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Salami reconstructed

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HEINO NYSSÖNEN

SALAMI RECONSTRUCTED

“Goulash communism” and political culture in Hungary

Two famous political metaphors connect Hungarian communism to cuisine. The first is called “salami tactics,” which means removing political opponents one by one like slices of salami. In the 1940s, communists used salami tactics and destroyed bourgeois parties one after another. The second metaphor, “goulash communism,” refers to Hungarian beef soup made with vegetables and — paprika. This idea of communist prosperity and consumerism appeared in Nikita Khrushchev’s speeches in the early 1960s. The Soviet leader boasted about the economic potential of the Soviet Union and reduced communism to consumerism, to a new pair of trousers and a plate of goulash. The expression also referred to Hungary and surmised a particular Hungarian “model” characterized by cultural freedom with a *national* flavour — goulash and salami both belong to Hungarian traditions.

After the salami tactics era, Stalinist consolidation and the uprising of 1956, we can distinguish several historical phases in Hungarian recent history: open terror and retribution until 1963, then a recovery period, and economic reform in the late 1960s flavoured with economic optimism in the early 1970s. Goulash communism refers primarily to the 1960s and sometimes to the period following the 1968 economic reform. The reform was officially interrupted between 1972 and the late 1970s, when reformist ideas came back to the fore. The image of the 1960s and 1970s is relatively good in Hungary and abroad, and contrasts with pre-1956 politics. These more liberal periods can be defined as the Hungarian Thaw.

The purpose of this article is to compare ideas of welfare and progress on the basis of political cultures first and foremost during the János Kádár era. The starting point is in Archie Brown’s typology of political cultures and the idea that political culture is in constant change. We do not, however, take Brown’s typology as granted but as a methodological tool. Moreover, the concept will be broadened to historical political culture, i.e. history’s role in politics. Despite fundamental

changes in the Hungarian political system, the recent past has been — and still is — present and making itself felt in the political sphere.

The thesis is that János Kádár finally reconstructed the salami and in fact unified Hungarian political cultures. He homogenised the country in the sense that starting in the late 1980s the past had to be re-politicised for the new political parties in search of an identity. After having been hated in the 1950s, Kádár managed to rule the country in such a way that he might even have had a chance of winning in a free election.¹ Instead of mass demonstrations and protests, a relative prosperity, “pseudo-consumerism” became a fact of life in the “happiest barrack” of the socialist camp — which can be compared with another “liberal case,” Poland, for example. Beside goulash communism, the later part of the Kádár regime has also sometimes been called “refrigerator socialism.”²

After a few theoretical remarks, we will focus on the post-1956 era until the late 1980s. In addition to chapters dedicated to Brown’s typology, we will particularly study economy, foreign relations, history and commemoration and a few peculiar features such as the “lack of” personality cult, cultural policy, and (mass) tourism. Mass tourism was a relatively new but rapidly growing phenomenon in the world in the 1950s onwards. Relation to the past and economy also played a significant role in communist rule and political culture. In addition to documents and historiography, I will use a periodical, *Magyarország*, a political and social weekly founded in 1964. Although it more or less represented the official political culture and views from the top, nothing prevents us from “reading between the lines.”

Political culture — A few theoretical remarks

According to John Street, there is a tendency to treat political culture like a familiar piece of furniture. Everybody is vaguely aware of its existence but hardly anyone asks the question of how it came to be there. The discussion began after Almond and Verba linked political culture to a strong civic culture which made democracy possible.³ However, even the supporters of the concept find it problematic. The idea of “political” itself can be highly contested, and “culture” is no less complicated. We are facing a serious problem if we merely accept political culture as a conceptual umbrella which in its broadness is finally leading us to a deadlock.⁴

1. Two highly respected Finnish journalists, Knud Möller and Olli Kivinen, expressed this view before Kádár’s visit to Finland, see *Helsingin Sanomat*, 18 (September, 1983), *Suomen Kuvalehti* (SK), 37 (1983).

2. T. Valuch, “A Cultural and Social History of Hungary 1948-1990,” in L. Kósa, ed., *A Cultural History of Hungary in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century* (Budapest: Corvin/Osiris 2000), 277.

3. J. Street, “Review Article: Political Culture – from Civic Culture to Mass Culture,” *British Journal of Political Science*, 24 (1993): 95; G. Almond, S. Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1963).

4. R. Lane, “Political Culture: Residual Category or General Theory?,” *Comparative Political Studies*, 25, 3 (1992): 362; J. Simon, “Definiálható-e a politikai kultúra?,” (Could it be possible

One of the most famous definitions of political culture derives from Archie Brown: “The subjective perception of history and politics, the fundamental beliefs and values, the foci of identification and loyalty, and the political knowledge and expectation of nations and groups.”⁵ This rather complicated definition in the strictest sense means how people define their own surroundings and attitudes to politics and analyse their own notion of politics. Frequently political thought comes into being with less rational simplifications and stereotypes.⁶

We will use Brown’s definition as point of departure. His criticism of Almond and Verba is based on the idea that instead of stable political cultures we meet political cultures in constant change. Brown distinguishes between a dominant political culture and an official one. Communist states in particular promoted official political culture in mass media, education and other bodies of socialisation, but it did not necessarily dominate in “the minds of the majority.” In studying the case of Hungary, we will also discuss the characteristics and problems specific to the monolithic and unified political cultures of the Kádár era. Moreover, Brown distinguishes a dominant political culture which has various political subcultures as a dichotomy political culture, and finally a fragmented political culture. The latter emerges when there is no state-wide political culture dominating political cultures or subcultures which are based upon tribe, locality, social or national group.⁷

Finally, we would like to broaden the concept and examine historical political culture as well. Since the late 1980s, Hungary has faced such fundamental changes in its political system that the Kádár era already represents another, past, era. However, the recent past is still used in political identification as there are those who would like to charge, reckon and diminish the era, whilst others defend the “survival of the nation” or relate it to current policy-making and political culture.⁸ We will argue that the ways in which a nation or groups of people deal with their past definitely belong to a political culture.

Socialist Hungary — A unified political culture?

In European comparison, countries like Sweden, Britain or Switzerland belong to a small minority which have not experienced a radical change in their political

to define political culture?), in J. Simon, ed., *Ezredvégi értelmezések: Demokráciáról, politikai kultúráról, bal- és jobboldalról. Első kötet (Interpretations in the end of the century: About democracy, political culture, left and right)* (Budapest: Villányi úti könyvek, 2001), 122-141.

5. A. Brown, “Introduction,” in A. Brown, J. Gray, eds., *Political Culture & Political Change in Communist States* (London & Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), 16-18.

6. H. Nyssönen, “Metsoja, peikkoja ja vampyyrejä: Poliittinen kulttuuri ja stereotypiat” (Wood grouses, trolls and vampires. Political culture and stereotypes) in K. Palonen, S. Hänninen, eds., *Lue poliittisesti (Read Politically)* (Jyväskylä: SoPhi, 2004).

7. Brown, “Introduction,” 8.

8. See H. Nyssönen, *Presence of the Past: ‘1956’ after 1956 in Hungary* (Jyväskylä: SoPhi, 1999).

system in the twentieth century. On the contrary, Hungary and many other East European countries have faced radical changes and attempts to change the political system. In 1945, the turn was revolutionary and it wiped away the old rulers and the state. The Red Army occupied the country, and a countrywide land reform changed the old structure of the society.

As in many other East European countries, communism attempted to change the traditional peasant society into “a country of iron and steel.” In 1953, the industrial output was almost three times higher than in 1938. The transformation continued during the Kádár era, homogenising Hungarian society and creating three major social blocs by the late 1960s: non-agricultural manual workers (industry, transport, commerce, etc.), agricultural workers and white-collar workers. In 1949, agriculture and forestry still employed half of the working population (53.8 per cent), but since then the amount has constantly decreased (15.4 per cent in 1990). Villages on the Hungarian *pusta*, for example, lost 800,000 people, ca. 10 per cent of the population in 1949–1990. The number of industrial workers peaked out in 1970 (36.3 per cent of the working population) but then slightly decreased (31 per cent in 1990). Other sectors grew steadily and formed almost half of the working population in 1990 (46.8 per cent).⁹

A unified political culture, according to Brown, has been a goal almost for all political cultures but has usually not been realised. In 1952 Mátyás Rákosi was already ready to deal with the way of how communists had gained power and mentioned salami tactics as a current name of the policy in his lecture. Probably the concept originated from a smallholder politician, who took a piece of salami at a dinner and demonstrated the tactics of their opponent. In Hungary salami tactics brought Stalinist communists into power aiming to unify Hungary under the Soviet model and Stalinist ideology of the workers’ state, in which there was no official place for “forces of the past”, like the gentry or middle class bourgeoisie, anymore.¹⁰

However, the contemporary form of socialism as the idea of a Soviet security zone were questioned in the uprising of 1956. The revolution was crushed, but the aspiration for political unity did not vanish from the minds of the people. Afterwards, Hungarian political leaders tried to bring unity and compromise from above. In 1959, socialist patriotism, a new concept bringing together patriotic and progressive values, was invented. The idea was further developed in the 1960s — socialism for some, patriotism for others. Those who were not directly against the system were considered potential allies — contrary to the Rákosi era, when everybody was a potential opponent. In 1974, the party also accepted “progressive bourgeois” and “democratic peasant” legacies as part of national tradition.¹¹ This

9. I. Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century* (Budapest: Corvina/Osiris, 1999), 275, 370–374; *Népszabadság* (NSZ), (26 April 2003).

10. C. Gati, *Hungary and the Soviet Bloc* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1986), 22; M. Rákosi, *Der Weg unserer Volksdemokratie* (Berlin: Dietz, 1952), 33.

11. I. Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX században* (Budapest: Corvina/Osiris, 1999), 514.

idea of a national canon was gradually broadened to accept different, progressive, views of the Hungarian past.

The Hungarian leadership did not necessarily expect obedience to Kádár but to the system itself. János Kádár became a personal guarantor of stable relations with the Soviet Union and therefore became an accepted and even admired person in the country. In 1976, the Finnish pictorial magazine *Suomen Kuvalehti* interviewed István Nemeskürty, film historian and producer and grey eminence of Hungarian conservatism since 1989. In 1976 Nemeskürty thought that Kádár had been the most glorious statesman in Hungary in the last three hundred years. Nemeskürty stated that he did not belong to the party but was “on the same side with Kádár [...] Kádár’s chosen road was maybe not the best but it was the only one.”¹²

Thus, even the “conservatives” thought that the best policy consisted in supporting the existing socialist system and improving it step by step. Recovery in the 1960s, economic reform between 1968 and 1972 or finally the stagnation period starting in the late 1970s, were features of the unifying Hungarian goulash communism. Evidently, progress and social justice were the goal of unified political culture. Kádár argued in favour of progress in the course of history and understood it in Marxist-Leninist terms and as the work of the party’s elite. In fact, in the twentieth century the idea of “progress” could be found in many different, even antagonistic, political systems.

Dominant political culture with various political subcultures

One of the starting points in *Politics and Political Culture in Communist States* is that official political culture is not necessarily the dominant one. Therefore we must raise the question of the relationship between official and dominant political culture. This is a difficult thing to do, as newspapers and periodicals mostly express official views and political cultures while they leave the subjective orientation of the people in the dark.

However, from a historical point of view, the party state was quite a new phenomenon in communist-ruled countries. A broader consensus dominated in Hungary: the state as such was not identical with the communist rule — the state with a glorious past had existed through centuries. The historical continuity of the Hungarian State was essential as well as the role of the Hungarian nation within that state. In addition, the Hungarians retained a strong sense of their national and ethnic uniqueness which was most obviously felt in the isolation of their language in the region.¹³

12. SK, 15 (1976).

13. G. Schöpflin, “Hungary an Uneasy Stability,” in A. Brown, J. Gray, eds., *Political Culture & Political Change in Communist States*, 131-132; P. Toma, I. Völgyes, *Politics in Hungary* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1977), 151-152.

The Parliament did not play a major role in Hungarian goulash communism — between 1950 and 1986, it only enacted an average of five laws a year.¹⁴ The electoral system favoured one candidate for one seat until 1966, then two candidates competed in the same constituency. During the Kádár era the existing electoral system was defended by presenting figures of constantly broadened franchise. However, the progress was compared only to historical development and not to other current models and states. Nevertheless, we should not idealise the Horthy era either: open ballots were abolished only in 1938, when secret voting became possible in the whole country and not just in the largest towns.¹⁵

The number of party members in the Parliament was the lowest in 1953 – 69.1 per cent – whereas it reached its highest point – 81.6 per cent – in 1958, after the revolutionary attempt. The number of women always remained under the international average of 11 per cent. In 1985, the new Parliament introduced essential changes and elements of a new political culture. Only 36.8 per cent of the old MPs were re-elected — compared to 65 per cent in 1980. According to Gabriella Ilonszki, the election brought with it the biggest change since 1949. In 1985 a new legislation concerning the election was used for the first time. It made the existence of more than one candidate in every electoral district compulsory.¹⁶

A Hungarian curiosity was the Patriotic People's Front, an official unifying para-opposition organisation founded in 1954. One of its founding fathers was Prime Minister Imre Nagy, for whom the front played the role of a multiparty system in socialism. The organisation tried to integrate social classes, published the newspaper *Magyar Nemzet*, organised elections and in principle offered a channel to act in the frame of the party state but outside the party itself. Officially election candidates represented the front, the political programme of which all candidates had to accept.¹⁷

Hereafter the point, however, is not to stress further such structural features of the communist system, but to outline some less known features and show how they were linked to the dominant political culture. Whilst the succession of governments is striking in postwar Western countries like Italy or Finland, in communist-ruled Hungary there were only seven governments during the whole János Kádár era. Particularly two of them lasted long: Jenő Fock held his position over eight years (1967-1975) and his successor György Lázár over twelve years (1975-1987). On the one hand this reveals increasing stability but on the other hand, it is doubtful

14. C. Horváth, "Új magyar történelem": *Magyarország 1944-től napjainkig* (Pécs: Carbocomp, 1992), 204; Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX században*, 421.

15. *Magyarország* (Ma), 3 (1967); 38 (1970).

16. G. Ilonszki, *An Introduction to the New Hungarian Parliament*, Budapest Papers on Democratic Transition, t. 1 (Budapest: Department of Political Science, Budapest University of Economics, 1991), 8.

17. Z. Bárány, "Political Participation and the Notion of Reform: Electoral Practice and the Hungarian National Assembly," *East Central Europe*, 16, 1-2 (1989): 108-112; Ilonszki, *An Introduction to the New Hungarian Parliament*, 8-9; B. Rácz, "Political Participation and the Expanding Role of the Hungarian Legislature," *East European Quarterly*, XX.II, 4 (1989): 459-461.

that the government played a significant political role since the party apparatus and the Central Committee were in charge of essential decision-making.

For the general public, the state bureaucracy remained obscure and immutable. In that respect, Toma's and Völgyes' 1977 survey is revealing: only 17 per cent of the 300 respondents knew the name of the Chairman of the Presidium. This is astonishing, considering that at the time, Pál Losonczy had already held the post for over ten years. Only 12 per cent could name the highest organ of state power, the Presidential Council.¹⁸

Also the relation between the society and the state remained alien in the dominant political culture. An ambiguous law was not to be changed but to be utilised (*kijátszani*) with protection and personal relations¹⁹. On all levels of society services needed other services, clients, unofficial networks and intrigues to cope with in the bureaucracy. These created "small liberties," and in fact, passive acceptance of the Kádár system. These phenomena had historical precedents and also both the post-1867 k.u.k. i.e. Austria-Hungary as neo-k.u.k after the First World War also had been étatist authoritarian regimes with a constitutional facade. To some extent this is a larger phenomenon in East Central Europe and in that respect, Hungary can be compared with Poland, for example. In Hungary, paternalism is striking as only three influential men have ruled the country since 1848: Francis Joseph, Miklós Horthy and János Kádár. None of them was a democrat but instead represented paternalist centralist rule.

In 1977, Toma and Völgyes complained about the difficulties of describing Hungarian political culture due to the lack of empirical material. However, they considered it "reasonable to estimate" that two general subcultures existed in Hungary. The first was a dedicated and ideologically motivated left. Secondly, there were few but strong anticommunist proponents of national independence. Both subcultures amounted to five per cent of the Hungarian population.²⁰ The vast majority, ca. 90 per cent of the population, seemed to live quite modestly outside political activities. In addition to these subcultures, a few representatives of Jewish and nationalist populist peasant cultures survived during the Kádár era. Hungary was a Catholic country with significant Protestant and Jewish minorities. The Jewry was particularly connected to politics as some communist leaders had a Jewish background. The impression of a distinction between Jew and non-Jew was identified but mainly only in the ranks of the Budapest intelligentsia.²¹

18. Toma, Völgyes, *Politics in Hungary*, 143-144.

19. M. Szabó, "A demokrácia és a demokraták politikai kultúrája," (Democracy and political culture of the democrats), in J. Simon, ed., *Ezredvégi értelmezések*, 115.

20. Toma, Völgyes, *Politics in Hungary*, 138-143.

21. Schöpflin, "Hungary an Uneasy Stability," 143-146; Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX században*, 491.

Dichotomies without fragmentation

Salami tactics created a dichotomy as those who did not belong to “us” had to be expelled, silenced or labelled as criminals to be imprisoned. However, open terror decreased in the early 1960s and political culture evolved towards a “soft dictatorship” which tried to use negotiation and persuasion to gain political support. In 1962, Hungary was the first communist-ruled country in which two former communist leaders had been expelled from the party.

After the failure of the 1956 rebellion, it became clear that Hungary’s political structure would remain state socialist and this was confirmed in the constitution of 1972. According to Kádár’s 1982 statement, the vast majority of Hungarians had understood and accepted his actions in 1956 — if not immediately, at least shortly afterwards.²² According to his 1962 famous speech, those who were not against the Hungarian People’s Republic were in fact with it. According to this definition only a small minority belonged to “them.”

We are thus facing a difficult question: in the lack of reliable sources, we hardly know who finally “supported” or “opposed” the system in the end. In the late 1970s, the analyst George Schöpflin wrote about opposition and para-opposition. The latter did not overtly question the ideological bases but accepted the semi-autonomous political role permitted to it.²³ After the collapse of communism, another analyst, Jenő Bangó, argued that the whole concept of dissident was too narrow, because in Hungary everybody “was against” and opposition refers only to the post-Kádár era. Bangó suggested the concept of nonconformism, which in principle can be found in every sector of society. Therefore, I would like to argue that the question was not that black and white but that instead a critical attitude prevailed. The party state was the existing context in which critics had to adjust their activities against their will in order to fall into line. The bureaucracy controlled the political field and there was a limited number of dissidents and activists. In September 1989, less than one per cent of the Hungarian population belonged to opposition organisations.²⁴

However, one of the most obvious dividers which concerned subjective attitudes and expectations, was party membership. In addition to official ideology, the party represented “the vanguard of the people” and not everybody was allowed to join the “elite.” However, the other side of the coin reveals that this dichotomy became less clear-cut in the 1970s and 1980s when the ruling party sought to develop the country from inside by changing membership qualifications. One of the striking

22. Ma, 28 (1982).

23. Nyssönen, *Presence of the Past: ‘1956’ after 1956 in Hungary*, 120; Jenő Bangó, *Die postsozialistische Gesellschaft Ungarns* (München: Trofenik, 1991), 191-194; Schöpflin, “Hungary an Uneasy Stability,” 147-148; G. Schöpflin, “Opposition and Para-Opposition: Critical Comments in Hungary 1968-1978,” in Rudolf L. Tökés, ed., *Opposition in Eastern Europe* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), 142.

24. L. Bruszt, “1989: The Negotiated Revolution in Hungary,” *Social Research*, 57, 2 (1990): 387.

features of the later Kádár era was that cultural intelligentsia, with literature as its medium, was supplanted by economists, sociologists, historians and jurists.

Social scientist Elemér Hankiss (1989) found another dichotomy when he defined two societies. In the first and official one, organised vertically, the state and ideology played an essential role. This was not so in the second, unofficial, society, in which alternative principles such as the second public started to gain importance.²⁵ It seems that both societies needed each other for services and as “friends” — finally even as good “enemies” — to strengthen their own identity. People played many roles, official intellectuals read *samizdats* and representatives of the “opposition” could publish in official newspapers, etc.

Still, as a rock musician later recalled, the agenda was somehow different in communist-ruled countries: it was paradoxical to oppose the war in Vietnam there, because the government already did. The party worried about the tenacity of precommunist attitudes, which surmises a dichotomy between collective and petit bourgeois values. The latter were seen as remnants of the prewar era, and, according to critics, were revitalised by the 1968 economic reform. Talented rock bands like *Omega* and *Illés* or film makers like Miklós Jancsó and István Szabó became relatively famous at that time.

To sum up, fragmentation does not seem to be a relevant feature in Hungarian political culture. Although open terror did not exist for decades, free speech was still limited, informers uncovered and people were kept under surveillance. Instead of fragmentation, politics began to (re)culminate between the dichotomy of “us” and “them” towards the late 1980s. The party’s “social contract” also started to grow old: in 1987 a *samizdat* publication, *Beszélő*, demanded Kádár’s resignation for the first time. We cannot underestimate these years, when critical intelligentsia could still debate in spite of its “national” or “urban” sentiments. This particularly concerned vital historical questions (*sorskérdések*) such as 1956 or the debates in Lakitelek in 1987. In 1987, 100 intellectuals boycotted the new programme of Károly Grósz’s government and even the youth organisation of the party demanded a different kind of socialism. The crisis and the crisis of the crisis management started to culminate in János Kádár, until May 1988, when he was superseded.

Catching the rainbow

When we study political culture we cannot ignore the economy, the general technological optimism of the era or the context of the Cold War. “Keeping up with the Joneses” and the consumer society in the making evidently influenced political cultures. In communist-ruled countries, the leadership had to offer other sticks and carrots as pluralist democracy was out of the question. In his classic *A history of the people’s democracies* (1969), Ferenc Fejtő noticed that the standard of living in

25. Elemér Hankiss, *Kelet-európai alternatívák* (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1989), 119-135.

Hungary had been raised by 20–35 per cent between 1956 and 1960. The same thing occurred in Czechoslovakia after the Prague Spring and even in Poland in the 1970s, when the authorities systematically concentrated on raising the standard of living. The GDP in the GDR and Czechoslovakia was the highest in the socialist camp (45.9 per cent — 42.3 per cent of the current US GDP) in 1980, Hungary came next (31.7 per cent) before Poland (27.3 per cent).²⁶

The 1960s and 1970s brought the greatest changes to Hungarian lifestyle.²⁷ Increasing commercialism and a consumer-oriented way of life were also clearly present in the periodical *Magyarország*. In 1964, the periodical forecast an optimistic future by advertising a “television to every house.” A new apartment, a private car or a small cottage at lake Balaton were the next goals of goulash communism. In the early 1970s, expectations of the future were high after the Hungarian communists had started the reform policy in 1968. Officials expected growth to be around 30–35 per cent, which represents an annual average of approximately 6 per cent. Even the Western level was assumed to take approximately 15–20 years.²⁸ Trade with the Soviet Union and particularly Soviet oil played an important role in this relative welfare until the late 1970s, when oil became remarkably expensive. At that time for example, every fourth car in Hungary was the Soviet-made Lada.²⁹ A five-day working week was established in 1981, balanced to 40 hours three years later, modelled on other countries in the Soviet bloc.

However, Hungarian political optimism vanished by the beginning of the 1980s at the latest. Real wages had increased and stabilised by then, but in 1985 the standard of living decreased for the first time. The weekly *Heti Világgazdaság*, which since 1979 concentrated on fluctuations in the world economy and reflected a more open and business-oriented political culture, represented a new form of thinking. In 1980, it reported, for example, that McDonald’s had 5,700 restaurants in the world.³⁰ In 1987, Budapest was the first city in former Eastern Europe to accept this symbol of globalisation on its soil.

Nevertheless, the state could not distribute and produce enough of certain consumer goods and kept prices high. In the 1960s, *Kicsi vagy kocs*i, i.e. the choice between a baby and a car, became a slogan. Another example: in 1978, there were only 103 telephones per 1,000 inhabitants. The amount was seven times less than in the leading countries, the United States and Sweden. Czechoslovakia was the most advanced country in the socialist camp in that respect and produced almost twice as

26. F. Fejtő, *A népi demokráciák története I-II* (Magvető Kiadó: Budapest-Magyar Füzetek Párizs, 1991), 159. Compared with the 1950s, the Hungarian GNP doubled until the late 1970s. See Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 349.

27. Valuch, “A Cultural and Social History of Hungary 1948–1990,” 277.

28. Ma, 14 (1970).

29. Ma, 9 (1964); 13 (1974); 25 (1974); 24 (1980).

30. *Heti Világgazdaság* (HVG) 0 (1979); 29 (1979); Ma, 19 (1980); Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 372; Valuch, “A Cultural and Social History of Hungary...,” 271.

many telephones as Hungary.³¹ The slogan “*Csak egy telefon*” — just a call — could have solved many problems but the lack of telephones became a problem in everyday life.

“Keeping up with the Joneses” needed hard work and did not always succeed. In the 1980s, many Hungarians needed several jobs to maintain their standard of living. The idea of the second economy was officially accepted in 1980 to complete state-socialist structures. In the 1980s, the crisis started to generate ideas which on the one hand stressed Hungary’s own identity as a model while on the other showed Western capitalism as a possible path. Reform policy was reactivated in 1983 to encourage small-scale private business. Those known as the new rich had either connections or networks in the party, worked abroad or were already involved in private business. The first income tax in the former people’s democracies was instituted in 1987.

According to a popular saying, “the Hungarians had Ethiopian wages but paid Swedish taxes.” In spite of this, consumerism — like owning a private car and a house — was also a way to show one’s status, standard of living and difference in a society that officially preferred equality and communist values. Towards the 1970s and 1980s, Hungary and particularly Budapest seemed “Western” for many citizens of the other socialist countries. Hungary’s relative welfare and the fact that it was “the most westernised” and liberal country in the former Eastern bloc also positively reinforced the image of goulash communism. When communism collapsed in 1989, Hungary was several years ahead of other former socialist states in bureaucracy and legislation, thanks to earlier reforms which had little by little set it apart from other state-socialist countries.

“Hungarian pragmatism” and foreign relations

János Kádár stressed that the domestic status quo was the best the Hungarians could achieve. On the one hand Kádár tried to find a balance between international commitments and national interests, between principles of socialist internationalism and Hungarian national consciousness. For example, in 1971 he argued in an interview for the news agency UPI that international laws prevailed in the building of socialism, but that at the same time the work was done in national contexts. Kádár continued that the Hungarians were developing socialist democracy, finding appropriate answers to contemporary questions. He consistently denied the existence of a certain “Hungarian road.” When the same question was asked again several years later, he referred again to the “international laws in building socialism,” but also to historical examples, to socialist patriotism and internationalism, which hinted that socialist models could not be copied as such. In 1982 and 1983, he still publicly denied the existence of a particular Hungarian model.³²

31. HVG, 46 (1980); Valuch, “A Cultural and Social History of Hungary...,” 270.

32. Ma, 12 (1971); 35 (1979); 41 (1982); 39 (1983).

Internationally Hungary had become quite isolated during the first post-1956 years. The situation changed essentially in 1962, when the Hungarian question was taken away from the UN's agenda — reciprocally a general amnesty was granted to the 1956 revolutionaries in March 1963. The emerging Thaw and particularly the year 1964 seemed to promise a new era and more open political culture. Several new embassies opened in Budapest, the weekly *Magyarország* was launched, and even organised tours from Finland to Hungary were started that year.

In Hungary, communist ideology was not the only factor by which to define international relations. As early as 1957, Kádár made a distinction between capitalist and imperialist countries: if Sweden was not imperialist, Finland was even less so.³³ However, the Soviet Union, the first state-socialist state and a superpower, was without doubt in a privileged position in relation to other states. The Central Committee defined several times its fundamental theoretical thesis, i.e. tight co-operation with the Soviet Union.³⁴ Foreign relations had to be adjusted in the context of communism, the ultimate interpreters of which were in Moscow. There, Hungarian leaders had the burden of testimony: after all, Imre Nagy had declared Hungary's sovereignty in 1956 and withdrew from the Warsaw Pact. Kádár stressed that no anti-Soviet communism had existed, exists or will exist. The emergence of Eurocommunism, particularly in France and Italy, was a particular theme in official political culture. When Kádár replied to an inquiry by the *New York Times*, he used the term "so called Eurocommunism." Still in 1986 the concept was put in brackets in the political dictionary as the concept of national communism.³⁵ In Kádár's political culture, "national" existed but it emerged only in the context of the party and in co-operation with the Patriotic People's Front.

Until 1967, the USA were one of the last three countries in the world with which Hungary maintained diplomatic relations only at the level of legation. After Cardinal Mindszenty's case was finally closed in 1973, relations with the Vatican also became normalised — Mindszenty had fled to the US legation in 1956 and opposed the regime from there until 1971.³⁶ In Europe, Hungary started to develop relations with Finland and Austria, and even with West Germany in the 1970s. For example, the idea of Finnish neutrality was very significant for the leaders of small socialist countries.³⁷ They desired to maintain and increase their own political space, in which Finland represented a positive path of political development.

33. A. Halmesvirta, "Editor's Introduction," in A. Halmesvirta, ed., *Kádár's Hungary — Kekkonen's Finland*, Hungarologische Beiträge, 14 (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2002), 10.

34. Ma, 39 (1970); 49 (1972).

35. Ma, 49 (1972); 25 (1978); *Politikai kisszótár, Ötödik, átdolgozott és bővített kiadás (Small Political Dictionary, Fifth revised edition)* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1986), 87, 121, 280.

36. L. Borhi, "Kádár and the United States in the 1960s," in A. Halmesvirta, ed., *Kádár's Hungary...*, 66.

37. J. Suomi, *Taistelu puolueettomuudesta: Urho Kekkonen 1968-1972* (Helsinki: Otava, 1996), 556; J. Suomi, *Liennytyksen akanvirrassa: Urho Kekkonen 1972-1976* (Helsinki: Otava, 1998), 265-266.

However, Hungary and the others belonged to a military alliance that did not include Finland, despite its common border with the Soviet Union and military treaty with the Soviets.

Hungary's foreign policy was further activated by the visits of Indira Gandhi, Josip Broz Tito, Bruno Kreisky in the 1970s, Francois Mitterrand in 1982, and George Bush in 1983. When Margaret Thatcher prepared for a visit to Hungary in 1984, communication between the two superpowers was reduced to a minimum. Years later, in 1993, Thatcher recalled: "It was through Eastern Europe that we would have to work." Her message to Kádár (read: to the Kremlin) was that "the West and Reagan personally were genuinely seeking disarmament." Thatcher noted how she had to take seriously Prime Minister Lázár's caution that the worst thing she could do "was to cast doubt on Hungary's remaining part of the socialist bloc." Hungary had gone the "furthest along the path of economic reform, although they were anxious to describe it as anything but capitalism."³⁸ In other words Thatcher's notes disclosed not only limits of political space or how good relations to the East opened more space in the West. In addition, they revealed the Cold War political context, in which rash and unwise statements of the West could harm small countries. The periodical *Magyarország* is strikingly filled with concern on the consequences of the increased arms race, particularly during the first half of the 1980s.³⁹

In the 1990s, the Hungarians have argued that taboo themes existed during the state-socialist era. Among these were 1956 – when Soviet troops intervened in the country – and the Trianon Peace Treaty, which in 1920 raised the question of Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries. In fact, the demonstration supporting the Hungarian minority in Transylvania in the summer of 1988 was the biggest gathering since 1956 and increased popular interest in foreign relations, which were traditionally the concern of the party elite. Kádár's Hungary had been extremely careful not to provoke neighbouring countries on minority questions. In fact, early statements in 1958 might have helped to deteriorate minority statuses in Czechoslovakia and Romania. By the end of the 1960s, the situation had recovered to some degree. Kádár was ready to give an account of the losses in Trianon for the first time at the Helsinki Summit of 1975.⁴⁰

Commemoration, politics and history

History and the ways in which a nation or particular groups deal with the past also belong to political culture. Relation to history does not only reflect personal opinions but also views dominating in education, historical experiences and culture. In East Central Europe, people have frequently expressed their political

38. M. Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), 454-457.

39. Ma, 1 (1982); 44 (1985).

40. Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX században*, 510-515.

views through historical examples and myths. Historian Miklós Szabó considered this legacy of Romanticism a part of the political culture of the region: the Stalinist rule between 1948 and 1953 created its own historical myths and progressive traditions of the poor and oppressed people. However, according to Szabó, Kádár's system aspired to deny and annihilate history as a whole.⁴¹ One may doubt this, but it will later become clear that relation to history and commemoration has been problematic in Hungary.

Historical Hungary could be considered as a great power of medieval Europe which in the sixteenth century was occupied by the Turks and later by the Habsburgs, who ruled the country from then on in co-operation with the Hungarian aristocracy, and in a Dual Monarchy as of 1867. In 1920, Hungary lost two thirds of its former territory, which led to the policy of open revisionism, at first with the support of Italy and then Germany. The attempt failed but even in János Kádár's Hungary, the Hungarians had to come to terms with the loss of an empire. As analyst George Schöpflin formulated it, "a substantial proportion of Hungarian opinion feels that the body of the nation [...] has been cut off from it." The perception of this historical experience as an earlier "Golden Age" has ignited wider historical debate as well. In 1960, historian Erik Molnár demystified the concepts of nation, people and homeland, which he considered as units which had not been questioned even during the Stalinist years. In this *Historikerstreit* another scholar, Aladár Mód, answered that patriotism had not been false consciousness, and that it therefore influenced the further development of the concept of socialist patriotism. Another debate became public in 1987, now between Hungary and Romania, after the publication of a Hungarian history of Transylvania. The Hungarians called in question the Daco-Romanian continuity theory supported in Romania and argued that Hungarian influence in the area had been more powerful.⁴²

When dealing with the recent past, we can distinguish several historical periods: the Horthy era, i.e. Hungary between the World Wars, the Second World War and the Communist rule itself. The People's Republic of Hungary tried to get rid of the remnants of the "Christian course" and admiral Horthy's legacy. On a symbolic level they, for example, renamed Saint Stephen's Day "20 August" because the new constitution of The People's Republic was timed for and celebrated on that day. In official political culture the day was dedicated to new bread as well, which tried to diminish the religious meaning of the day: Saint Stephen was considered a founder of the state and a Catholic saint. The Day of Liberation, 4 April, referring to 1945, was described to be the greatest national holiday in the code of law, although

41. Szabó, "A demokrácia és a demokraták ...," 104-105; M. Szabó, *Politikai kultúra Magyarországon 1896-1986* (Political culture in Hungary 1896-1986) (Budapest: Medvetánc, 1989), 230-231; H. Nyssönen, "Political Cultures in Urho Kekkonen's Finland and János Kádár's Hungary," in A. Halmesvirta, H. Nyssönen, eds., *Bridge Building and Political Cultures*, *Hungarologische Beiträge*, 18 (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2006), 37-45.

42. Schöpflin, "Hungary an Uneasy Stability," 144; Schöpflin, "Opposition and Para-Opposition..." 173-179; Ma, 16 (1987).

it did not appear to attract substantial popular identification. The anniversary of the 1848 Revolution, 15 March, and May Day were also declared holidays at the same time in 1945. However, 15 March became complicated for the new rulers, partly for its bourgeois nature. They abolished the holiday status of the day in the 1950s, but Imre Nagy restored it during the 1956 uprising, whilst Kádár and his companions restored the former practice. Instead, Kádár wanted to utilize the day, and time the founding of the new Communist Youth Organisation, KISZ, precisely on that day. The appeal was finally published 21 March, which was the anniversary of the establishment of the Soviet Republic in 1919.⁴³

It is estimated that Hungary lost 800,000 – 900,000 people in the Second World War. However, there was no open mourning of the Second World War on the Hungarians' part. Plaques commemorated resistance and martyrs but not those who were killed in action or vanished in the Don catastrophe, in which the whole army perished. On the contrary, erecting memorials for the liberating Soviets was one of the first activities of the new Hungarian state after the war. It is astonishing that the idea of a memorial was brought up as late as February 1989 in the Central Committee.⁴⁴

One of the most difficult issues is the 1956 uprising and János Kádár's role in it. Although Kádár introduced goulash communism and *de facto* unified Hungary in many ways, he also was the man who crushed the revolutionary attempt with the help of the Soviets. In today's Hungary, there is quite a popular view that although the revolution was crushed, the rebellion helped János Kádár to create "kádárism," i.e. a soft dictatorship.⁴⁵ Although, we do not know the alternative, the upheaval clearly showed the limits of how far the radical policy of social change could go. For "liberals" in the Soviet Bloc it showed the dead end of the Stalinist policy but for "conservatives" the bloodshed was a permanent warning to oppose any reform attempts in the Bloc.

Although Kádár could emphasize socialist achievements and boasted, for example, in 1973 that 1956 was hardly remembered anymore,⁴⁶ forgetting was not

43. NSZ, 10 (March 1957); S. Balogh, ed., *A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt ideiglenes vezető testületeinek jegyzőkönyvei II (Minutes of the provisional leading management of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party II)* (Budapest: Interart, 1993), 19; S. Balogh, ed., *A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt ideiglenes vezető testületeinek jegyzőkönyvei, V* (Budapest: Napvilág kiadó, 1998), 110-114; H. Nyssönen, "Remembrance and Oblivion: 1956 and the Politics of Memory in Hungary," in G. Rittersporn, M. Rolf, J. Behrends, eds., *Sphären von Öffentlichkeit in Gesellschaften sowjetischen Typs / Public Spheres in Soviet-Type Societies*, Komparatistische Bibliothek, 11 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003), 341-346; György Gyarmati, *Március Hatalma - A Hatalom Márciusa: Fejezetek Március 15. ünnepelésének történetéből (The Power of March: Chapters of the history of 15 March celebrations)* (Budapest: Paginarium, 1998).

44. A. Kosztricz, J. Lakos, K. Némethné Vágyi, G. Soós, eds., *A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt központi bizottságának 1989 évi jegyzőkönyvei (Minutes of the central committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party in 1989)*, 1 kötet (Budapest: Országos levéltár, 1993), 107.

45. See for example, M. Kalmár, *Ennivaló és hozomány: A kora kádárizmus ideológiája (Food and dowry: Ideology of the early Kádár regime)* (Budapest: Magvető, 1998).

46. MOL, M-KS-228.f.5./62 H. Nyssönen l.öe; Halmesvirta, "Editor's Introduction," 12.

that simple. Between 1957 and 1962, approximately 22,000 people were sentenced in courts, among them 250-350 to death, including the 1956 Prime Minister Imre Nagy. In addition, earlier injustices caused bitterness because they were perceived as discrimination “for political reasons.” Commemoration became political in a sense that the official commemoration of 1956 also represented the winners’ official political culture and history, and the winners considered the event as a counter-revolution. For the ruling HWSP, the attack on the party headquarters on 30 October 1956 was the most important evidence of the counter-revolutionary character of the rebellion. Laying wreaths at the square and the Budapest cemetery became part of annual communist rituals. As late as 1988, the party prohibited “a commemorative procession to memorialise the events of 23 October 1956” organised by the new alternative organisation of young democrats, Fidesz (Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége).

Thus, beside general dissatisfaction, 1956 finally became one of the main factors in uniting various nonconformist groups, including former neo-Marxists in the 1980s. In December 1986, nonconformist activists organised the first illegal conference in a private apartment. Political nature and the use of history became more apparent in June 1988, when the Committee for Historical Justice, *Történelmi Igazságtétel Bizottsága*, was founded illegally. In the founding document the authors insisted on “the full moral, political and juridical rehabilitation of victims, both alive and dead, from the retribution which followed the revolution.” They demanded reliable history-writing on the post-1945 period, publication of documents about 1956, and a national memorial as well as the reburial of the executed.⁴⁷

In general, history-writing in Hungary has had more room for manoeuvre than in other socialist countries. Recent history and particularly 1956 were the most difficult issues of all because of the origins of the existing power structure and contemporary leadership. In political culture, there was an atmosphere of secrecy and concealment because not everyone had access to documents or Western literature. Such literature was branded in libraries with the letters Z.A. (closed material) and access to it required special permission.

Finally, there has been a peculiar phenomenon in the way history and commemoration are used in Hungary. Since the nineteenth century particular memorial statutes have “codified” extraordinary events and persons in the Hungarian code of law — there are a few examples after 1989 as well. During the Kádár era the Soviet liberation was enacted into law both on the fifteenth and twentieth anniversaries as the general amnesty. The memory of the first Soviet Republic was codified on its fortieth anniversary in 1959. Great historical figures

47. G. Litván, “Research and Discussion on 1956 in present-day Hungary,” in P. Hihkala, O. Vehviläinen, eds., *Hungary 1956* (Tampere: Tampereen yliopiston julkaisematka, 1995), 5-12; Andras B. Hegedűs, ed., *Ötvenhatról nyolcvanhatban. Az 1956-os magyar forradalom előzményei, alakulása és utóélete című 1986. December 5-6-án Budapesten rendezett tanácskozás jegyzőkönyve* (Minutes of the conference organised in Budapest in December 5-6 1986) (Budapest: Századvég Kiadó & 1956-os Intézet, 1992), 9-11; Nyssönen, *Presence of the Past*, 121-125.

were also strongly present in street naming as there is probably not one village without its Lajos Kossuth or Sándor Petőfi Street. They represent the 1848 tradition, as Lajos Batthyány and Ferenc Deák, and are visible all over Hungary alongside with other national heroes. Although Lenin Boulevard and Red Army Road existed in the centre of Budapest, the above-mentioned national heroes provided the most popular street names in the capital. In other words, the number of national heroes was striking also in Kádár's Hungary.⁴⁸

Personality cult, culture and travelling

There are several other features in political culture, such as the leaders themselves and their images, culture and travelling, which made the image of goulash communism more attractive. When we deal with the political cult of *living* political leaders, it seems that it was not Mátyás Rákosi who brought personality cult to Hungary, as sometimes has been claimed. The roots of this political phenomenon reach further back: it is enough to study Hungarian legislation and memory statutes during the Dual Monarchy and the Horthy era. Although Rákosi celebrated his own sixtieth birthday in a pure Stalinist manner, the Hungarian party "de-canonised" him a few years later, in September 1956. At the same time, the party pushed through the principle that streets should not be named after living persons.⁴⁹ In this context it is indicative that Kádár seemed to follow this line of thinking and lived relatively modestly compared to some other leaders. Kádár's sixtieth birthday was neither comparable to Rákosi's nor were there as many pictures of contemporary leaders hung at party conventions.⁵⁰ Neither did Kádár reveal much of his personal life. In *Magyarország*, he only once disclosed something about his free time: if there was any time left he read books, and mentioned Jack London as one of his favourite authors.⁵¹

In addition, culture was one of the basic arguments in goulash communism. The Hungarian leadership fulfilled international commitments in foreign policy but insisted on keeping cultural policy in national hands. Stressing national (cultural) values, it aspired to show some national independence and self-respect, contrary to the Rákosi regime. In Hungary, this meant extraordinary cultural freedom within the limits imposed by communist rule. Kádár's close colleague, György Aczél, was in charge of cultural policy during practically the whole Kádár era (1960-1985). Aczél operated with three political categories, expressed by the famous three T's (*támogatott, türt, tiltott*), i.e. "supported, tolerated and forbidden." These categories were interpreted quite independently in practice and sometimes there was room for

48. Budapest térkép (Map of Budapest) (1987); Nyysönen, *Presence of the Past*, 116-119.

49. Nyysönen, *Presence of the Past*, 56.

50. Ferenc Pölöskei, Jenő Gergely, Lajos Izsák, eds., *Magyarország története 1918-1990* (*History of Hungary 1918-1990*) (Budapest: Korona Kiadó, 1995), 240, 248.

51. Ma, 26 (1965).

negotiations concerning the meaning and the significance of a single production. Beside Hungarian pop classics and literature, we should mention one of the best political satire in the socialist bloc, *A tanú* (The Witness, 1969/1979). Hungarian humour became a concept itself — according to Andrzej Vajda, only the Hungarians could have done the film, which was dealing with the nearest Stalinist past. Humour and political cabaret became those small freedoms of everyday life.

Finally, travelling and possibilities to travel abroad were also part of goulash communism. When Archie Brown explored political culture, he also paid attention to tourism and workers who went abroad for employment. Tourism and travel lead people to compare living conditions in foreign countries. Travelling was also a structural phenomenon which played a role in the change of political culture: between 1950 and 1990, international passenger traffic grew 18 times.

Comparable freedom of travel along with a degree of cultural liberalism typified the liberalism of the Kádár era.⁵² In the 1960s, it became possible for ordinary citizens to travel to the East without a visa. Travellers needed a so-called red passport, whilst a blue passport entitled one to a journey to the West. One tourist trip every three years was the limit, and that changed to two years in the case of visits to relatives. Organised tourism was not concerned by these limits. As of 1982, the Hungarians could travel abroad once a year, although hard currency was guaranteed only every three years.⁵³ Despite these restrictions, tourism was popular and important. By the first three-quarters of 1964, 1,077,909 Hungarians had already travelled abroad, with a small minority (56,143) to nonsocialist countries. In 1970 one million and then 5,2 million in 1980 travelled abroad, most of them to neighbouring socialist states or the seaside of “semi-Western” Yugoslavia. The state-owned tourist agency advertised its services in *Magyarország*, particularly in the late 1970s. In 1975, five days in Crakow cost 1,950 forints and two weeks in Kiev-Riga-Tallinn-Moscow, 6,900 forints — when an average monthly salary was 3,100 forints. A new passport without any restrictions was introduced during the late Kádár era, in 1987.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, we should not forget those who travelled to Hungary. For example, in January-August 1973, around 5.1 million tourists visited the country. Finns, for example, dominated mutual rates more than nine times in the mid-1970s. There were also practical reasons for this: a week in Finland cost more than ten days in Vienna and London, and the prices were “beyond Hungarian means.” This gap shows that the Hungarians had to consider their next destination carefully. As of 1970, Finland was “the only one from the so-called Western countries not requiring a visa.” In 1978, compulsory currency exchange was cancelled, and the other neutral country in Europe, Austria, became a visa-free country the following year.⁵⁵

52. Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 402.

53. HVG, 49 (1981).

54. Ma, 48 (1964); 50, 1976; 3 (1975); 14 (1986); Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX...*, 422; Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 402.

55. *Viikkosanomat*, 20 (1974); Ma, 47 (1976); 50 (1976); 40 (1973); 4 (1986).

Travelling also concerned part of the generation born after 1945. In Hungary, the number of these travellers doubled to 180,000 between 1967 and 1972. When inter-rail train tickets were established in 1972, the GDR, Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia participated in the agreement. In 1973, international discount tickets were also sold in Hungary: Rail Europe Junior provided discount tickets in 11 European countries.⁵⁶ Unfortunately, no information is available on the relationship between travelling and the travellers' or their parents' political and economical status. According to historian Ignác Romsics the fact that the Hungarians could compare the standard of living in their neighbouring countries had both a stabilising and destabilising impact. Some also "voted with their feet" and defected. For example, in 1986, 3,295 Hungarians did not return — which was under 0.5 per cent out of 708,000 who travelled.⁵⁷

Conclusion

In this piece of research we have studied Hungarian communist rule from the point of view of political culture. Instead of seeing political culture as a single unit, we have taken the concept as a methodological tool to analyse different perspectives of goulash communism — as the communist experiment which started in the 1960s has sometimes been labelled. However, the process was contested as early as the 1960s by the more dogmatist forces in Albania and China which labelled it "phony communism." Hungary took another path, and although it participated in the suppression of the Prague Spring, it went on with a more "social democratic" policy.

In post-1956 Hungary, we can distinguish several phases and "model changes" from neo-Stalinism to "soft dictatorship" before the particular systemic change of the late 1980s. Although Hungary showed signs of market economy, János Kádár could still argue in the 1980s that 98 per cent of the means of production were state-owned. Ideologically, and to a certain extent economically, Hungary depended on the Soviet Union but loyalty in foreign policy left room for domestic experiences. The economic reform of 1968 was unique in the Soviet bloc, and although it was interrupted in the 1970s, these ideas were kept alive and they later inspired Gorbachev himself.

On the level of political cultures the idea of progress and social justice were common tasks for unified political culture. In Hungary, the old statehood, "small liberties" combined with passive acceptance of kádárism, had characterised the system since the 1960s. The system itself remained unchanged for citizens but a policy of "small gates" was used if official channels did not bring the expected outcome. Despite nonconformism and dichotomies, goulash communism absorbed

56. Ma, 24 (1973).

57. SK, 16 (1975); T. Seifert, ed., *Magyar történeti kronológia 1971-1990* (Budapest: IKVA, 1994), 100; Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 402.

most intellectuals and the people. The majority of Hungarians learned to live as a small nation with a glorious history. There were no mass demonstrations as in Poland, where conflicts immediately became over-politicised. According to a contemporary foreign journalist, Hungary was the most open socialist country and intellectuals in neighbouring countries envied its relatively greater freedom of speech.⁵⁸

In today's Hungary, kádárism is something of an inconvenient issue politically. Since 1990, both left and right have accused each other of attempting to restore the Kádár system in the debates concerning the role of the state. For politicians, this has been a negative allegation but still it seems that János Kádár reconstructed the salami which communists had sliced piece by piece in the 1940s.

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58. SK, 14 (1980); *Helsingin Sanomat*, 18 (September 1983).