young artists, trained under Stalinism, began to make their way into the art world. Most of them accepted dominant aesthetic norms and worked according to the Socialist Realist method. For a limited number of young graduates the question of whether or not to participate in the official art world was more vexing. They had found their education limiting and had drawn no real inspiration from the works created by their teachers. At the same time, the lack of an alternative, resulting from the imposition of ideological safeguards on the official art world, offered them little hope of remedying the situation. Censorship and the fear of being labelled bourgeois

[22] See Vlastimil Tetiva, *České malířství a sochařství 2. poloviny 20. stol* (Hluboká nad Vltavou: Alšova jihočeská galerie, 1991), 53.

traitors deterred them from seeking out information about certain artists and artistic styles. Adriena Šimotová (b. 1926), who studied at the School of Applied Arts from 1945 to 1950, remembered how she had 'smuggled' a book about the work of Paul Cézanne out of the school library. At times she herself had been accused of working in a bourgeois style. She recounted:

> If I wanted to borrow a book about Cézanne from the school library, I had to carry it out under my coat so that nobody would see it. It was absolutely absurd. Once I made a sketch for a mosaic, and they wagged their finger at me and said that it was Impressionism!

Artists such as Šimotová began to form small unofficial art groups. 'Offstage' they met each other and discussed the pre-war Czech avant-garde and their own 'formalist' art works. In addition, they organised clandestine group exhibitions in their studios,[23] and secretly contacted older artists who had belonged to the avant-garde, such as the Surrealist Karel Teige (1900–50). The sculptor Hugo Demartini (b. 1931) noted: 'We were lucky that we succeeded in having contact with some older artists who had known it [avant-garde art] and who were rooted in it. There were only a few artists whom we respected and found interesting.' Young artists received information about the pre-Communist pluralist art world and a variety of artistic styles not only through the stories and works of older non-conformist artists but also by reading old journals and art books. Although avant-garde works had been removed from museums and galleries, some of the pre-1948 art journals and art historical publications were still available from public libraries and private individuals.

The Stalinist re-organisation of the art world generated, however, a division between public official and clandestine unofficial artistic discourse. Before the coup, the art world had been divided into groups of artists who belonged to the artistic establishment and groups of those who were not (yet) established. This distinction differed in some important respects from the post-1948 distinction between official and unofficial social spheres. Before 1948, artists' success had mainly depended on favourable reception of their works by prominent critics, dealers and collectors. Artists who did not belong to any established association were free to form their own art groups, and were allowed to organise exhibitions and discuss their works in public. Their personal attitude towards politics did not necessarily influence the critical reception of their works. In contrast, under Stalinism, open competition outside the official organisational structures was forbidden, and the primary criterion for success was political conformity. The centralisation of the art world and the system of censorship ensured that all art works which appeared in public were ideologically correct. This forced artists who refused to act as political propagandists to hold unofficial artistic discourses in secret. Paradoxically, the producers of

[23] Scott noted that, in general, people in situations of extreme oppression only dare to voice alternative opinions if they possess a 'sequestered social site where the control, surveillance, and repression of the dominant are least able to reach', and which must be 'composed entirely of close confidants who share similar expressions of domination'. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 120.

unofficial art were often indirectly integrated into the official organisational structure through compulsory Art Union membership, which was required of all practising artists.

The Formation of Unofficial Art Groups

Inspired by non-realist avant-garde styles, young artists who did not approve of the repressive Communist art policy set about creating works which were not acceptable to the Art Union employees who organised exhibitions. The twin sisters Květa and Jitka Válová (b. 1922) graduated from the School of Applied Arts in 1950 and 1951. When asked to describe the atmosphere in the art world after their graduation, they responded:

KV: It was very bad.

JV: We couldn't exhibit because they wouldn't let us.

MS: Because you created a different style of art?

KV: Yes, we made different things, we didn't work in a realistic vein.

MS: Did you try to exhibit?

KV: No, it was clear [that we couldn't]. There were still art associations up until 1950, but even when we took things along they never showed them at any of the exhibitions. There was no point in trying.

MS: Were there a lot of young artists who had similar difficulties?

JV: Yes, a lot.

KV: Those who stood for something. The rest just licked arses and copied nature. They weren't artists.

Those who wanted to discuss and exhibit their works were forced to create their own clandestine networks and, as a result, more than ten unofficial art groups were established between 1954 and 1960. The members of the groups held exhibitions and meetings in the privacy of their homes and studios. The groups which became best known were Trasa, Máj,[24] Radar,[25] Skupina 58,[26] MS 61, Etapa, UB 12,[27] Šmidrová, Experiment and Proměna.

Květa and Jitka Válová were members of the group Route (Trasa):[28]

[24] Members included J. Balcar, A. Bělocvětov, V. Beneš, B. Čermáková, L. Dydek, L. Fára, R. Fremund, M. Hájek, D. Hendrychová, F. Caun, M. Chlupáč, J. Kolínská, J. Martin, M. Martinová, Neprakta, J. Winter, V. Nolč, D. Nováková, Z. Palcr, R. Piesen, J. Rathouský, J. Skřivánek, M. Vystrčil and K. Vysušil.

[25] J. Bartoš, V. Bláha, D. Foll, F. Gross, F. Hudeček, J. Chadima, V. Kovařik and O. Synaček.

[26] J. Brož, J. Grus, K. Hladík, S. Ježek, M. Jirava, J. Kodet, J. Liesler, J. Malejovský, V. V. Novák, J. Otčenášek, J. Smetana, A. Sopr, V. Tittlebach, R. Wiesner and V. Žalud.

[27] V. Boštík, F. Burant, V. Janoušek, V. Janoušková, J. John, S. Kolíbal, A. Kučerová, J. Mrázek, D. Mrázková, V. Prachatická, O. Smutný, A. Šimotová and A. Vitík.

[28] Members included the painters Eva Burešová, Věra Haŕmanská, Vladimír Jarcovják, Čestmir Kafka, Dalibor Matouš, V. Menčík, Karel Vaca, Jitka Válová and Květa Válová and the sculptors Zdenek Fibichová, Eva Kmentová, Václav Preclík, Zdeněk Šimak and Olbram Zoubek.

KV: We established the group Route in 1954. The majority of us were Emil Filla's (a prominent Cubist painter) [ex]students, but a year later some of Vágner's [ex]students also joined us. Altogether there were about thirteen members. We started having meetings, showing each other what we were doing, and discussing it.

MS: Did you meet often?

KV: Almost every week.

MS: In a studio, or in a pub?

KV: Always in a studio. We always took our works with us to chat about.

The unofficial activities of illegal art groups automatically assumed political significance. As Jeffrey Goldfarb said in his analysis of political domination and resistance in Polish theatre, 'when opposition politics is not possible, politics through aesthetics keeps social alternatives alive'.[29] The very fact that a number of artists offered alternative views, albeit in secret and on a small scale, was highly significant. They formed a social space for indirect but active opposition to the Stalinist regime, proving that it was still possible to hold and express views which differed from the official doctrines put forward by the Party.

Initially Route members painted or created sculptures of everyday objects and situations in an expressive, dramatic style. In the late 1950s, they became interested in existentialist philosophy.[30] From the perspective of Socialist Realist aesthetics the existentialist world view was intolerable. The emphasis on the misery of human existence, inevitable suffering and the lack of hope for change, conflicted with the optimistic message of Socialist Realist works. In the Czech Stalinist context, existentialist art works referred not only to past aggression but also to the oppression experienced throughout the 1950s. When asked what existentialism meant in the context of the 1950s, Jitka Válová referred to the isolated position of the non-conformist artists: 'People were more introverted. They had no alternative because you couldn't communicate with the outside world. Well, there was one alternative, but fuck that!'

The formation of groups outside the official structures did have some political efficacy within the art world, in as much as it proved that the leaders of the Art Union lacked the power to dominate *all* artistic discourse and practice. The effect, however, was mostly one of raising morale. The secret activities psychologically supported unofficial artists (who would otherwise have worked in isolation) by convincing them that they were not alone in their fight. Through their activities they created an area of potential political power which could be harnessed and put

[29] Jeffrey Goldfarb, *On Cultural Freedom. An Exploration of Public Life in Poland and America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 98.

[30] Defined as '[a] loose title for various philosophies that emphasise certain common themes: the individual, the experience of choice, and the absence of rational understanding of the universe with a consequent dread or sense of absurdity in human life. The combination suggests an emotional tone or mood rather than a set of deductively related theses, and existentialism attained its zenith in Europe following the disenchantments of the Second World War.' Simon Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 129–30.

into action in the interest of autonomising the art world whenever the political climate allowed it.

Open Criticism in the Art Union

By the mid-1950s, an increasing number of artists and art historians who had supported Communist ideals in 1948 had become disappointed with the effect of official art policy. As a result, some began to express their doubts about the rigidity of Socialist Realism. Respected and influential members of the Art Union, such as the art historian Jaromír Neumann, began openly to question the value of the method in 1955. The art historian Jiří Kotalík (1920–96), who was head of the editorial board of the official art journal *The Visual Arts* between 1953 and 1954, argued that he had never believed in it anyway.

The third major exhibition of Czechoslovak art, organised by the Art Union at the Prague Riding School (Jízdárna) in 1955, triggered the art historians' critical reaction. The works exhibited, all of which were examples of Socialist Realism, highlighted the 'rigid standardisation' which had been enforced.[31] After visiting the exhibition, Neumann and other respected art historians and critics initiated a debate about the works' poor level of artistic quality and through their critical artistic discourse, indirectly attacked the inflexible political system. This was rather risky because the deaths of Stalin and Gottwald in 1953 had not yet resulted in a less rigid form of Stalinism.

Alarmed by the debate, and in an attempt to pre-empt it, the Union's Central Committee decided to organise a conference to discuss its regulatory role. For the first time in its history the organisation was openly criticised by its own members. The art historian Miroslav Lamač, for example, attacked the Union for its over-insistence on the use of particular themes. At two other conferences about art criticism in the same year, similar criticisms were made. Some critics claimed that the art historians who worked for the Union lacked a scientific approach. Jaromír Neumann, a former advocate of Socialist Realism, stated that it was necessary to return to the method of historical comparison.[32] By positively (re-)evaluating 'objective' art historical methods which had been developed before 1948, the art historians claimed art history as a science that was not, nor should be, inseparable from politics.

In a reaction to the protests by respected art historians, less influential artists also dared to voice objections which they had previously only discussed in secret. Young artists in particular demanded better representation in the Union and travel grants for visits to East and West European countries. In addition, they demanded their own galleries and the right to establish art groups outside the Union. They claimed that the Union was too bureaucratic, politicised and impersonal.[33]

[31] Jůza, 'Smutná léta padesátá', 30.

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] One of the artists I spoke with, who was a member of one of the unofficial art groups in the late 1950s, told me that small art groups were a necessary counter to the overwhelming dominance of the

In Scott's terminology, one could say that, six years after the Communist coup, the proponents of official art policy who operated 'on stage' began to split into groups. One remained dogmatic and political, and ignored the stiffling effects of Stalinist art policy. The other became increasingly critical and self-reflective, and tried to introduce a policy which was less prescriptive. Their self-criticism stimulated less powerful Union members to make public their own hidden criticism.

A number of Union officials were willing to introduce organisational reforms and to remove some of the restrictions imposed by the Socialist Realist method, which would allow illegal art groups to exhibit their works publicly. Without openly admitting any error, they acknowledged that artists should have (at least to some degree) artistic freedom. Their willingness to change can be explained by their own dissatisfaction with some of the (unforeseen) consequences of their own Stalinist art policy. Firstly, the monolithic Union did not satisfy the seemingly natural need of artists to form smaller groups. Secondly, basing the judgement of artistic quality on political criteria had resulted in the endless repetition of a limited number of standardised artistic themes.

Even though some Union officials were, as a result, willing to introduce changes within the Union, their attempts were thwarted by hardliners who continued to support Stalinist policies, and who feared they would lose their jobs if the Union were liberalised. They therefore continued to frustrate all attempts to reform the system.[34] More minor re-organisation was also vetoed by Party leaders who similarly disapproved of change. Despite Stalin's and Gottwald's deaths in 1953, the Czechoslovak government remained dogmatic. Decentralisation directly contradicted the Stalinist model of society, and therefore would, it was felt, undermine the authority of the Party.

The Increased Tolerance Exercised by the Editors of the Art Magazine *The Visual Arts*

Even though attempts to introduce organisational reform within the Union in 1955 had proved unsuccessful, the editors of the art magazine *The Visual Arts* began to take a more tolerant line. More liberal art historians thus increased their influence over official art policy. It was clearly easier gradually to widen the political boundaries of artistic discourse than to push through far-reaching organisational reform. The increasing tolerance of the journal must be placed in the context of international political developments. In 1956, Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev, announced a new policy of de-Stalinisation in which Stalin's dogmatic policies were heavily criticised. Even though the Czechoslovak government, headed by Antonín Zápotocký, refused to take up the Soviet political line, artists and art

Union. The illegal groups offered artists the possibility of meeting colleagues with similar interests, with whom they could discuss both art in general and their own work. However, they also felt the need to exhibit their work before a wider public, and wished to use the official network of galleries and museums to do so.

[34] Jůza, 'Smutná léta padesátá', 31.

historians who heard rumours about the Soviet developments dared to resist in more visible ways.

Between 1956 and 1960 the editors progressively lifted the ban on Czech and Western 'bourgeois' avant-garde art. In 1955, the journal, for the first time since its establishment, included more reproductions of works by Western than by Eastern bloc artists (see Appendix 1). Eleven per cent were by the former, with only eight per cent by the latter. By 1956 this difference had become even more noticeable (34.6 and 4.2 per cent).

An early attempt by the editors to stretch the limits of censorship clearly came in 1956 with the publication of the article 'Modern Art', in which the art historian Miroslav Lamač reviewed the work of a number of Western avant-garde artists. From the viewpoint of Socialist Realist aesthetics, the works which illustrated the article were not particularly shocking. All but one were figurative depictions of politically neutral topics or social themes.[35] The one exception was a study for the painting *Guernica*, by Pablo Picasso. Though the work was Cubist, its warning against the terror of fascism was a sufficiently acceptable theme in Communist discourse.

More daring than the reproductions, however, was Lamač's own attack on ideas fundamental to Socialist Realism. In Socialist Realist aesthetics the 'pejorative' equation of avant-garde art with formalism, and the incompatibility of Realism and Abstractionism, were fundamental. Lamač however rejected these basic assumptions:

> the equation of modernism with formalism has been one of the greatest mistakes of the past . . . . Artists [such as Picasso, Matisse or Bonnard], who so passionately researched man, who so much enriched our artistic knowledge of reality, and who discovered so many new expressive possibilities, cannot be formalist.[36]

Accompanying Lamač's text, the reproductions of Western works of art were intended to challenge the dogmatic Stalinist view of art. In the context of earlier debates held by the Union it heralded a potential political change.

The publication of Lamač's article demonstrated that the editors of *The Visual Arts* were ready to discard, or at least defy, Cold War rhetoric, which had divided the world into the categories of 'friendly realists' and 'hostile formalists'. During the

[35] Some of the artists reviewed, such as Gustav Courbet and Théodore Géricault, had already been accepted as socially conscious realists, and their work had already been reviewed. In Lamač's article they were represented by paintings with social themes, such as a beggar and a woman in a kitchen. Other painters discussed by Lamač, such as Manet, Dégas, Renoir and van Gogh, now appeared for the first time in the magazine. However, as had been the case with Picasso in 1953, none of their more abstract works were shown. Instead, realist paintings that had a social or relatively neutral content served as illustrations. Van Gogh, for example, was represented by a painting of agricultural labourers. Toulouse-Lautrec's work showed people in a bar, Renoir's people in a street, Pierre Bonnard's people in a garden, Manet's a woman applying her make-up; and Dégas was represented by three of his nudes, a woman ironing and a dancer. The most avant-garde artists Lamač wrote about were Picasso and Matisse. The reproduction of Matisse's painting depicted a woman and a child.

[36] Miroslav Lamač, 'Moderni umění 1', *Výtvarné umění*, Vol. 17, no. 5 (1956), 212. In the same issue Picasso was quoted as attacking the idea that Realism and Abstractionism were incompatible artistic categories. The quote was taken from his interview with Christian Zervos, originally published in *Picasso 1930–35* (ed. Cahiers d'art). Picasso's and Lamač's statements reinforced each other.

late 1950s, the editors gradually distanced themselves from this dogmatic political line. The Socialist Realist view of art was no longer presented as the indisputable truth, but came to be regarded as yet another artistic movement that should also be open to criticism. In 1957, the magazine published an article by Jindřich Chalupecký which criticised pre-formulated artistic programmes. He claimed that over-defined procedures and methods made artistic creation impossible.[37] In the same year, in an extended article, the art historian Jiří Padrta introduced readers to a variety of twentieth-century modernist styles.[38] He claimed that knowledge about the historical development of abstract art was a necessary prerequisite for any serious criticism on the subject. By presenting the history of 'the range of different branches of its aesthetics' and 'its historical origins, development, and the way it has been recorded in both available and less accessible literature', he aimed to help readers formulate 'their own opinions and critical judgement'.[39] By accepting abstractionism as a historical process, Padrta deconstructed the Cold War notion of abstract art as a 'timeless mythical entity' (the art of the arch-enemy), and redefined it as a series of events and processes which could only be understood in their historical context.

In his introduction to the history of abstract art, Padrta dealt with Cubism, Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism, Fauvism, Expressionism, Concrete Art, Abstract Impressionism, Neoplasticism and Suprematism, and discussed art groups such as De Stijl and Bauhaus. The critic was careful, however, not to express his personal opinion about works by specific artists. He argued that abstract art was a relatively recent development which therefore made any sound judgement difficult. Padrta's cautious attitude can be explained by the fact that, even though increasing tolerance was shown towards Western art within the Union, the official political line was still Stalinist. Padrta, therefore, strategically quoted Western critics while making sure he was not seen to be agreeing or disagreeing with any of them.

One of the critics Padrta quoted was the Frenchman Michel Seuphor, who had written the book *l'Art Abstrait*. Seuphor's view of art was diametrically opposed to doctrinaire Stalinist aesthetics. According to him art was primarily a personal, inner process.

> For abstract artists it is enough to discover oneself. To discover oneself means to find. That is in reality the utmost requirement . . . . A genuine artist does not imitate anything. He manifests that incommunicable world which is inside himself, which is him, and which he must externally recreate.[40]

Padrta also noted that Seuphor approved of originality and criticised repetition. In the context of the discussion about the routine production of Socialist Realist

[37] Jindřich Chalupecký, 'Umění a skutečnost', *Výtvarné umění*, Vol. 18 (1957), 157.

[38] Jiří Padrta, 'Umění nezobrazujíci a neobjektivní, jeho počátky a vývoj 1', *Výtvarné umění*, Vol. 18, no. 4 (1957), 174–81; 'Umění nezobrazujíci a neobjektivní, jeho počátky a vývoj 2.' *Výtvarné umění*, Vol. 18, no. 5 (1957), 214–21.

[39] Padrta, 'Umění nezobrazujíci a neobjektivní, jeho počátky a vývoj 1', 174.

[40] Seuphor, quoted by Padrta, *ibid*., 181.

themes, Padrta's decision to quote Seuphor was a clear challenge to the hardline members of the Union.

For artists who had been unable to obtain information about current Western abstract art due to political censorship, the article contained invaluable material. It was illustrated with forty-nine reproductions of abstract works produced between 1910 and 1957 by a varied group of artists, such as the Russian avant-garde painter Vasilij Kandinsky, the Dutch geometric artist Piet Mondrian, the German Abstract Expressionist Hans Hartung, the French Expressionist Jean Dubuffet and the American Abstract Expressionist Jackson Pollock.[41] The inclusion of American artists was not just a sign that Padrta wished to break with the idea that the American art world was a 'dangerous bourgeois realm', but also a reflection of the fact that, after the Second World War, the centre of artistic innovation had moved from Paris to New York.[42]

One of the works accompanying the article was a painting by František Kupka, a former representative of Czech Cubism who lived in Paris. It was the first time that Kupka's work had been reviewed in the Communist art magazine. Padrta described his stylistic development as a Cubist during the first decades of the century, and defined his position within a group of other, mostly Western European, artists. The painting reproduced in the magazine was a recent work from 1957, entitled *Two Blues* (*Dvě Modré*). It was a purely abstract composition showing two geometric forms. The painting, displayed together with a series of works by Western artists, proved that post-1948 non-figurative styles had been developed not only by Western but also by Czech artists. By including Kupka's painting, Padrta broke with the Cold War image of a divided art history in which abstract Czech emigré artists in the West were traitors who had lost their right to a place in Eastern European art history.

The articles by Lamač, Chalupecký and Padrta marked the beginning of a period of liberalisation in the official art world. It was a period in which Czech art was again criticised in the context of Western art history, and art theory in general was discussed openly. In addition, they symbolised an end to a period in which official artistic and political discourse had been superimposed upon each other, and the beginning of a process in which artists and art historians would regain a degree of professional autonomy. It should, however, be emphasised that this process took place at a time when, *outside* the art world, the political scene was still dominated by

[41] The first part of the essay was accompanied by twenty-three reproductions of works by Vasilij Kandinsky (3), Joan Miró (2), Hans Arp (1), Willi Baumeister (1), Hans Hartung (1), Marcel Duchamp (1), Robert Delaunay (2), Franz Marc (1), Piet Mondrian (2), Fernand Léger (1), Umberto Boccioni (1), Alberto Magnelli (2), Giacomo Balla (1), Auguste Herbin (1) and František Kupka (1). The second part of the essay, published in the next issue (no. 5), contained twenty-six reproductions of paintings by Piet Mondrian (1), Emilio Vedova (1), Roger Bissiere (1), Ernst Wilhelm Nay (2), Jean Bazaine (1), (Otto) Wols (1), Mark Tobey (1), Georges Mathieu (1), Hans Hartung (1), Dieira da Silva (1), Geer van de Velde (1), Jackson Pollock (1), Alfred Manessier (1), Boris Lanskoy (1), Georg Meistermann (1), Fritz Winter (1), Maurice Esteve (1), Bram van Velde (1), Gustave Singier (1), Renato Birolli (1), Jean Atlan (1), Gérard Scheider (1), Jean Dubuffet (1), Pierre Soulae (1) and Alfred Manessier (1).

[42] See Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New*, rev. ed. (New York: Knopf, 1991), 255.

hard-line Stalinist policies that, in response to the uprising in Hungary in 1956, had become even more entrenched.

A Changing Exhibition Policy: Socialist Realism and Avant-Garde Art as Sources of National Pride

Whereas in 1956, de-Stalinisation programmes along the lines of that in the Soviet Union were implemented in Poland and Hungary, no such reforms were introduced in Czechoslovakia.[43] In the Czech art world however, there were signs that political change was none the less filtering through. Not only did *The Visual Arts* continue its increasingly tolerant line, but the Art Union's policy on exhibiting art also changed. This policy was characterised by a twin-track approach. On the one hand, Stalinist exhibition organisers continued to hold exhibitions of Socialist Realist works which identified artists as political propagandists and emphasised the links between Czechoslovak and Soviet culture. On the other, the reformist Communist exhibitions' organisers arranged Czech Cubist and Surrealist exhibitions which identified artists as 'free, autonomous creators', and highlighted the unique characteristics of Czech culture. The latter approach was part of what might be termed the de-Sovietisation of Czechoslovak nationalist discourse.

In 1957, for the first time since the Communist take-over of 1948, the works of the Czech Modernist avant-garde were publicly exhibited. The art historians Lamač, Padrta and Tomeš organised an exhibition in the House of Art (Dům Umění) in Brno, the capital of Moravia, which was entitled 'The Founders of Modern Czech Art' ('Zakladatelé moderního českého umění'). The exhibition was intended 'to show young artists, who often referred to (Bohumil) Kubišta, (Emil) Filla, (Václav) Špala, (Josef) Čapek and others, just how to use these names in a correct and responsible way'.[44] The exhibition organisers attempted to bridge the gap between the youngest generation of artists and art historians and the Czech avant-garde. The former were given the opportunity to study at close quarters the technique and colours of works which they had only ever seen as reproductions, and the latter were encouraged to expand the collections of the Regional Art Galleries to include Cubist and Surrealist works. To the delight of liberals, Party officials deliberately turned a blind eye to the exhibition, which was also shown in

[43] The lack of political reform in Czechoslovakia can be explained by a number of reasons. The Czechoslovak economy had not been as drastically affected by Stalinist policies as had the economies of other Eastern bloc countries, and consequently economic pressure for reform was not as great. The majority of intellectuals had remained loyal to the Party and, as a result of the purges and strict political control, those not loyal to the Party had been given no chance to organise themselves. Ethnic and historical differences between Czechs and Slovaks might also have been a factor involved or exploited in hindering the development of any unified opposition. Many politicians in the upper echelons of the Party took a reactionary stance and resisted change in any direction. The experience of the purges meant that most still feared punishment for any leeway to those opposed to Stalinist rule. See Sharon L. Wolchik, *Czechoslovakia in Transition. Politics, Economics, and Society* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1991), 25–6.

[44] See Jůza, 'Smutná léta padesátá', 32.

the Prague Riding School. The mere fact that the exhibition remained open to the public signalled an important political victory, and showed that the art world had gained at least some degree of autonomy.

The growing interest in Czech avant-garde works was, indirectly, a reaction to Stalinist propaganda which continually presented Czechoslovakia in a fraternal or filial relation to the Soviet Union. As a result, it was claimed that the nations shared the same political and cultural aims, as well as identities. By the end of the 1950s this image had lost the appeal it had enjoyed following the end of the Second World War. The Stalinist system had fallen short of the ideals voiced in 1945. Many artists who had been fervent Communist supporters became first disillusioned, then shocked and embittered by the acts of political terror and systematic suppression of certain characteristics of Czechoslovak history, culture and art. They were equally disappointed, and ultimately bored, by the repetitive and predictable kind of art generated by the Soviet school of Socialist Realism. Reacting against this, Czech artists sought inspiration in the past, and began to identify with art historical developments which, in the context of contemporary Eastern bloc culture, were both different and yet typically Czech. The Czech avant-garde was regarded as just such a phenomenon. By (re)claiming it as an inseparable part of Czech art history, the idea of a *Soviet-free* Czech culture was reinforced.[45] Claiming Kupka (who had French citizenship) as a 'Czech national artist' must also be understood from this perspective.

The Changing Reception of Contemporary Abstract Art

The appearance of Cubist and Surrealist works in *The Visual Arts* and state galleries did not mean that political censorship had been fully relaxed. On the contrary, the works of most contemporary innovative artists who had formed unofficial art groups were still banned. Censorship was still enforced, and special employees of the Chief Press Inspection Board (*Hlavní správy tiskového dohledu*) continued to scrutinise art exhibition programmes, art catalogue reproductions and accompanying texts, for any 'wayward' sentiments. Anything which did not conform to the censors' directives was excised before publication. The names of certain artists were banned in publications, particularly the names of those who had emigrated to the West.[46]

Those artists who defined their identity by stressing *present-day* links between Czech and Western European artistic movements were regarded by the censors as especially dangerous. Their interest in the works and aesthetics of their Western colleagues suggested that the Iron Curtain was not shut quite as tightly as the

[45] The anthropologist Ladislav Holy argued that, after 1948, the idea of an autonomous Czech identity was not denied outright: 'Hand in hand with the officially proclaimed ideology of "proletarian internationalism" went the recognition of the national principle in the organisation of communist society and the communist state'. Ladislav Holy, 'The End of Socialism in Czechoslovakia', in C. M. Mann (ed.), *Socialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Local Practice* (London: Routledge, 1994), 809–10.

[46] Dušan Tomášek, *Pozor, cenzurováno! Aneb ze života soudruzky cenzury* (Prague: MV ČR, 1994), 111–14.

Czechoslovak state leaders might have wished. Western-orientated Czech artists managed to keep up with recent artistic developments in the West by reading publications which were occasionally smuggled into the country. Subsequently, they attempted to incorporate what they saw into their own work. As the sculptor Hugo Demartini recalled:

When information about Western post-war abstractionism started to get through we were influenced by it, whether it be work by the painter Alberto Burri, or by George Mathieu. From time to time a magazine with those things in it made it through to Czechoslovakia. To us this influence was very welcome, because . . . it gave us more possibility to develop our own work.

Some information about contemporary Western art could even be found in the official libraries which kept on their subscriptions to some Western art journals.

There was the university library and the library of the Museum of Applied Art which collected certain Western magazines about architecture and the applied arts. We, the young people, always went along and looked through them to find certain things which we were normally not allowed to see.

The producers of unofficial Western-orientated abstract art, encouraged by the increasing tolerance of *The Visual Arts* and rumours about de-Stalinisation in the Soviet Union, tried to have their works accepted by the official state galleries. Towards the end of the 1950s some of them succeeded in holding public exhibitions of their works. In 1957, some members of Máj 57[47] held an exhibition in Obecní dům in Prague. A year later the art critic František Šmejkal organised an exhibition in the lecture rooms of the Philosophical Faculty at Charles University, including Existentialist and abstract works.[48] In the same year non-conformist works by a number of young artists were exhibited in the House of Art (*Dům Umění*) in Brno. To make it politically acceptable, the exhibition was presented as 'an historical turning-point of a genuine approach of fresh artistic powers to generate new creative possibilities in socialist art'.[49] Although the exhibition was fiercely criticised at the eleventh Congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, it remained open. In its own way this was a considerable victory for the proponents of artistic variety but, in the overall context of state censorship, it was relatively insignificant. Art exhibitions continued to be censored and exhibitions of non-conformist art were frequently closed. The painter Adriena Šimotová, one of the members of the unofficial art group UB 12, vividly recalled how the programme of censorship continued:

I had an exhibition with the sculptress Věra Janoušková in a small exhibition hall on Karlovo náměstí in 1960. In art terms it wasn't by any means revolutionary, but the work was very daring. They didn't close that exhibition. But when we had another exhibition with the group UB 12 in 1961, they closed it and re-opened it three times. They forced us to remove

47 Libor Fára, Josef Istler, Oto Janeček, A. Karášek, Jan Kotík, P. Kotík, Mikuláš Medek and Karel Teissig.

48 See Jan Kříž, 'Imaginace-struktura-divnost', in Jiří Vykoukal, ed., *Záznam nejrozmanitějších faktorů. České malířství 2. poloviny 20. století ze sbírek galerií* (Prague: Národní galerie, 1993), 37; Vlastimil Tetiva, *České malířství a sochařství 2. poloviny 20. stol*, 90.

49 Vilém Jůza, 'Smutná léta padesátá', 33.

some of the works, then re-opened it. The exhibitions were always closed for so-called technical reasons. They formed committees to judge the works, as if we were criminals.

Despite the continued censorship, non-conformist artists persisted in trying to enter the official art scene. In Scott's words, 'the hidden transcript [was] continually pressing against the limit of what [was] permitted on stage', just like 'a body of water pressing against a dam'.[50]

The dam finally burst in 1964. After Khrushchev's second de-Stalinisation speech in 1961, the politicians who adhered to his views put the Czechoslovak President Antonín Novotný under increasing pressure to introduce political and economic changes.[51] As a result, in the field of the visual arts, hardline Stalinists quickly lost ground. Artists and art historians who defined artists as 'free creators' were able to take up influential positions in the Art Union, and introduce organisational changes. In 1964, the art historian Jindrich Chalupecký, well known for his vociferous criticism of political censorship and his ardent support of political non-conformism, was appointed Chairman of the Art Union. Together with other members of the Union, he introduced a number of measures aimed at reducing political restrictions on artists' activities. In an article in 1969 he reviewed the changes as follows:

[In 1965] the Union abolished the position of Central Secretary, and thus wrenched itself free from control by political institutions. By the beginning of 1965 the Union had reinstated all those who had been discriminated against. The Union also put an end to the censorship of exhibitions. At the same time, exhibiting abroad was permitted and all artists were eligible to receive scholarships irrespective of their [political] opinions.[52]

Officially, artists were re-identified as free creators, and measures were taken to guarantee the autonomy of the Czech art world in which non-political specialists would judge the quality of art. In itself, the ideal of a depoliticised art world was, of course, part of the political discourse of reformist Communist politicians such as Alexander Dubček. In the Art Union plans were made to decentralise the art world and re-introduce organisational pluralism through the establishment of independent art associations. The fate of Hungary's uprising in 1956 was similarly repeated in Czechoslovakia. The invasion by the Warsaw-pact troops in 1968 and the introduction of the programme of normalisation thwarthed the Art Union's plans. Czech artists were once again expected to take up the role of political propagandist.[53]

Conclusion

When the Communist Party seized power in 1948, its leaders took complete control of the exhibition and purchase of art works. Non-figurative avant-garde art was

[50] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 196.

[51] See Jacques Rupnik, *The Other People* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988), 171–2; François Fejto, *A History of the People's Democracies* (New York: Penguin Books, 1971), 70.

[52] Jindřich Chalupecký, 'K čemu je Svaz?', *Výtvarná Práce*, Vol. 17, no. 3–4, 11.

[53] For a detailed analysis of subsequent developments in the Czech art world, see Svašek, 'Styles, Struggles, and Careers', 88–234.

denounced and banned as the product of a hostile, 'bourgeois', international élite. Artists were redefined as political propagandists who should work in a realist manner and depict scenes which promoted Communist ideals. Prominent representatives of the Czech avant-garde art movement were no longer able to advance their careers whereas, in contrast, artists working according to the Socialist Realist principles gained artistic success and were held up as examples to the rest of the artistic community. Socialist Realist discourse was propagated in a new Communist art magazine in which art historians rewrote art history from a Communist perspective. Artists who, before 1948, had won national and international recognition, were either classed as 'bourgeois enemies' or 'progressive friends', depending on their political views.

The art world was re-organised in such a way that public artistic discourse reinforced the authority of the Communist Party. Art students were trained to produce ideologically acceptable works, reinforcing a notion of Czech national identity which referred to folklore, lay culture and the collective fight against the international bourgeoisie. However, the Communist Party failed to halt completely the production of art works opposed to Communist discourse. A small group of artists refused to work in figurative or Socialist Realist styles and continued to take their inspiration from non-figurative avant-garde work. They rejected the Communists' optimistic political view, and defined their art content as a reflection of existentialist problems. They produced images which emphasised human suffering and experimented with abstraction. Their works were consequently banned from public exhibition and became symbols of a clandestine artistic discourse. Although the works were not allowed to be publicly exhibited, they were viewed and discussed in the privacy of artists' studios. Such works resisted the merging of Communist and artistic discourse, and implicitly challenged the authority of the Stalinist regime.

In 1955, public debates were staged in which critical Art Union members (some of them respected Party members) protested against its overwhelming centralising control and its refusal to acknowledge artistic plurality. Until then, some of them had expressed their criticism in secret, afraid of being labelled as enemies of the state. The protests did not, however, lead to organisational changes. Hardline Stalinists in the Union, with the government's backing, opposed decentralisation: as a result, the unofficial groups remained just that. After 1955, however, the Communist art journal *The Visual Arts* began to publish articles in which critical art historians openly attacked Socialist Realism's rigidly enforced ideas, and rehabilitated artists who had produced avant-garde art during the first half of the twentieth century. Cubism and Surrealism were redefined as artistic movements which were characteristic of Czech art history, and therefore, elements of Czech culture which distinguished the Czechs from other Communist nations.

Official exhibition policy in the late 1950s used a twin-track approach which fostered conflicting images of Czech artistic identity. Exhibitions of Czech avant-garde art were organised by art historians who managed, in part due to international political changes, to express their formerly hidden views on Czech art and the task

of Czech artists in public. At the same time, the more dogmatic art historians continued to organise exhibitions of Socialist Realist works, emphasising the Communist identity of Czech art. After 1961, as part of a wider process of de-Stalinisation, the Party began to exercise less control over the Union's activities, which in turn allowed more liberal artists and art historians to take up key positions. They redefined art as an autonomous discourse and promoted Western-orientated, politically non-conformist artists. Their plans to implement far-reaching decentralising reforms were, however, thwarted when they were dismissed from their influential positions as a result of political normalisation.

Appendix

Table. *Percentage of works*[1] *by artists from Czechoslovakia, other Communist countries and the West in the art journal Výtvarné Umění (The Visual Arts)*

	Czech	East	West	Other
1950	46.5	43.5[2]	10[3]	0
1951	50.5	32.5	14.5	2.5
1952[4]	—	—	—	
1953	79.7	13.1	3.1	4.1
1954	63.9	25.5	6.6	4
1955	73.9	8	11	7.1
1956	56.8	4.2	34.6[5]	4.4
1957	42.3	19.1	26.3	12.3
1958	65.3	5	24.3	5.4
1959	75.6	8.8	7	8.6
1960	72.2	4.8	17	6
1961	71.5	10.6[6]	11.9	6
1962	74.9	3	18.3	3.8
1963	52.3	1.2	36	10.5
1964	65.1	0.8	26.5	7.6
1965	64.2	6.4	18.5	10.9
1966	63.8	5	27.2	4
1967	54	21	24	1
1968	75.6	3.7	20.6	0.1
1969	62.2	4.3	25.4	8.1

[1] Each volume contains between 250 and 550 photographic reproductions of art works.
[2] Socialist Realist works mainly by Soviet artists.
[3] Figurative and Socialist Realist works.
[4] Unfortunately this volume was missing from the libraries of the Academy of Fine Arts and the Museum of Applied Arts in Prague.
[5] Figurative *and* abstract works.
[6] Mainly Russian abstract Modernists.

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