

Minority Culture

*Béla Pomogáts***Volumes of Fidelity****Hungarian Literature in the West about
the Hungarian Revolution**

A few months after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution had been repressed László Cs. Szabó bowed his head to the Budapest writers who had joined the popular insurrection: "The Hungarian writers set off to kill the dragon in the citadel of powers with legendary bravery in their hearts. They look upon all the duties of the country in return for the naive, moving and limiless trust by which the lesser and the greater of the country turned to them in the times of unbearable poverty and oppression. In October 1956 they acted according to the 1848 tradition and their role larger than life can be surprising only to the Anglo-Saxon eye while in Hungarian people's view they were doing their duty."

When the Hungarian writer committed these words to paper as part of his historical summary in "splendid isolation" (to use the English phrase) in his London workshop, it was already the summer of 1957 and everything was silent in Hungary. Prime Minister Imre Nagy and his political comrades were waiting the turn of their fate at a hidden resort in Romania used as prison; while Tibor Déry, Gyula Háty and numerous other Budapest writers were suffering interrogations in the house of detention in Fő Street, and thousands were arrested, many hanged. The country was listening paralysed to the noise of the police cars at night as the Kádár regime, already settled safely, detained all those, who voted for freedom by weapon, by confident action or by expressed opinion not quite a year earlier.

The Hungarian literature was also silent: anyone daring to speak was despised and outcast by writers who remained loyal to the nation. Double responsibility and duty fell on Hungarian writers living in the West during the times of national silence. First it was their duty to inform the public of the world, to report on what had happened in October and November 1956 and in the months and years of the painful retaliation afterwards. Secondly it also fell to them to preserve and keep as well as demonstrate the intellectual, moral and political heritage of the Hungarian Revolution to the whole world.

This double task had determined the mission of the literary emigration of earlier history too – after the defeat of the independence war of Ferenc Rákóczi II in 1711 and also following the fall of the freedom fight in 1849. In those times the "refugee literature" was far less moving since the memoirs of the Rákóczi himself, written in French and Latin, and the letters of Kelemen Mikes hidden for a long time, had little chance to have an impact on the public opinion at home

Minority Culture

or abroad. After 1849 mainly the politicians and soldiers, Lajos Kossuth, Bertalan Szemere, László Teleki, György Klapka, were preserving the spirit of the freedom fight in their emigration, while at home writers – János Arany, Mór Jókai, Zsigmond Kemény, János Vajda - represented ideas of 1848 sometimes reservedly, sometimes avowedly.

After the repression of the 1956 Revolution a sixth 'reed' of the Hungarian literature could be heard added to the 'five reeded Pan's pipe', which symbolises Hungarian literature according to Gyula Illyés. It was the voice of those fled earlier from tyranny like Sándor Márai, László Cs. Szabó, Lajos Zilahy, Imre Kovács, Zoltán Szabó, Gyula Borbándi and partly by those who were seeking a new home in Western Europe and overseas after the fall of the revolution. They were even more numerous: György Faludy, Pál Ignolus, Tibor Méray, Tamás Aczél, Győző Halár and a whole generation of young writers: József Bakucz, György Vitéz, György Ferdinandy, Géza Thinsz, Vince Sulyok, Imre Máté, Endre Karátson, Pál Nagy, Tibor Papp, Alpár Bujdosó and many more.

1956 and the Emigration

Of the literary and other publications, the countless commemorations of '56 which celebrated the unexpected miracle of history and expressed the sorrow over its repression (which flooded the Hungarian newspapers and periodicals in the West at the turn of 1956-57), I have opened the November-December 1956 issue (published in January 1957) of the Munich periodical *Látóhatár* [Horizon], so as to document how the western Hungarian literary and public life interpreted and commented the events in Hungary. This volume was delivered to the reader tied with a red-white-green ribbon – warning the Hungarians living in the Western world that the events of the homeland can only be compared to the ones of the revolution and fight for freedom of 1848-1849. Similarly to '48, October 1956 also reconstituted national identity and the national spirit.

As the editors wrote, the periodical was ready for printing by the second half of October when the word of the demonstration of university students of the 23rd of October and the outburst of the revolution arrived to Munich. The contents were changed in a hurry to turn the volume into a memorial issue for the revolution, and thus became the document of welcoming of this immense historical move as well as that of mourning the repression of the revolution. The publication began with the leading article titled '23rd October' written by Imre Vámos, the editor of the magazine: "historiographers believe that the brightest days of Hungarian history are the ones when fight against external oppressors was linked to the struggle for the internal, social liberation. If we keep this in mind this October fits well the series of our freedom fights. All that happened in

Minority Culture

the past few weeks in our homeland was a revolution and a fight for freedom. It is a revolution for social rights, reforms and for justice – as well as a fight for freedom, a struggle for independence against the occupying Russian empire.”

It was already after the fall of the freedom fight when the editor summarised the historical event but the rearguard actions were at their height – the strike movement of the Budapest Workers' Council and the demonstrations of the youth organisations (e.g. the Mefesz). “The Hungarian workers' fight against the oppressors – he recorded -, who outnumber them and are superior in power, is still going on to this day. Violence and privation is being used to break the will but the dynamic force of them renews itself day by day. These workers have achieved the unique historical thing – as was highlighted by Ignazio Silone so aptly -, that after a repressed revolution they could organise a nation-wide strike. They have earned the right to shape the country according to their wish and have paid by blood, by famine and misery for it”. This quotation reminds us today that the character and importance of the Hungarian Revolution carried “left-wing” values in historical and ideological sense or more precisely, it was “left-wing” in proclaiming social equality and justice but as an enforcer of national independence and identity it was the carrier of “right-wing” values. This is to be emphasised because in the past decade the “left-wing” character of 1956 seems to fade in the light of recent political interpretations. This leftish tendency was documented by Gyula Borbándi in his excellent study: *Forradalom vagy ellenforradalom* [Revolution or Counter revolution] in which he summarised all the demands and programmes of 1956 and finally drawing the ideological and political balance of 1956 came to the conclusion that the strategic idea of the “great popular and national struggle” was “finally creating a free, independent, neutral Hungary which is democratic in its public life, and is socialist in its economic and social structure – and was determined by intention to achieve these.

This “middle-of-the-road” characterization of the Hungarian Revolution or more precisely the ideological and political intentions of the revolution as well as the heritage (as announced by László Németh too) and its importance in the history of the world determines its significance according to the authors of *Látóhatár*. István Borsody, the excellent historian and political scientist, surveyed this issue in his study: *A magyar forradalom és a nagyhatalmak politikája* [The Hungarian Revolution and the Policy of the Major Powers]. “The people of Hungary have written their name in the history book of the world by the October Revolution of 1956 more lastingly than by any other action in their modern history.” This significance is emphasised by documents like Albert Camus's: ‘My Demand towards the United Nations' Organisations' or Salvador de Madariaga's: ‘Suez and Hungary’. The first calls for the UNO (unsuccessfully as we know) to stand for and protect the Hungarian people suffering Soviet

Minority Culture

aggression, while the latter avowedly expresses the (well-established) suspicion that the British and French armies took this opportunity of internal crisis of the Soviet empire, caused by the Hungarian Revolution, to attack Egypt. The importance of the Hungarian Revolution is also supported by documents of protests on behalf of prominent western writers and member organisations of the International Pen Club.

The 1956 issue of *Látóhatár* still offers interesting and informative reading materials; there are other exciting writings in *Látóhatár* (Horizon), *Új Látóhatár* (New Horizon) and *Irodalmi Újság* (Literature Magazine) presenting the International (foreign language) literature on the Hungarian Revolution. These are works in German and English language as *Ungarn zehn Jahre danach 1956-1966*, edited by Werner Frauentdienst, Paul E. Zinner's *Revolution in Hungary*, George Urban's *The Nineteen Days*, Leslie B. Bain's *The Reluctant Satellites*, Hannah Arendt's *Die Ungarische Revolution und der totalitare Imperialismus* among others, also by Hungarian authors (Tamás Aczél, Tibor Méray, Gyula Borbándi, József Molnár, József Kővágó, Miklós Molnár, Sándor Szilassy). The latter works were published both in Hungarian and in foreign languages. When listing the authors publishing most frequently scholarly and journalistic literature dealing with the 1956 Revolution, we have to mention Gyula Borbándi, István Borsody, Zoltán Garamvölgyi, Péter Gosztonyi, József Molnár and Imre Vámos. It would have been fairly useful if both the books written in foreign languages, and the analyses by Hungarian authors (together with the 1956 issue of *Látóhatár*!) could have been made available for the Hungarian readers, even now mostly uninformed about the history of 1956, at least at the 50th anniversary.

The Revolution in the Hungarian Literature of the West

After the repression of the Revolution Hungarian literature in Hungary was sentenced to silence about the historical event: it was almost forced into "internal emigration". The last document that argued for the rightfulness of the Revolution was made public at the general assembly of the Association of Hungarian Writers on the 28th December 1956; it was the approved statement composed by Áron Tamási with the title 'Gond és Hitvallás' [Trouble and Creed]. This statement was approved by the vast majority of the assembly and a few days later the Kádár-authority prohibited the operation of the association and the memorandum of Áron Tamási could only be read in type-script and become public by the Hungarian broadcasting in the West. For long years to come the Hungarian Revolution was aspersed and called a "counter revolution" or even a "fascist" attempt to grab power; writers like György Bölöni (former friend of Ady), András Berkesi, Imre Dobozy (later Chairman of the Association of Writers), László

Minority Culture

Erdős and Lajos Mesterházi (who do not deserve sparing their names) were involved. The Hungarian readers did not accept their books with sympathy (although some of Berkesi's poorly written political pulp-fictions were fairly popular!) and were rejected by the intellectual public opinion.

It was left to the literature of the emigration to provide an honest picture of the autumn of 1956. Therefore it was natural, that this literature considered it one of its major tasks to preserve, maintain and serve the heritage of the Revolution as well as to correct and disaffirm all the disinformation and lies which could be read in publications in Hungary. As a consequence attention drawing personal attestations were published expressing the authors' emotions both in the Hungarian poetry and prose of the West. Let's see poetry first. Poems of Ágnes Mária Csiki, who lives in Germany, and the American Lajos Kannás as well as the poems of Imre Máté, who fled after the defeat, were written in the fever of the historical days. Dating on 25th October 1956, the poem of Ágnes Mária Csiki with the title *But the City Is on Fire at Home* was written when news of the brutality of the in-marching Soviet troops, the police force and news of hopeless fights came: "The city is on fire at home, / - a drop is spreading on my coat, / - grenade is screaming, death overhead, / - greets me from far, the milkman is that, / - the museum yard where I used to play, / - is trembling with fear in the world of flames, / - the news-boy is shouting by the edge of pavement, / - passers-by hurry with umbrellas in hand".

The subject of the five part poem of Lajos Kannás, the 'Kormos kövek' (Smutty Stones) is also the mourning of the bloodstained days: "Tiny foot-prints were running in the snow, / like ribbon in the wind flying or float, / its slight glint, each step shone. / But beyond sight / over the corner of square it stopped. / On a bullet-dotted wall / grumous blood you saw. / A life, that's all. / Foot-prints did not run on."²⁷

Imre Máté, who had fought on the barricades in Budapest not long before, wrote about the pain of fleeing and the tragic motives of the individual decision in his poem *Meneküléskor* [When Fleeing]: "I commend thee my homeland to the God of my heart! / I fear the lin-coloured days of the Siberian mines, / I also fear the rainbow-colours of Siberian nights / behind me like huge lightning-bugs / towns are on fire, becoming ashes and dust."²⁸

²⁷ „odahaza ég a város, / - a kabátomra csepp terül - / granat sikolt, halál kering lönt, / - a tejes köszönt messziről - / a Múzeum kert, ahol játsztam, / lángok világában remeg, / - az utca szélén rikkancs ordít, / sietnek ernyős emberek.”

²⁸ „A hóban apró lábnyomok szaladtak, / s mint szállodosó szalagnak / lány villanása, minden lépés fénylett. / De túl a térnek / kiégett sarkán megtorpant a nyom. / A golyóverte falon / megalvadni vér sötétlett. / Csak ennyi volt egy élet. / S a hóban nem szaladt tovább a nyom.”

²⁹ „Szívem Istenének ajánlak hazám! / A Szibériai bányák önszínű nappalaitól felek, / és felek a szibériai éj szivárvány színűitől is / most mögöttem óriás szentjánosbogarak, a fölygújtott városok égnek.”

 Minority Culture

Numerous poems of remembrance and mourning were penned by Hungarian writers in the West throughout the later periods such as Sándor András, Ferenc Fáy, György Gömöri, Győző Határ, Elemér Horváth, Tamás Kabdebó, László Kemenes Géfin, Áron Kibédi Varga, Gábor Kocsis, Ádám Makkai. A general overview of all poetic works would require a series lengthy monographs or full anthologies (I myself also published a n anthology with the title 'Ezerkilencszázötvenhat, te csillag' [1956, You a Star]). This time I would like to recommend three great poems to the attention of the reader: the poems of Sándor Márai, György Faludy, István Siklós each of them erecting a lasting memorial to the Revolution of 1956.

Sándor Márai is at the top of the lists in Hungary owing to his novels and diary notes written in emigration (and is still one of the most popular writers) though he created lasting values as poet as well, one of the most beautiful and painful remembrances of the Hungarian lyricism between 1948 and 1956 was also his work: Funeral Oration, which dealt with the tragedy of exile and was written in Naples. At Christmas 1956 another lyric confession was also written, reaching classical values and heights: Angel from Heaven, which presents the tragedy of the people to the international public. Besides projecting the tragedy of the people whose revolution was repressed and was robbed of freedom again, he also gives voice of the historic hope derived from sacrificed.

Angel, you tell about the wonder.
 Tell about it, because it's a miracle:
 A tortured nation's Christmas-tree
 In the Silent Night it was lit
 Sign of the cross is made by many
 People of the world just watch and watch
 One understands, the other does not
 Wagging heads say it's too much for many
 They say their prayer and shudder
 What's hanging on the tree is not candy
 But Christ of nations: Hungary.

Aren't told any words of charge or defy
 Just keeps watching down from the cross like Christ
 For a Christmas strange this tree is
 Brought by an angel or the devil
 By whom on his gown the dice is thrown
 Of their actions they don't know
 Just smell, suspect, presume
 Secret of this night they do

Minority Culture

Strange a Christmas this is
Hungarian nation's hanging on trees.

Angel, do take the message of Gods
New life always is born from blood
A few times they all have met –
The child, the donkey and herd
In bedding of animals by the crib
When life gave birth life to live
The wonder is being guarded
By their breath that is guarding
Because stars are lit and dawn is broken
Tell them about it
Angel from Heaven*.

The other great poem by György Faludy: 1956, You Star was written on the thirtieth anniversary of the revolution in October 1986 (evocating memories of Petőfi and 1848). The poet - who suffered in the Recsk forced labour camp during the Rákosi era and fled to the New World after the repression of the revolution – makes a commitment and swears loyalty to the ideas, events and martyrs of the freedom fight:

Fifty-six is not a memory
Not my past or history
Part of me inoperably
You've come with me

* Angyal, te beszélj a csodáról.
Mondd el, mert ez világ csodája:
Egy szegény nép karácsonyfája -
A Csendes Éjben égni kezdett -
És sokan velnek most keresztlet
Földrészek népe nézi, nézi,
Egyik érti.. másik nem érti.
Fejük csóválják, sok ez, soknak.
Imádkoznak vagy iszonyodnak,
Mert más lóg a fán, nem cukorkák:
Nepek Krisztusa, Magyarország.

Mert Ő sem szól már, nem is vádol,
Néz, mint Krisztus a keresztjáról
Különös ez a karácsonyfa, Ördög hozta,
vagy Angyal hozta -
Kik kontócsére kockát velnek,

Nem tudjak, mit cselekesznek,
Csak orronljak, nyílnak, gyanílják
Ennek az éjszakának lílkát,
Mert ez nagyon furcsa karácsony:
A magyar nép log most a lákon.

Angyal, vidd meg a hírt az égből,
Mindig új élet lesz a vérből.
Találtakoztak ők már néhányszor
- a gyermek, a számár, a pásztor -
Az alomban, a jászol mellett,
Ha az Élet elevent ellett,
A Csodát most is ők vigyázzák,
Leheletükkel állnak strázsát,
Mert Csillag ég, hasad a hajnal,
Mondd meg nekik -
mennéből az angyal.

 Minority Culture

To universe of no mercy
 Flood of nothing running underneath
 There is no handrail on my bridge
 You gave sense to my life and dreams
 At night and passion for misery
 Joy you gave and held my hand
 When I stumbled, lifted in the air
 You didn't let me grow old, breathless
 1956, You star
 With you misery was an easy path
 You've been shining on my white hair for so long
 Go on shining over my tombstone⁵.

Finally the third poet and poem to be cited is István Siklós who got into England quite young and worked as an editor of the Hungarian radio broadcast of London. He revealed his talent in emigration; his longer work Before the Forest of Silence he includes a quotation of Prime Minister Imre Nagy by documentary fidelity when evoking the tragic events of Hungarian history with poetic surrealism:

`Ezerkilencszázötvenhat, sem emlék,
 sem múltam nem vagy, sem történelem,
 de lényem egy kioperálhalállan
 darabja, testrész, ki jöttél velem
 az irgalmatlan mindenségbe, hol a
 Semmi vize zubog a híd alatt,
 melynek nincs korlátja: - életemnek
 te adtál értelmet, vad álmokat
 éjjelre és kedvet a szenvedéshez
 meg örömet; mindig te fogtál kézen
 ha bollandoztam, magasra emellél
 s nem engedted, hogy kifulladás vénen,
 ezerkilencszázötvenhat, te csillag,
 a nehéz út oly könnyű volt veled!
 Oly réges-régen súlsz fehér hajamra,
 ragyogj sokáig még sirom felett.

 Minority Culture

"the Hungarian National Government and the Hungarian people,
 pervaded by historic responsibility,
 declare the neutrality of the Hungarian People's Republic
 expressing the one and undivided will
 of the millions of Hungarian people.
 A century long dream of the Hungarian people
 comes true with that,
 and the cause of independence and freedom
 is one by the revolution fight,
 fought by the heroes of past and present"⁶

The Hungarian prose writers living in emigration were also striving to perpetuate the real story of the 56 events as opposed to the "official" distortions and lies in the literature at home. This narrative literature presented the events sometimes with documentary credibility or with the objectivity of historiographers letting through the expression of the narrator's commitment, his emotions, passions and nostalgia. There are some really excellent books which conjure up the history of the Hungarian revolution and events of freedom fight as well as the fate of young workers and intellectuals taking part in them. I mean novels and personal documents like Tamás Kabdebó Minden idők [All Times], Miklós Domahidy Tizenhat zár [Sixteen Locks] and Tibor Dénes Budapest nincs többé Budapesten [Budapest is not Anymore in Budapest], and narratives like Tamás Aczél Egy villa története [History of a Villa], Mátyás Sárközi Menekülők [Fleeing], László Ladányi Novemberi misztérium [November Mystery], Béla Szász [Vincent Savarins] Az első halott [The First Dead] and György Ferdinandy Mágneses erővonalak [Lines of Magnetic Power] on 1956.

* „a magyar nemzeti kormány a magyar nép
 És a történelem előtti mély
 felelősségérzetől áthatva, a magyar
 nép millióinak osztatlan akaratát
 kifejezve nyilvánítja a magyar
 népköztársaság semlegességét.
 a magyar nép évszázados álma
 valósul meg ezzel, a forradalmi
 harc, melyet a magyar múlt És
 jelen hősei vívtak, végre
 győzelemre vitte a szabadság,
 a függetlenség ügyét.”

Minority Culture

One of the greatest literary enterprises providing an image of the Hungarian revolution is the novel trilogy *Danubius, Danubia* by Tamás Kabdebó who fled to England, worked as a librarian in Italy and in the South-American tropical area and finally settled down in Ireland. This excellent epic work tells the story of the alter ego of the writer with the events of 56 at the centre. First they are historic events of the author's personal experience, later memories determining the way of thinking, personal development and views of the hero. The novel is a book of memories and nostalgia both surrounding the described reality with the shadow of emotions modifying and "gilding" it. The events eternalised in the epics have gained two aspects of meaningful human and historical reality. The first is the reflection of the greatest human and historical experience of youth. The second is a portrayal of the young Hungarian fleeing into a foreign world after the repression of the revolution, his fate, intellectual orientation, general spiritual conditions. Tamás Kabdebó's novel is true to the spirit of the greatest event of 20th century Hungarian history, evoking the historic and moral greatness of the revolution so tragically lost.

As Literary Studies See It

There is a fairly extensive (and valuable), scholarly and journalistic literature of the Hungarian revolution in the western world, volumes of historic and political-scientific works. Owing to this hundred odd works the history of the 1956 Hungarian revolution could not be considered "an unexplored period" even before the 1989 regime change. A number of these volumes, enough to fill a small library, was re issued at home too after the regime change. These books did not only have an apologetic role, simply refuting lies spread by the official Hungarian party propaganda (e.g. in the works of i.e. János Berecz or János Molnár or the pseudo-historian Ervin Hollós, who was one of the leaders of the political police) distributed in huge number of copies. Comparing the propaganda publications (self-justification attempts of the Kádár regime) produced at home with Hungarian literature written in the west drives us to the recognition how powerful and convincing the presentation of reality can be as opposed to distortions and libels; that fidelity is a must for every one dealing with historiography in the interpretation of historical events.

The first impressive result of credible presentation of history was the collection 'Tanulmányok a magyar forradalomról' [Studies on the Hungarian Revolution] edited by Gyula Borbándi and József Molnár in 1966 (published for the 10th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution). In their preface the editors summarise and set the aim of their work "the publisher has made a selection from studies, essays and articles which in their opinion provide an accurate

Minority Culture

analysis of some aspects or reflections of events during the revolution. It was impossible to pursue completeness, it would have exceeded the resources of the publisher. The collection is not complete since it cannot include every work worth recording but it also is not complete because it is not covering every topic related to the revolution. Part of the studies and articles were written shortly after the revolution in the years following it. But several studies and publications are new and have been published for the first time." The volume contains altogether eighteen studies; Péter Gosztonyi's work about the role of the Security Authority and the Hungarian Army, Péter Kende about the discussions in the editorial office of Szabad Nép [Free People], Gyula Borbándi about the role of Imre Nagy in the Revolution, Zoltán Szabó about István Bibó, Vilmos Juhász about the demands of the Revolution, László Cs Szabó about the writers' activity in the revolution and finally Imre Kovács about the decade after the repression of the Revolution. This lengthy volume of essays is one of the most authentic works about 1956's events and aspirations.

The most popular works of the western Hungarian emigration are the biography of Imre Nagy by Tibor Méray and the report by Tamás Aczél and Tibor Méray on the events of the process leading to the Revolution. The author started writing 'The Life and Death of Imre Nagy' [Nagy Imre élete és halála] in the summer of 1957, when the Prime Minister – who died as a martyr shortly afterwards – was still alive and there was still hope that fate could be avoided. The political murder, ordered by the law court, made the volume a historical work, which had to research and present truth. "I have planned my book a documentary work – wrote Méray in the foreword-.I have not aspired for vividness but for truth. When making statements I have relied on available factual materials and applied logical and psychological implications only as a last resort in a very careful way. My work or any other attempt of historical research concerning this era is made extremely difficult by the fact that part of the most important facts is unknown. Party minutes from Moscow, records of Political Committee meetings, Khrushchev's, Rákosi's, Kádár's and others' personal evidences would be needed to establish a credible image. A better period may come handy when everything that is "classified" now becomes public, deterrent and edifying for a happier, freer humanity." This era has come and we have a biography of Imre Nagy by János Rainer M. which is more detailed and more thorough than any previous ones. This does not concern the authenticity, credibility and truthfulness of Méray's work.

The other – we can say – fundamental work is Tisztító Vihar [Purgatorial Storm], a report by Tamás Aczél and Tibor Méray, which presents processes of opposition and then that of the revolution taking developing within the communist party itself, in the literary life and in newsrooms based on documents and

Minority Culture

personal memories. In deed it presents events preceeding the Revolution: the "riot" of the staff of Szabad Nép, the story of the internal debates of the Writer's Association: the so called Memorandum-case, in which writers, artists and journalists (from Tibor Déry to Imre Sarkady and from the actor Miklós Gábor to the filmdirector Zoltán Fábri) turned against the Rákosi-leadership as one, in spite of being communists and loyal to the party. The two authors introduce the sequence of historical events leading to 23rd October with the credibility of personal experience.

There are several interesting and worthy books that could and ought to be introduced or mentioned here from the works of Western Hungarian scholarly workshops but I do not have the space and means to do so. Nevertheless there are four more books to be mentioned here. The first one is Péter Gosztonyi's: 1956 – A magyar forradalom története [1956 The History of the Hungarian Revolution] which studies the military history of the 1956 events, similarly to other military history works of the author. He refers to Tibor Déry who called attention to the role of the young people in 1956, comparing their courage and heroism to those of the 1848 youth. "They – who were raised by the post-1945 system - formed the core of revolutionary forces taking up arms following the writers', poets', publicists' intellectual preparatory efforts for freedom. Both as civilians and as regular army the organized workers, the new intellectuals coming from the people joined them, while the peasants proved their commitment and solidarity towards the insurgents in countless instances. The book is about their fight, about the whole Hungarian nation; heroes of the freedom fight regardless of their creed or political preferences."

The second book is the publication of the Hungarian Society of Literature and Fine Arts in Switzerland (Svájci Magyar Irodalmi és Képzőművészeti Kör) called '1956 A befejezetlen forradalom' [1956 The Incomplete Revolution] containing papers of the 1981 conference in Lugano. I would like to call attention to A magyar október központi helye a kelet-európai forradalmi mozgalmakban [Significance of the Hungarian October among the Eastern-European Revolution Efforts] by László Révész, in which the author calls attention to the general historic importance of the Hungarian Revolution and Freedom Fight in world-history and lists the anti-totalitarian movements of the region; 1953 East-Berlin, June 1956 in Poznan, October 1956 in Hungary, movements of university students in March and autumn 1968 in Poland and of workers and intellectuals in 1968 in Czechoslovakia.

The third on the list is Magyar Füzetek [Hungarian Notes] edited by Péter Kende and published in 1970s and the 1980s. The double volume 9.-10. with the title 1956, was published in 1981, to the 25th anniversary of the revolution. Studies of the issue intended to give a proper setting of the revolution, to cor-

Minority Culture

rect the misinterpretations, based on lies and forging history by which the official Budapest propaganda attempted to enforce its views on the public, especially on the youth. The editors emphasized: "Those in power are also well aware that the greatest political action of contemporary Hungarians was 1956, that is why they have kept varying twisting the truth, trying to monopolize history and the conspiracy of silence for 25 years. Their primary aim is to keep it as a secret or even try to make the public forget the fact, that contemporary Hungary is an illegitimate descendant of 1956. Therefore open talk is banned. Not for responsibility, the days of reckoning are over after 25 years both legally and humanly. But open speech would inevitably bring up the issue of legal continuity." Correctness and direct speech were the main motives of the studies by Tibor Méray about Imre Nagy, Béla Király about the "war" between the Hungarian and the Soviet army, Miklós Molnár about the background events of the Soviet intervention, Ferenc Donáth about the comparison of 1945 and 1956 and Ferenc Fejtő about the "innocence" and "necessity" of the revolution. Illustrious foreign authors like G.H.N. Seton-Watson, Raymond Aran, Claude Lefort, Hanna Arendt, Bill Lomax, and Paul Goma also made their contribution to the small volume. There is also a rich and useful bibliography of the international literature of the Hungarian Revolution published by Bill Lomax.

Finally the fourth of the most representative publications on the era is related to the European Protestant Hungarian Free University which published a collection of studies with the title: 'Harminc év 1956-1986' [Thirty Years 1956-1986] on the 30th anniversary of the Hungarian revolution. This contained studies by Miklós Molnár, Péter Kende, István Kemény, Zoltán Kovács K., Pál Harmat, Bálint Balla, Tibor Hanák, Péter Gosztonyi, Magda Kerényi, János Gergely, Imre András, Gyula Bárczay, Károly András, Elemér Illyés, László Juhász, Andor Kovács, Árpád Szöllősy, Gellért Békés, Judit Szász and Zsolt K. Lengyel dealing mostly with the aftermath of the revolution, the post 1956 historical situation of Hungarian culture and the efforts of minorities. In the preface of the volume Gyula Bárczay, a Calvinistic priest in Basel, evokes the moving experiences of 23rd October 1956: "What have we got left after thirty years? There is no answer to this question. It can be well presumed that the experience of a nation with a common will revive among Hungarians living at various points of the compass at least for a few hours in remembrance. Not everyone will commemorate the revolution. The ones who look back from a distance of thirty years on this day will commemorate the time of national unanimity for the others too; for those who adapted to the present in Hungary to such an extent that they have forgotten the dreams of the past. Or for those who exclusively seek their own individual welfare; or for those who live in the neighbouring countries and are weary of or broken under minority life; for those who deliberately renounced

Minority Culture

being Hungarian in the west or for those whose national feeling have been lost, blunted or faded because of being unable to bear the weight and sight of the foreign environment."

The trace our 1956 revolution has left in the western Hungarian literature, scholarship, publishing and memoirs would require a real scholarly summary or better a monumental anthology. The celebration is suitable at least to throw light at some parts of this picture: the reflection of the Hungarian revolution and freedom fight in western Hungarian writings is there for the nation to look at and to recognise its own true self – the one that is not determined by economic prosperity or party policy interests but is a historic truth itself. It is that the descendants of the generations of 1956 can be proud of.