

**The Demonstration of March 15, 1989, in Budapest:
A Struggle for Public Memory**

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Mass demonstrations in Eastern Europe were highlights and turning points of political change in 1989. Timothy Garton Ash describes this time poetically;

A few thousands, then tens of thousands, then hundreds of thousands, went on to the streets. They spoke a few words: "Resign!", they said. "No more shall we be slaves" (a quotation from Petofi, from the March 15 Budapest demonstration—T.H.). "Free elections!", "Freedom!" And the walls of Jericho fell.

The entry of the masses onto the scene, of course, was not the only cause of the political transition. Ash and other observers point to the "factor Gorbachev," the new, more liberal Soviet policy toward the satellite countries, and also the "factor Toqueville," the ruling elite's loss of conviction in its own right to rule. Especially in Hungary, the change seems to be a mixture of reforms (from above, by an enlightened minority in the still ruling communist party) and revolution, largely mediated by negotiations between ruling and opposition elites. Nevertheless, the popular pressure for reforms found expression in demonstrations of growing size, notably on the anniversaries of the earlier Hungarian revolutions, of March 15 (1848) and October 23 (1956) (Ash 1990: 139, 14-15, 140-142).

My paper discusses the March 15, 1989, demonstrations in Budapest and aims to explicate the struggle for historic memory between the communist government and the opposition. Who is the heir to the national past? To what future does the trend of national history point? The fight was bitter because the suppressed memories of the 1956 revolution and the bloody, unlawful repression surfaced just at this time. These memories rapidly undermined the public image of the communist party.

The media gave the March 15 demonstration little publicity in Hungary or abroad, almost suppressing the event. However, in retrospect it seems that March 15 was a turning point in the revolutionary process, serving as a forerunner of later mass-demonstrations in 1989, the reburial of Imre Nagy in June, and the dramatic, massive protests in Leipzig, Berlin and Prague. It was an early (perhaps the first in 1989) appearance of the "gentle crowd against the Party-state...that large-scale, sustained, yet supremely peaceful and self-disciplined manifestation of social unity..." which was both the hallmark and the essential domestic catalyst of change in 1989 (Ash 1990: 133).

To place March 15 in the chronology of East and Central Europe's transformation, I refer to the following dates and events:

January 19, 1989: The Hungarian National Assembly passes the law on freedom of assembly and association. (The forming of parties is not yet allowed, and public demonstrations in front of the Parliament, in Kossuth square are forbidden.)

January 28: Imre Pozsgay, member of the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party (HSWP) Political Committee declares that in 1956 a national uprising took place in Hungary.

February 11: The HSWP takes a stand in favor of the introduction of a multi-party system.

March 15: anniversary of the 1848 revolution.

March 22: Organizations which cooperated in the March 15 demonstration form the Opposition Round Table.

May 2: Dismantling of technical barriers (the "Iron Curtain") is begun on the Hungarian-Austrian border. This step will later facilitate a mass-exodus of GDR citizens toward Western Germany.

May 8: János Kádár relieved of his post as party president and of his CC membership.

June 4: Solidarity wins with an overwhelming majority in the Polish elections.

June 16: Solemn reburial of Imre Nagy, leader of the 1956 revolution, and his companions.

To indicate the international context of the Budapest demonstration, I quote Ash again:

In April, while a comparison with 1848 had already come to mind, it was the springtime of only two nations, Poland and Hungary. The other four states of what was misleadingly called Eastern Europe were still frozen in various binds of dictatorship. (Ash 1990:13)

The description and analysis presented in this paper is based on my personal observations and participation in the long-term historical process of which it was a part. I do not deny a certain measure of subjectivity in my presentation. As an anthropologist, I focus first of all on the demonstration of March 15 as a specific cultural performance and as a human experience, and try to show its cultural context.¹

A closer scrutiny of the March 15 demonstration as a “public event” (cf. Handelman 1989) or as a “political ritual” (Kurti 1990) might reveal many component processes of the political transition in Eastern Europe, some of which began much earlier and begot results much later. In this paper I want to focus on the shift in public memory and the change in historical self-identification. This shift brought back the formerly suppressed memory of the 1956 uprising. In light of the restored memory of 1956, the traits of a liberal, democratic revolution and those of a brutal, unlawful retaliation were cast in relief by the legendary and distant image of 1848.

These shifts in perception of history had been underway for a long time, at the individual and small group levels. The March 15 demonstration publicly confirmed this change, and created a new oppositional political consensus. The fight was for political power and legitimacy; the opposed views were, however, articulated in significant measure as different interpretations of historical events. Public memory served as a sort of symbolic battlefield in the political struggle. My objective is to show how the ritual of the March demonstration represented an interplay between past and present, and between the creation of a new past and a new programme for the future.

On another, deeper level, we might assume that the “cultural strategy” of using historical memory as a justification for protest and revolt has its own specific tradition and continuity in Hungarian history. The “cultural strategy” concept (Swidler, 1986) interprets culture as a “tool kit” of symbols, stories, rituals and world views, which people may use in various configurations to solve different kinds of problems. According to this hypothesis, we may suppose that the contents of the Hungarian cultural “tool kit” were more or less different from those of other Eastern Europeans, and the Hungarians had specific traditional strategies in applying historical symbols as political weapons.

The analysis of the March 15, 1989 demonstration as a case study may allow us to raise general questions concerning the interrelations among public memory, political power and the role of the cultural context. In addition, we might explore national variation and national specificity in the maintenance of historical memory. The question is not limited to the transmission of historical knowledge and values. We might assume the long survival of once-acquired strategies of action, including strategies of adaptation to situations of extraordinary crisis. “People may have in readiness cultural capacities they rarely employ, and all people know more culture than they use” (Swidler 1986: 277). In this spirit, we can see in one demonstration a

microcosm of the working mechanism of historical determination, and use it to examine the role of past experiences in shaping the Hungarian political transition.

MARCH 15, TWO PARALLEL DEMONSTRATIONS

March 15 commemorates the revolution of 1848. The Opposition demanded restoration of this day as a national holiday, a day off, in addition to or instead of April 4 and November 7. These two holidays represented the dependence of the Hungarian political system on the Soviet Union. The Soviet Army liberated Hungary on April 4, 1945, and the second date commemorates the October Revolution. The government expressed its inclination toward compromise when it declared March 15 an official holiday, and allowed demonstrations at the statue of Kossuth in front of the Parliament, in accordance with a new amendment of the Act on the freedom of assembly. The government wanted a collective commemoration of loyal and opposition forces, under the auspices of the Patriotic Front, which would have expressed national consensus, and approval of the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party's reforms. The opposition groups would be symbolically incorporated but at the same time marginalized (cf. Bruszt-Stark 1990: 24).

This call was not followed unanimously: thirty-one opposition organizations invited the citizens to their own demonstration, independent of the state celebration. More than one hundred thousand people participated in that demonstration in Budapest, in contrast to the estimated twenty to thirty thousand participants in the demonstration organized by the government. A double commemoration was carried out in most provincial towns, with similar results. It was evident that the majority of the people were dissatisfied with the policy of the existing government, and instead of reforms wanted a general change in the political system.

The doubling of the demonstration, and the appearance of the opposition on the scene as a cohesive force, meant a very significant shift in the political power relations in Hungary, as the excellent analysis by Bruszt and Stark shows (1990). The opposition's earlier strategy of compromise was replaced by a strategy of mobilization and uncompromised confrontation.

The March 15th demonstration was the performative action that made possible the mutual self-recognition of an oppositional identity transcending the boundaries of various participating organizations. ... It began the process of redrawing the boundaries of the political space along dichotomous lines between Officialdom and the Opposition.

Under the pressure of the opposition, the split between hardliners and reformers deepened in the party, and the reform wing gathered momentum (Bruszt-Stark 1990). The parallel and competing demonstrations became to some degree institutionalized as “tests of strength” (and were repeated on May Day, on the anniversaries related to 1956; June 16, October 23) and, lacking parliamentary representation, became a public manifestation of public will. The streets and squares of Budapest became a substitution for a parliament.

One may consider the two—government and opposition—as a dialogue between government, party leadership and opposition. Neither side knew exactly how many people the other could mobilize, or what the other side would do, and how far it would go in carrying out their aims. Shock-troops of the police, armed with waterguns, were kept in readiness. The demonstrators knew the government might try to disperse them, as happened in Wenceclas Square in Prague much later, and were aware that even arms might be used against them.² In the city of Pecs, the speaker of the opposition meeting was confidentially notified that on the roofs of surrounding buildings machine guns were in firing position, in case the demonstration took an “unlawful” turn.

The parallel demonstrations dramatically expressed that the people were competing with the government for the interpretation and appropriation of the national past. In this respect the Budapest demonstrations might be compared to the parallel, competing commemorations of Communists and Gaullists in France after World War Two. French historians described these demonstrations as “batailles pour la mémoire” and for the oblivion of unwanted, disturbing aspects of recent history. Both parties tried to mobilize more people than their adversaries. However, the two parties were most interested in expropriating and reshaping the past, and in transforming public memory for the purposes of their differing programmes (Namer 1983, *La mémoire des Français* 1986, Raphael, Herberich-Marx 1990).

The contexts of the French and Hungarian demonstrations were different. In France, party struggles were taken for granted, whereas in Hungary for 40 years all public, political demonstrations were organized exclusively by the Communist party and its client organizations. During this time the government suppressed all other manifestations of any political opinion. That over a hundred thousand people rallied without party leadership, and furthermore, against the party leadership, was a powerful, symbolic break with communist political hegemony.

1848 AND 1956 IN PUBLIC MEMORY

The opposition demonstration referred to two historical mythologies; the events of 1848 and 1956. A knowledge of both revolts is important for the understanding of the 1989 demonstration.

Almost every modern European and American state traces its genealogy to revolutions. This means that from each state's conception, opposition has been in some way an integral part of its ideology (Eisenstadt, et al. 1987). In Hungary, the founding myth of modern statehood is the revolution and national war of independence in 1848. This revolution was suppressed, and its leaders were either executed or exiled.

The 1848 revolution started with a peaceful demonstration in Pest. Sandor Petof's poem "National Song" mobilized the masses. In addition, the reformers had articulated their requirements for democratic transformation in twelve points. The demonstrators succeeded in printing the poem and the twelve points without clearing censorship. In effect, they established the freedom of the press. They also released the political prisoners, who numbered only two at this time. The military commander of the city did not shoot at the demonstrators. Simultaneously the feudal assembly of the estates, sitting in Pozsony (Bratislava), passed a decree that abolished the privileges of the noblemen, liberated the serfs and set up a government responsible to Parliament.³ These reforms were accorded royal consent by the Hapsburg monarch seated in Vienna, at the high tide of revolutions all over Europe. However, after the suppression of the revolutions in Vienna and Northern Italy, the old king and Kaiser Ferdinand was removed and the young Franz Joseph ascended the throne. He turned against the new democratic government in Hungary, and finally suppressed the Hungarian movement with the help of the czar, and introduced absolutist rule.

1848-49 became a source of national pride not as a victory or show of strength, but as a peaceful and bold democratic revolution, and in its later phase, as a heroic struggle against superior adversaries. (The image of 1848 is not everywhere so glorious. In the memory of other nations of the region, Hungarian nationalism overshadows the liberal reforms.) For Hungarians, 1848-49 connotes liberal values, heroic acts, endurance in hopeless situations, and brings to mind images of heroes fallen in struggle for the country. In general, 1848 became a focal symbol of patriotic sentiments. Kossuth, the politician struggling for democratic reforms and national independence, who went into exile, and Petofi, the revolutionary poet, who fell in battle, have both attained central places in Hungarian national mythology.

The story of 1848-49 deeply affected all Hungarians. Its memory became a legend that permeated Hungarian society including the broad peasant strata. The peasants gained their freedom in 1848 and voluntarily joined the revolutionary army. In 1867 Franz Joseph, who had suppressed the Hungarians, reached a compromise with them and restored the constitution. The memory of 1848 was carried on by the nationalist opposition to the compromise of 1867. The same legacy was, however, also incorporated in the legitimation of Franz Joseph. After all, he realized the demands of 1848. The fact that leaders who were executed in 1849, could be buried ceremoniously, was regarded as a sign of the lawfulness and of the national character of the 1867 government. Included among those posthumously honored was Count Lajos Batthyany, the Prime Minister, executed in 1849 and buried in state in 1870. These displays alleged that the sacrifice of the martyrs of 1848-49 had borne its fruits under the reign of Franz Joseph.

1848 became a part of the official national ideology, but still it retained its revolutionary, anti-Hapsburg edge. When Lajos Kossuth died in Italy in 1894, after 45 years of exile, he was buried in Budapest. Franz Joseph made no objection, although he did not allow state institutions to hoist commemorative black flags. Subsequently, a large number of statues of Kossuth and Petofi were erected by communities all over the country. In almost in every village there were streets and squares named after Kossuth and other heroes of the war of independence.

March 15 and October 6 were commemorated as historic national and school holidays, the first date marking the revolution, and the second when the Prime Minister and captured military leaders of the revolutionary struggle were executed.⁴ Ever since the late 19th century, every political movement in Hungary, Left or Right, in or out of power, has posed as the heir of 1848.

1848 became, in practice, the Hungarian national model of revolution. (cf. Eisenstadt et al. 1987: 2, 8) Its influence manifested itself in the popular uprising of 1956. The Petofi Circle within the Young Communist League started the opposition movement. On October 23, 1956, demonstrators met at the Petofi statue, and from there marched to the statue of General Bem, the legendary Polish commander of the war of independence in 1849, to express their sympathies toward the Polish government under Soviet political pressure.

The demands of democratic reform were summarized in 14 points. As a modern realization of the free press, the demonstrators wanted to broadcast these demands over the radio. They also demanded the release of the political prisoners. However, the demonstrators of October 1956 were fired upon, and an armed struggle

ensued. Soviet troops suppressed the reform movement. The captured leaders, including the legally installed communist Prime minister Imre Nagy, were executed.

The Kádár government rapidly and successfully was able to consolidate the political situation in Hungary. It tried to erase 1956 from public memory, and portrayed it as a criminal counterrevolution, directed from abroad. Any public commemoration was suppressed. The memory of 1956 lived only in the political underground and in the literature of the Hungarian emigre communities. The Kadarist consolidation situated a large part of Hungarian society in the neutral fields of five grades of legitimation distinguished by Mary Fullbrook (1987). These "grades" are; support, passivity, withdrawal, dissent and opposition. Personal objectives were "privatized", and made politically passive. János Kádár's famous slogan, "who is not against us, is with us," expressed the government's satisfaction with developments. Kadar's view was in accordance with Fullbrook's theory that the stability of the regime hinged on a large mass of passive, indifferent people, and on a certain amount of support from the intellectuals.

The assessment of politics shifted from the moral-national sphere to that of technical efficiency. Confidence in the Kádár government was strengthened by the relative affluence and the liberalism of cultural life in Hungary, as compared with the neighboring socialist countries (cf. Gitelman 1986).

Every revolution is essentially a moral crisis. The governed masses lose their confidence in those in power and in the authority of the state, and no longer obey them (Whutnow, 1987). In Hungary the loss of confidence was caused to a great extent by the country's rapidly increasing lag behind the world economy, the economic crisis and the shaken confidence in the technical efficiency of the administration. The government itself had largely contributed to the growing public awareness of these shortcomings. Authorities dispersed an increasing quantity of economic information through mass media, in order to explain the measures that had effectively reduced living standards. As a side-effect, the public's increased knowledge of economic process enabled them to criticize and so to lose faith in the government's policy. Overall, discontent with the communist regime within the Soviet block had the strongest economic coloring in Hungary.

However, the rapid loss of confidence in the Kádár regime in 1989 was caused primarily by the revival of the memory of the bloody post-1956 retaliation and the publication of János Kádár's role in it. Hence the focus for the assessment of his personality shifted from an evaluation of his technical efficiency to a scrutiny of his

morality and human integrity. A single act above all undermined Kádár's moral image: his execution of Imre Nagy, to whom he was sworn in as Minister of the Nagy government, and to whom Kádár had promised personal freedom. In a discourse on technical efficiency, one might justify or reject different measures the government took, according to the given external conditions and limitations. In a moral discourse there was no way to justify the personal treason against Imre Nagy.

A public moral problem was created. János Kádár and Imre Nagy were linked to each other in this dilemma, like a pair of scales. As Imre Nagy emerged the champion of humanistic socialism and innocent victim, the authority of János Kádár and the HSWP was bound to sink. Some of the reform communists saw the inevitable outcome of this process, and tried to disassociate themselves with Kadarism. However, they could not save themselves, and the HSWP became the first communist party in Eastern Europe which dissolved itself (on Oct. 7, 1989).

The intertwined, personal histories connecting Nagy and Kádár form a singular, powerful narrative which offered clues to the interpretation of the crisis of 1989. Like a mythical text, this narrative assimilated "the peculiar and contingent phenomena of secular history to archetypical patterns of growth and decay, salvation and damnation, death and rebirth" (Slotkin, 1986). Well-known examples of European civilization and religious tradition could be associated with the destiny of Imre Nagy, and with the treason committed against him. For example, a Budapest performance of *Antigone* in 1985 was banned by the authorities because it refers to a hero whose decent burial had been denied, as it had been to Imre Nagy.

From 1988 onwards the fact that Imre Nagy had not been humanely buried in a marked grave became a neuralgic issue for the legitimation of the government. The 1988 Christmas issue of the Patriotic People's Front daily paper *Magyar Nemzet* published the reminiscences of the widow of a member of Imre Nagy's group. The memoirs recall how Nagy and his closest associates and their families were kidnapped from the Yugoslav embassy in Budapest, and carried to Rumania. Later, the families were separated, the husbands brought back to Hungary where they were tried, and several were executed. The captors allowed the wives, who were not informed, to write letters to their dead husbands. In 1988 Judit Ember shot an 11-hour film on conversations with family members of the Imre Nagy group. Though the film was shown somewhat later, the text of the film was published in tens of thousands of copies. In my view, this text and the public awareness of the fate of the Nagy group became the most significant ideological factor causing the rapid and total loss of János Kádár's popularity.

The flood of concrete, personal information on 1956, as well as the periods of cruel retaliation in 1957 and 1958, had a great impact on the public. We have to keep in mind, however, that at this time the official, or "first", and the "underground", or "second", levels of publicity were still separate (Hankiss, 1986). The oppression of the "second publicity" was alleviated, the memoirs dealing with the revolution and retaliation were openly sold on the streets of Budapest. On the other hand, in the realm of the official "first publicity," János Kádár was still president of the HSWP, and the Party was still recognized as the "leading force" of the country. When Pozsgay called the 1956 revolution a "national uprising", he was strongly criticized by the party's leaders. As late as February 6, the Hungarian Writer's Association petitioned for a just, historical analysis of the 1956 events, that would reconcile the "first" and "second" public. The Premier, Karoly Grosz, while in Canada in June 1988, made a promise for a reburial of Imre Nagy, but on June 16, 1989, the solemn burial of the Nagy-group had to be arranged privately by family members. One year before, on the 30th anniversary of Imre Nagy's execution, police were still assailing commemorations of his death. In early 1989, Hungary was surrounded by "still frozen" socialist states. Nevertheless, the poetic words of Freddy Raphael and Geneviève Herberich-Marx (1990:196) apply to the memory of 1956 also: "it is in vain that any policy 'woven of forgetting', appear reconciled and consensual, the 'untreatable thing' is roving in the city, and lurks in clandestine shelters—to rise again abruptly with force."

NARRATIVE OF THE MARCH 15 DEMONSTRATION

The opposition groups organized their March 15 demonstration in the political environment described above. They took pains to avoid direct confrontations with the state and government celebrations, selecting different locations and times.

Early in the morning of the 15th, the government and loyal organizations had laid wreaths at the statues of Kossuth and Petofi, and other heroes of 1848. At eleven o'clock, they called for a mass rally at the National Museum. The Museum is the most renowned memorial of the March 15, 1848 revolution. Here Petofi had recited the "National Song", and his friends presented the "Twelve Demands" to an enthusiastic crowd. The National Museum had been designated since the 1950's as the location for official commemorations. So choosing this significant locale in 1989 put the government at a disadvantage because it evoked the memory of former communist celebrations, and the party's empty slogans of the Kádár and Grosz era;

it called to attention a continuity in the "socialist" utilization of the revolutionary heritage.

At noon the opposition called the demonstrators to the Petofi statue, so that a part of the "pro-government" demonstrators could join them. In contrast to the stationary meeting of the loyal demonstrators, the opposition organized a march connecting six sites between 12 and 4 p.m. A carefully elaborated plan evoked and symbolically re-enacted the events of 1848 and 1956, and then related them to the political situation of March 1989. (The events of 1956 themselves had been full of references to those of 1848.) As the events of 1848 and 1956 were closely associated with the places visited, the route of the demonstration became in itself a narrative. "Places" not only "remind us of the stories that are associated with them," says Edmund Leach, they acquire "the power of telling the story" (Leach, 1984:358). At the six selected sites the march came to a halt, and short speeches explained the historic and political significance of revolutionary events associated with the locality.

The government's recent policy of commemorations significantly shaped the "geography of historic memoirs" in Budapest's inner city. This policy would attach an official cult to some locations, an important example being the National Museum. At the same time, a coloring of dissent and opposition was associated with other places where spontaneous commemorations were prevented or hindered by police actions. The "possession" of 1848 and the monopoly on celebrating it were important political issues for the government.

Any spontaneous commemoration of 1848 challenged the communist party's monopoly on public political demonstration. On the other hand, the government itself created the opportunities for such illicit demonstrations. School was cancelled on March 15, even though it was not an official holiday, so the parents had to go to work. In the morning the schools celebrated commemorations, but the afternoon was free for the youth to stroll around the city and visit the Petofi statue and other historic sites. Groups of students were often dispersed by the police. In 1972, 1973, 1983 and 1985 real battles ensued between the police and grammar and high school students. Seven-year-old school children were brought to the police station with their mothers for reciting poems by Petofi, even though these works are compulsory material at school. Anecdotes such as these explain why the independent opposition commemoration of 1989 was a highly political act. Furthermore, they relate the political significance of the demonstration route; the march symbolically reclaimed the historic sites where public and civic commemorations had been banned for decades.

Naturally, not everyone utilized the day off in Hungary for political demonstration. Hungarians took advantage of eased passport regulations to cross the border into Austria to go shopping. In Vienna this day became memorable, the streets of the inner city were jammed and traffic paralyzed. The shoppers numbered between 200-300 thousand, according to estimates. This figure exceeded the number of Budapest demonstrators. The flow of Hungarians to Vienna on this day documented the continuing presence of the privatizing, politically passive trends of the Kádár-era. The shopping in Vienna, on the other hand, expressed another sort of political criticism of the government concerning the insufficiencies of supply.

The demonstration's basic message asserted that the opposition of 1989 was the true heir and representative of the revolution of 1848, as well as the uprising of 1956 (the objectives of which are still relevant). The demonstration challenged the legitimacy of the communist government that had installed itself by the bloody suppression of the 1956 revolt. Opposition demonstrators also demanded a new democratic, multiparty political system. They endorsed this request as the speakers identified themselves as representatives of the parties still in the process of formation, and most of the banners were signed by parties. (In March, the formation of political parties has not yet been completed.)

All episodes of the demonstration had three sets of reference, alluding respectively to 1848, 1956, and 1989 (see figure 2). At Szabadsag (Freedom) Square (location 2 along the route), in front of the headquarters on the Hungarian TV, the demonstrators called for a broadcast of their demands. They were denied. The TV transmitted live reports of loyal commemorations all around the country, but did not cover the much larger opposition demonstrations. Then, the demonstrators briefly lifted a huge banner in front of the building: "Free Hungarian Television". The name referred to "Free Radio Budapest" in 1956, which in turn referred to the attainment of freedom of the press in 1848. An actor, a member of the National Theater, recited the "Twelve Demands" of 1989, compiled by the oppositional organizations. The model was the Twelve Demands of 1848, and it turned out that eight demands from the original scheme were still relevant to the state of affairs in 1989.

The scene in front of the TV building illustrates the metaphoric use of historic antecedents in the demonstration. In March 1989, the publication of newspapers and books had already become free. On the other hand, the radio and the television were still under government (and party) control. The demonstrators wanted to break this hegemony, but did not consider forceful action, or try to

penetrate the building. They “captured” the TV only symbolically, by lifting a banner. This gesture, however, demonstrated that a “Free Hungarian Television” did not exist in reality. They showed that the Hungarian government of 1989 denied free expression of opposition demands, just as the Stalinist government denied it to the 1956 demonstrators. The display in front of the TV building was a kind of morality play, intended to unmask government hypocrisy. In this case, the relationships among 1989, 1956 and 1848 were established on an abstract, conceptual level, through the ideas of freedom of speech and of the press.

The Batthyany memorial (location 3 along the demonstration-route) marks the spot where the first Hungarian Prime Minister was shot in 1849. Batthyany had not played a prominent role in the mythology of 1848. He was a moderate and stepped back when the break with Austria came. That he did not participate in the armed struggle made his execution all the more unjust and unlawful.

With the growing dissent under Kádár, the fate of Batthyany came to be perceived by a growing part of the public as an analogy to that of Imre Nagy, the executed Prime Minister of the 1956 government. The Batthyany memorial also became a place of commemorations for Nagy. In 1989 members of the “Romania Libera” group, Romanian political refugees living in Hungary, stood as guards of honor around the Batthyany memorial. This symbolic act recalled the fact that Imre Nagy had been abducted to Rumania and from there transported back to be tried unlawfully in Budapest.

The demonstration stopped next at Kossuth Square, (location 4 on the route), the political heart of the country. Here one finds the Parliament, the seat of the government and the National Assembly. In this huge square, the statues of Rakoczi, (the leader of an early 18th century national uprising), and of Kossuth face each other from a distance. The square is replete with memories of the 1956 uprising. Here, on the evening of October 23 of that year, demonstrators had demanded that Imre Nagy, the previously dismissed, humanistically minded communist leader, speak to them. On the morning of October 25, security forces opened gunfire from the roofs of surrounding buildings on peacefully demonstrating masses, leaving several hundred victims dead. It was not until March 15, 1989 that these victims were commemorated openly, when the demonstrators lowered their flags.

The interconnected political and historical messages of the 1989 demonstration were aptly expressed by the banners carried during the march. The style of the slogans was outspoken, often ironic, using puns and humor. They underlined the basic political objective of the march: to break up the communist party’s political

monopoly, and to dismantle the one-party-state. "Communist Policy = Policy made in the name of the people, but against the people. Communist Policy = Police state." "We want neither white nor red terror." ("White-terror" referred to the anti-communist terror experienced in Hungary after the overthrow of the 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic. Early in 1989 hardliners accused some alternative groups of wanting another "white terror".). Some slogans were impertinent: "1945-1989: enough is enough." "Backward on Lenin's road" (the symbolism of the road—the road to socialism, the road of Lenin—was commonplace in communist political parlance).

Direct references to the 1848 events were relatively scarce. After all, the demonstrators were commemorating it on foot by visiting the historic sites. "No more shall we be slaves!" "The time is ripe: [act] now or nevermore!" These are quotations from Petofi's "National Song"—timely messages in 1989. One banner—"Freely after Petofi"—could be interpreted as advocating "a free quotation of Petofi," or as saying, "let us live freely [so many years] after Petofi."

Several banners drew an analogy between the cruel, unlawful retaliations after 1848 and 1956. "Lajos Batthyany = Imre Nagy" (the two executed Prime Ministers), "October 6, 1849 = June 16, 1958" (the two dates of their executions). "Haynau 108+ versus Kádár 453+" (Haynau was the Austrian military commander of defeated Hungary. He executed 108 military and political leaders, considerably fewer than Kádár. The figure 453 is from a U.N. report.) "We won't relinquish anything from '56." (This is in reference to the well-known slogan of the anti-Hapsburg 1848 party: "we won't give up anything of 48").

INTERPRETATION (1): THE CREATION OF CONSENSUS, MEMORY AND FORGETTING

Seen from a historical perspective, the Budapest demonstration was a pivotal event in the political transformation of Hungary, and also of Eastern Europe. It was a watershed in the process of remaking the political field in Hungary (cf. Bruszt-Stark 1990). The acceleration of political change immediately after the demonstration signals its importance and impact. From an anthropological perspective, we may raise further questions. How did the change in the personal commitment of individuals really happen? People who were for decades tuned to conformity and passivity, showed themselves to be active, committed to the cause of democratization, and ready and brave enough to face the threat of violent police counteraction. How was this readjustment of personal attitudes conditioned by changes in

public memory, by the return of the memory of 1956? What did the participants of the demonstration really experience, and how were their attitudes changed through this experience?

At the end of the march, people felt a sort of catharsis and the elation of victory. The day ended with another march in the late evening. They carried burning torches to the ancient prison in the Buda castle, where the political prisoners had been freed in 1848. These late demonstrators were in a very triumphant mood.

Observers of the demonstration stressed, above all else, the unity experienced by the participants. Author Miklos Meszoly commented on the demonstration in an article titled, "Bowling my head in front of the Nation." He regarded the opposition rally as a manifestation of the unity and of the "mature [political] behavior of the masses in a deep crisis of Hungarian history." Janos Kis, philosopher and later president of the Free Democrats, was of the opinion that "the people, the *demos* as an overwhelming majority manifests itself with a common will only in exceptional moments [of history] and not through individuals, but through forms of common action like mass demonstration, barricades, free elections." The March 15 demonstration was, according to him, such an exceptional manifestation.

These statements coincide with the thinking of anthropologists who understand rituals like the march of the opposition as powerful means to create consensus and a feeling of unity. This feeling overrides class and other boundaries. All ritual is inherently polysemic and allows for different interpretations. Participants with different cultural backgrounds, coming from different subcultures, may have different interpretations, nevertheless, they can be part of the common experience.

No data are available on the social composition of the demonstrators. Young people formed a majority, as happened later on in Leipzig, Berlin and Prague. All social strata including workers acted together, students and intellectuals being to some extent over-represented.

Overtly, the demonstration evoked, narrated and reenacted the history of the 1848 and 1956 revolutions. It was an attempt to expropriate the national historic heritage from the ruling elite, and to create a new sense of historic continuity. The impact of the demonstration, however, went much deeper. "Ritual teaches people to believe in cultural principles by creating experiences in which they can be apprehended" (Valeri, 1985:x). After long decades of real or simulated conformity,

fear and subservience, people were restoring their self-assurance and self-reliance, and placed their trust in a civic society.

The historic memory of 1848-49 has long been in Hungary a traditional terrain of political contestation. At least since 1867, the year of the compromise with Austria, there have existed oppositional, pro-independence and official, government interpretations. For a fine tuning of the alternative political positions, the wide selection of heroes gave ample choices for actors in the revolution and events during the preceding and following years. In this respect, Hungarian public memory can be compared to the continuous debate in France over the meaning and significance of different events and figures in the French Revolution (cf, Hobsbawm, 1990a).

The continuous application of 1848 as an analogy and measure of current political situations inevitably led to the question: can Kádár be compared with actors of 1848-49? The March 10, 1989 issue of the popular weekly magazine "Magyarország" ("Hungary"), with a circulation of about 60,000 at that time, interviewed Professor Domokos Kosary for his comments on the possibility of drawing historical parallels. Kosary, now the president of the Academy of Sciences in Budapest, was himself a victim of the 1956 retaliations. The magazine asked Kosary if it were possible to compare János Kádár with Ferenc Deak, the architect of the 1867 compromise. Kosary replied in the negative, since Deak had restored the achievements of 1848, but Kádár had not done the same after 1956. What about a comparison between Kádár and Franz Joseph? Franz Joseph crushed the Hungarian revolution with Russian troops, but later rescinded his absolutist measures under the compromise. Again, Kosary answered no, Kádár cannot be compared to the king, as he did not redress his detrimental measures after 1956.

The well-known history of 1848 and the resuscitated memory of 1956 offered narrative material and argumentation through which common people could join in the debate over the political future of the country and the legitimacy of the existing government. Through these narratives, new notions of community and coherence with tradition were created (cf Swidler 1986).

Nevertheless, it appeared during the 1989 demonstration that the people distanced themselves from the revolutionary past, referring to it in a metaphoric vein, instead of using it as a direct model for action. They did not want to repeat the courageous revolutionary gestures and feats. Instead they used references to 1848 and 1956 as means to unmask the existing government and expose its anti-democratic character. They often presented their ideas ironically, making puns and

addressing issues in a joking manner. The heroic pathos of the inter-war years and the bombastic slogans of socialist commemorations were equally absent. This metaphoric and ironic quotation of the past is illustrated by actions such as the symbolic occupation of the TV headquarters. Like the play within the play of Hamlet, this scene, with the banners lifted high in front of the building, had a figurative meaning. It expressed that the socialist government did not listen to the demands of the people, just as the 1956 Gero government did not. It also asserted that the demonstrators of 1989 were peaceful and playful, and felt a moral superiority vis a vis the government.

Nationalism and national sentiments were not the driving force of the March demonstration and Hungarian political transformation in general. A negative national identity was a well known problem of public life, recognized by social scientists (e.g., Csepeli 1988). The Hungarians of 1989 were highly aware of the limitations of their country's sovereignty and future prospects, as well as sensitive to their dependence on the will and politics of great powers. They saw themselves as citizens of a poor and underdeveloped country. Hungarians of 1989 did not share the national pride and optimism of their predecessors of 1848, nor the gallant bravery of the youth of 1956.

Nevertheless, the feeling of community created by common ritual overriding social boundaries, in itself tends to appear as "national." According to Eric Hobsbawm, in spite of its evident prominence, nationalism loses its historic significance in our era, and often it is only "a catalyst for other developments" (Hobsbawm 1990b: 181-182). I consider this remark applicable to the situation in Hungary.

In retrospect, we can conclude that the restored memory of 1956 initiated far-reaching modifications in Hungarian self-identity. (The revival of memory itself was a long process, which began long before the March 15 demonstration.) In the new vision, the mainstream of Hungarian history was rerouted toward 1956, and from there flowed to the Kádár opposition, the underground press and the attempted reforms of the socialist system. In the former perception, Kádár's pragmatic manoeuvring was regarded as the specific Hungarian way, the "Hungarian model". The relative prosperity and liberal economic and cultural policy were hailed as unique achievements under the conditions of socialism. In the new image of Hungarian history, the path Kádár followed turned more and more into a dead-end, a deviation from the main direction, an idle sequence of years, with

growing financial and moral indebtedness. This path led to economic and moral disaster.

In the Kádár era, the figure of the "true Hungarian" was represented for many people by the clever, unrestrained, entrepreneurially-minded person, who, adjusting to the existing power and economic structure, created for him or herself a comfortable, lucrative private niche. (In the 70's an extremely popular Hungarian animated film narrated the exploits of a cunning young fox. In the following years, the same fox became a mascot and emblem for Hungary at some international sports events, and was shown on some postal stamps, reproduced on children's clothes, etc.). The growing privatization of personal goals was a symptom of the "fall of the public man" syndrome, a process of the citizen's retreat from public responsibility. In light of this general indifference toward the public cause, the remembrances of 1956 and the mass demonstrations of 1989 appear as a radical turn in public attitudes.

The transposition of the main current of Hungarian history involved also the process of forgetting. The formerly oppressed "counter-memory" (Foucault 1977, Davis-Starn 1989) replaced official memory, but at the same time spread amnesia over a large terrain. Imre Nagy, Pal Maleter, surviving fighters of 1956, returning emigrants and the underground opposition were placed in the spotlight. Behind them, the peaceful decades of the "Kádár-compromise" and nationwide cooperation with the communist government were submerged into darkness and erased from memory. This situation can be compared with the one in France immediately after the Second World War, when the celebration of the resistance downplayed and helped one to forget about the collaboration with the Germans, or the neutral passivity of millions (Raphael, Herberich-Marx, 1990; on the "policy of forgetting" in Czechoslovakia, see Rupnik 1982).

The remolding of the past was not limited to a new image of national history. In Hungary it necessitated the "reorganization" or "reconstruction" of personal identities en masse, through the reinterpretation of self-biographies. From the point of view of the social psychiatrist, the country was a "laboratory of large-scale identity-reconstructions with different backgrounds and motivations." (Pataki 1990: 12-15)⁵

The retouching of personal identities and memoirs was carried out in a basically continuous, unshaken social structure where no large-scale changeover between a new elite and the old political-managerial elite took place, except for the emergence and promotion of a handful of new politicians (cf. Tokes: 1990). So, in

general, people stayed in their former positions (or in their former social strata, as in the case when former party bosses moved from political to economic, managerial roles), and only changed the "presentation of their [social] self" in everyday life.

I have delineated processes which took place during the months and years after the March 1989 demonstration. These processes however, might help us to understand the government's behavior on that March day. As I suggested earlier, the demonstration can be interpreted as a dialogue between the establishment and the opposition. But the government remained silent and did not reply to the arguments and provocations of the opposition. Was this a manifestation of the "factor Toqueville", the former party elite's loss of confidence in its right to rule, a sort of spontaneous, self-critical concession to the opposition? There is truth in this, but it can be argued that the party-elites' restraint in the use of power was the outcome of foresight and calculation, and represented the most advantageous strategy for salvaging as much power and privilege as possible. Violence and the deployment of the police would have identified the government immediately with the Stalinist administration of 1956, especially in the symbolic context of a historic commemoration. The people, whether intimidated, crushed, or infuriated enough to escalate their protest, would have felt a growing alienation from their political elite. For the government, the remaining choices would have led to Honecker, Husak, Ceausescu-type outcomes. In all of these versions, more members of the party elite would have lost more prestige and influence than with the Grosz-Nemeth solution in Hungary.

INTERPRETATION (2): THE SHIFT IN POWER-RELATIONS

On March 15, 1988, one year earlier, a couple of thousand people took to the streets to celebrate the anniversary in an oppositional spirit. They were attacked by the army-police crowd-control unit, which had been established in 1987 in the context of mounting uncertainty and fear within the government. Demonstrators were beaten, dispersed or arrested. Some leading opposition-figures had been taken into custody days before (Schopflin et al. 1988:35).

In 1989, the "goon squads" and water cannons were placed at strategic junctures along the route of the demonstration. However, they were not deployed. One hundred thousand demonstrators passed by with banners demanding a change of the political regime.

The government (especially the hardliners of the party) did not conceal that they were unpleasantly surprised by the opposition's successful, separate demon-

stration. This displeasure was mirrored in the silence of the T.V. and radio about the opposition march. Nevertheless, the government and the party wanted to retain their lawful reform image and so no violence was applied.

Hungarian public life had been dominated since the mid-1960s by the political elite's strategies of demobilization and quasi-mobilization, which had been simultaneously prompting and thwarting the self-mobilizing efforts of society. Society protected itself by withdrawal into "inner emigration", political indifference, privatization, consumerism, and through "escape into illness". As a result of these processes by 1987-1988 the country was in a "dangerous stalemate" and a deepening crisis (Hankiss 1989:123, 146). Observers were asking whether the disillusioned society would be able to express its distrust of the government and to accelerate the collapse of the "tottering communist edifice" (Schopflin et al. 1988:46).

The March 15 demonstration displayed an unexpectedly large-scale and vivid expression of discontent. The main locus of the power-contest between the government and the demonstrators was not on the streets and not in the realm of physical force. Demonstrators had to overcome two inhibitions: apathy and indifference in public affairs, and the fear of police violence and other repressions. Participants individually had to cross the boundary of the "possible" and move into the realm of the "impossible". They had to break the rules of the game (compromise, conformity, deference) under the party-state. "All of us have become accustomed to the totalitarian system, accepted it as an unalterable fact and therefore kept it running," said Vaclav Havel in his 1990 New Year's address.

The people of Prague during the November 1989 demonstrations crossed the crucial "line of conflict", which "runs through the middle of each individual" (Havel, cf. Ash 1990:138). Through these demonstrations they stopped the double-life of "systematically saying one thing in public and another in private" (Ash 1990:137). In Hungary, the process was less dramatic and more protracted. Inside broader, but still carefully controlled limits, in the eighties critical opinions could be expressed publicly. From 1987-1988 onwards, some critical public manifestations were also tolerated, for example the mass rallies against the Bos-Nagymaros dam on the Danube (Sept. 1988), and the mass demonstration against the Ceausescu government's village demolition plan on June 29, 1988. On the other hand, dissenter commemorations of March 15 and of Imre Nagy's death were broken up by police. So the "line of conflict" was also present inside the participants of the Budapest demonstration; perhaps some of them had already crossed it, or had one

foot over. In essence, the demonstration was a big step toward freeing people of a totalitarian state's discipline and restoring civic dignity and personal integrity.

To understand the shift in the balance between the upcoming forces of opposition and of the party-state, we must consider a mode of power which does not manifest itself as physical force or as bodily interaction between people, but rather as a 'governance' of their consciousness. Eric Wolf calls it a "structural power" and defines its workings with the words of Michel Foucault as the ability to "structure the possible fields of action of others" (Foucault 1984:428, Wolf 1990:586). "Structural power shapes the social field of action so as to render some kinds of behavior possible while making others less possible or impossible." Structural power, therefore, influences or even controls the perception of the world. "Power is thus never external to signification—it inhabits meaning and is its champion in stabilization and defense, ...power maintains the order of the world" (Wolf 1990: 593). Power, adds Foucault, is not merely a relationship of repression, it actively produces individuals conforming to the requirement of the order it has created (Foucault 1979:194).

The anti-regime demonstration was part of an "existential revolution" in the sense that it shook "the psychological habits of deference and self-censorship that have grown up over many years" (Schopflin et al. 1988:45), and opened access to (or hope for) personal civil liberties.

INTERPRETATION (3): LIVING IN FRAGMENTED TIME

No government and no political observer was prepared for the collapse of the East European communist regimes in 1989. In March in Budapest, the demonstrators could not have a program, or even a clear vision of how the unprecedented task of dismantling a socialist state could be performed. Most people who joined the march simply felt distrust of and disappointment with the government, and a sympathy toward the "alternative" or "independent" groupings. The mythologies of the historic commemoration (1848, 1956) were instrumental in organizing the consensus against the regime in a confused, unclear political situation. On the other side, among the government, "it was above all the fear of society that so deeply inscribed in the communist leadership an instinct to do everything to avoid another '56 (Bruszt- Stark 1990: 13). The memory or the "ghost" of 1956 was, therefore, a powerful means for organizing and coordinating dissent, and for eliciting concessions from and the retreat of the ruling communist elite. The impact of the image of 1956 was enhanced by the memory of 1848 and by other parallels in Hungarian

history. Furthermore, as I will argue in the following paragraphs, the specific “consciousness of time” developed in Hungarian society.

The corpse of Count Batthyany, kept in a secret location, was buried 21 years after his dishonorable execution. Imre Nagy’s corpse, which was not identified among the remains of several hundred other victims until the spring of 1989, had to wait 31 years for a burial. To the life-course of some Hungarian political leaders a special 20-30 year long period must be added between their death (by execution) and their rehabilitation and burial. This interval first marks the victory of a hostile, oppressive power, and the end or weakening of its rule. The period of clandestine memory might be more protracted; Rakoczi died in exile in Turkey in 1735; his public, national cult became established in the 19th century, and his remains were brought home in 1906. In the public image of Hungarian history (as it was represented in school books, in historic monuments and paintings, in literature, etc.), since the early-modern age, the continuity of Hungarian history was carried nearly exclusively by tragic heroes who staged a resistance and hopeless fight against superior, adverse forces, and fell; but who have been honored by posterity. The national model of the tragic hero was elaborated upon in the 18th and early 19th centuries. These ideals animated the 1848 revolutionaries, whose revolutionary efforts ended either on the battlefield, in emigration, or in prison (but who were rehabilitated after 20 years). The Hungarian anthem (Kolcsey, 1823) and the Szozat (the second Hungarian national anthem, Vorosmarty, 1836) depict Hungarian history—after a pristine, medieval golden age—as a sequence of heroic and hopeless struggles, and evoke even the vision of the nation’s death. (An artistic, graphic allusion to the “death of the nation” idea appeared on one of the posters in the summer of 1989, referring to the memory of the 1956-58 retaliations.)

I will not go into detail about the pessimistic, tragic perception of Hungarian history and how it was created. The alternating executions and rehabilitations were embedded, however, in political changes deeply affecting everyday social life. Not only were political leaders and ruling parties replaced, but changes affected institutions, firms, property rights, and many interpersonal relations—even street names were changed. Personal life histories were broken up and rerouted. Hundreds of thousands had to start careers afresh in other social positions, sometimes in other countries. The depth, force, and frequency of shattering changes in modern Hungarian history clearly differs from the continuity-pattern of other countries with an even, normal development. A Swedish-Hungarian comparison revealed that in Stockholm only two street names had been changed between 1945-1985 (one street

was renamed after Raoul Wallenberg, another to mark where the murder of Olaf Palme took place). In Budapest several thousand alterations were registered, and in some cases the same street was renamed four times.

An individual in any society develops a "consciousness of time" which is "in large measure consciousness of his society's continuity and of the image of its continuity which that society possesses" (Pocock 1971: 233). This consciousness of time "is an important part of that society's understanding of itself—of its structure and what legitimizes it; of the modes of action which are possible to it and in it." The sense of past and the perception of time differs from society to society. As Pocock explains, all institutions and patterns of behavior in a society "generate their own past". These pasts do not need to be congruent, and need not be "thought of as continuous in the same way as [their] neighbor[s]; there may be contradictions between the pasts and even conflicts." Nevertheless, in their totality, these pasts form a specific "image and idea" of time.

The Hungarians' perception that they live in an interrupted, fragmented time is related to their understanding of Hungary's small-nation status and of its dependent, peripheral position in the global (continental) political system. The collapse of Hungarian political regimes was only partly the outcome of indigenous processes; both the collapse and the installation of new systems were in large measure the result of shifts in the international balance of power and the result of direct foreign interference. Hungarians experienced these crises as interruptions of the natural, even flow of "local" time (and of their "local" projects, career plans, etc.) by unforeseeable foreign powers.

For comparison of long-range political processes among national societies, Professor Eisenstadt developed a model based on the stable pattern of center-periphery relations inside the society, and the ways opposition and conflict are incorporated into it (Eisenstadt et al. 1987). He demonstrated that, in the characteristic confrontation between center and opposition, the pattern of social conflict might remain unchanged for several generations, notwithstanding the fact that in between the actors themselves (political parties, social strata) both in the center and in the opposition were replaced several times. In a similar way, in the case of the East Central European countries, we could investigate the traditional adaptive patterns societies develop in dealing with the interference of superior foreign powers, with crushing defeats, occupation by foreign armies, and political and ideological systems imposed by force upon them.

There are national societies which seemingly maintain self-stereotypes about gallant, fierce resistance even in cases when its outcome is dubious, hopeless or even meaningless. Such an attitude was demonstrated among Poles in a “national character” survey done by American anthropologists during the Second World War (Mead-Metraux 1953:415-421 “Courage: Cumulative Effects of Sacrifice”). In contrast to the Poles, Jacques Rupnik pointed out the Czechs’ readiness to accept the unalterable strokes of fate in a rational way, as happened in 1938, in the voluntary installation of Stalinism in 1948, and in the non-resistance of 1968 (Rupnik 1982: 313-316). This field of historical comparison has not yet been investigated, and only preliminary, tentative observations can be made concerning national patterns dealing with political catastrophes (if such patterns exist at all). The Hungarians, at least in some periods of their history, responded as the Poles did; in an irrational and hot-headed way, which might be related perhaps to the strong noble-aristocratic component in both the Polish and Hungarian national cultures (cf Sugar 1969).

Living in time interrupted by invasions, occupations, and lost wars produces victims, martyrs, and tragic heroes in much greater number than societies with a linear, continuous time experience. In the latter societies, like the United States, the role of the national hero, personal luck, and longevity do not contradict one another; great statesmen enjoy in their old age the love and respect of their children and grandchildren. On the other hand, in front of the Hungarian Parliament stand the statues of Rakoczi (leader of the revolt 1703 -1711), Kossuth (leader in 1848), and Mihaly Karolyi (president of the first Hungarian Republic of 1918), who all died as exiles. The general pattern of Hungarian history suggests, however, that these people took the right stand: that their defeat was only provisional, and that in due time they returned as immortals and national heroes.

I don’t say that the inhabitants of Budapest in 1989 were filled with heroic patriotism. Polls and surveys showed that people generally had only limited and superficial knowledge of Hungarian history, and most of them had a disillusioned, ironic relation to the national past. The “interrupted flow of time” was experienced by the people as a defenselessness against unforeseeable adverse turns of history. A survey conducted in 1983 showed that 42% of the sample—or their parents, grandparents—were victims of political persecution (not including persecution or loss of property, etc., under communism. cf Csepeli 1988:28). On the level of personal life-strategies, the adaptation to the “interrupted flow of time” might result in a retreat into privacy, and the exploitation of given opportunities. On the other hand, the experience of the “interrupted flow of time” implies that political regimes

are also transitory and exposed to abrupt, adverse turns of history. Concerning this point, the mythical narratives of Hungarian history, and the public statues, street names, cemeteries of Budapest recalled the merits of civic resistance into memory. They glorified heroes who waged the hopeless fight against oppressive regimes, fell, were executed, forced into exile—but became later symbols of the continuity of national society. Of course, these lessons of the “historical reminders in the surroundings” were hardly noticed in the everyday routine. In crisis situations, however, their analogy could influence the political attitudes of the people.

The “return of the dead” was a major theme in the Hungarian political transformation which culminated in the reburial of Imre Nagy on June 16. The participants in the ceremony at the Heroes’ Square, about 250,000 people, were silent and moved, in a quasi-religious mood. The names of victims of the post-1956 political trials were read in alphabetical order: “Laszlo Alapi, driver’s companion, lived 37 years, executed May 6, 1957” and so on, hundreds and hundreds of names, including Imre Nagy and members of his cabinet. The same list was repeated in the cemetery where voices from the crowd answered, “I am here.” Many of the victims’ remains were really there, some of them reburied in new graves and others in unidentified spots in the infamous Section 301 of the Budapest public cemetery (where people executed after 1956 were buried). After this, there was no way to continue the government of the country in the old style. Participants in the funeral heard rumors that János Kádár committed suicide on the day of the reburial—which, though false, nevertheless expressed the understanding of the quasi-mythical dimensions of the reburial.

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¹In Hungary, as in all other socialist states, all citizens had to present autobiographies every time they applied for a new job, school admission, a passport, or a promotion. The autobiography had to define descent and family background, supposing that there were by definition "socialist," "progressive," and "enemy," reactionary classes. The texts reviewed personal, employment, and educational history, as well as political activities. It was a general understanding that all people carry their own (and in some cases their parents' and spouses') life histories with them, and that their prospects in the huge state-regulated sphere of social life depended to a high degree on good or bad self-biography. (After the free elections in 1990, in many workplaces people immediately demanded the destruction or return of the autobiographies and personal files.) I also used contemporary news reports and comments published in Hungarian journals. One member of the committee responsible for the planning of the opposition, Dr. Istvan Szent-Ivanyi, a sociologist and ethnographer, now MP and secretary of the Parliament's committee for foreign affairs, was a colleague of mine in 1989, and through him I had direct insight into the planning aspect of the demonstration.

²The new law on freedom of assembly, passed on January 19, allowed for the march of the opposition groups as a historic commemoration. Doubts might have arisen, however, as to the nature of this demonstration; the banners and speeches indicated an anti-government rally. It was reasonable to think of violent interference by the police, standing at the alert along the route of the demonstration.

³March 15 immediately became a symbol of the revolution in Pest. The left-radical revolutionaries started their newspaper under the title, "March 15." The significance of the date was underlined by referring to it as "the Ides of March," which evoked the memory of the murder of Julius Caesar (and the popular Shakespeare play). On the eve of the Second World War democratic young intellectuals organized an anti-Nazi "Front of March." In 1942 a successful nationwide anti-war and anti-German demonstration was held on March 15 (cf. Margocsy 1988).

⁴October 6 got its historical significance during the revolution in Vienna in 1848. Latour, the minister for defense, was hanged by a revolutionary mob on that day. In 1849, as symbolic revenge for that act, Haynau selected the day for the execution of the Hungarian leaders, although the Hungarians had no part in the killing of Latour. The day preserved its somber significance later on: Laszlo Rajk, the unlawfully executed Communist minister of the interior was reburied on October 6, 1956, a couple of days before the uprising began. (To the great surprise of the authorities, the funeral was attended by more than 100,000 people.) The last session of the HSWP's Central Committee (which resolved the dissolution of the Communist Party) was convoked for October 6, 1989.

⁵The new image of the recent Hungarian past created new measures for the evaluation of personal life-performances. Some carrier-types were "devaluated," whereas other life-path models enjoyed "biographical conjunctures." Social psychologists noted the burden on individuals caused by the need for a reconceptualization of their life histories and identities, for public and private use.

The Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies

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Since its establishment in 1969, the Center has tried to orient students towards questions that have been neglected both about past developments in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European societies and about the present. The Center's approach is comparative and interdisciplinary, with a strong emphasis on the historical and cultural sources which shape a country's political and economic policies and social structures. Major interests of Center members include elements common to industrial societies: the role of the state in the political economy of each country, political behavior, social movements, parties and elections, trade unions, intellectuals, labor markets and the crisis of industrialization, science policy, and the interconnections between a country's culture and politics.

For a complete list of Center publications (Working Paper Series, Program on Central and Eastern Europe Working Paper Series, *German Politics and Society*, a journal appearing three times annually, and *French Politics and Society*, a quarterly journal) please contact the Publications Department, 27 Kirkland St, Cambridge MA 02138. Additional copies can be purchased for \$4. A monthly calendar of events at the Center is also available at no cost.

